MY GREAT Neighbourhood Grant Policy

CITY OF VICTORIA

Land Acknowledgement

The City of Victoria is located on the homelands
of the Songhees Nation and the Xwsepsum Nation.

Introduction

Do you have a new idea to bring a neighbourhood space to life or bring community together? If so, we'd like to hear from you. Your project should address one of the following themes:

1. Placemaking
2. Community building activities
3. Community resiliency

Purpose

This policy guides the allocation of funding for new projects that impact public space and that support community building activities.

Objective

The My Great Neighbourhood Grant program aims to foster positive connections among residents in the City of Victoria. The program supports new projects that enhance community spaces with physical improvements, promotes community development through activities and celebrations, and strengthens resilience within neighbourhoods.

Jubilee Parkfest

This grant program is designed to strengthen community and neighbourhood connections among residents. When preparing your application, please ensure your project addresses the following considerations:

- It is community-led
- There is clear evidence of neighbourhood support for the proposal
- It fosters community identity and expression
- It contributes to neighbourhood pride and enhances quality of life.

At the heart of this program is a focus on creating new relationships and strengthening existing ones, between neighbours and across neighbourhoods.

Definitions and Examples

Community-Led
Community-led refers to initiatives, projects or activities that are initiated, planned and carried out by community members. These efforts are driven by the needs, interests and priorities of the community. Community-led approaches empower participants and encourage collaboration.

Community Space
Community spaces include areas of public land under a license of occupation by a non-profit organization (e.g., community garden), boulevards, local streets and minor green spaces. It can also include property under the management of School District 61 and other levels of government. In certain cases, private property may also be considered (e.g., outdoor space owned by a strata corporation that is accessible to the general public). Written permission must be obtained from all owners, prior to applying. Placemaking projects within larger City parks are discouraged due to the complexity in design, function, maintenance and use of these public spaces. These factors make installing placemaking features in parks more challenging compared to other spaces in the public realm.
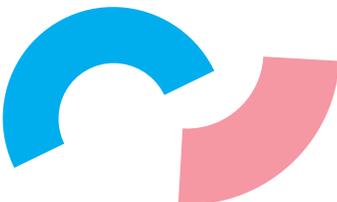
Community Development

Community development is defined as a process where community members work together to strengthen social connections. It focuses on empowering individuals and groups, building local capacity and fostering collaboration.

Community development is inclusive and encourages participation, collaboration and involvement from all members of the community.

Examples of community development activities could include:

- Short-term neighbourhood improvement or cleaning programs (e.g., beach cleanup, graffiti removal)
- Emergency management workshops for neighbours living on the same street
- Community programs with a focus on building social connections
- New neighbourhood celebrations and block parties (not previously established)
- An education awareness event involving training or information useful to all residents

Community Resiliency

Community resiliency refers to the ability of a community to anticipate, prepare for, respond to and recover from adverse events such as natural disasters, economic challenges, public health crises or other disruptions. A resilient community can withstand stress, adapt to changing circumstances and emerge stronger by leveraging its resources, social networks and local knowledge.

Key aspects of community resiliency include:

- Strong relationships and mutual support among community members
- The capacity to adjust to new conditions or challenges
- Practices that ensure long-term ecological, social and economic well-being and ensure all members of the community, especially marginalized or vulnerable groups, are included in decision making and have access to support systems

Examples of resiliency projects could include:

- Community projects that enhance existing community strengths to create stronger support systems and connections
- Creating neighborhood response teams to give practical help and emotional support to people who feel alone, especially seniors
- Creating youth-focused programs that support connection between young people and their neighbourhood, ideally by fostering a sense of belonging in their neighbourhoods
- New programs and activities that help people deal with climate change, grow food, handle emergencies, take care of the environment and build strong communities
- Programs and projects that identify and support City Council's priority of community wellbeing at the neighbourhood level

Mobile community table

Placemaking

Placemaking is defined as a collaborative approach between neighbours to redesign under-utilized public spaces, that puts the needs of the community at the center of the process. Placemaking focuses on transforming spaces into vibrant, inclusive and functional places that foster social interaction, wellbeing and a sense of belonging. Placemaking is about making spaces more accessible, attractive and functional. It encourages the use of space for diverse activities, such as relaxation, recreation and events.

Examples of placemaking projects could include:

- Community garden and boulevard improvements
- Communal gathering spaces
- Decorative lighting displays
- Community art displays
- Community murals*
- Neighbourhood branding initiatives
- New playable spaces outside of designated parks
- Little free libraries for books, seeds, toys, food or art supplies
- Murals on local streets

*Community murals are subject to the guidelines provided through the City's mural process. Once the original design has been submitted and signed off by the City and artist, major alterations or additions will not be allowed.

Refusal to comply may require removal of the mural by the City. In addition:

1. Profanity, hate language and any other words or images that are likely to be perceived by the public as offensive will not be permitted.
2. Any language or images that convey or portray drug or alcohol use will not be permitted.
3. Explicit or encrypted signatures or acronyms will not be permitted.

Open Space Mural

Project Location

Projects must take place within a specific neighbourhood of the City of Victoria and be of direct benefit to residents of the city. The applicant and/or sponsoring organization can reside outside of Victoria as long as the project is situated in the City of Victoria. The project or activity must be free and accessible to all residents.

Eligibility Criteria

Get Growing Fernwood

This program is open to all non-profit organizations including community and neighbourhood associations and schools. Ad hoc, informal organizations and businesses may also apply for funding by partnering with a local non-profit group. The non-profit group is required to sign the application as the sponsor, and if approved, will receive the funding for disbursement to the applicant.

The applicant or sponsor must meet all the following criteria to apply for a grant:

- Registered non-profit organization in good standing in the Province of B.C. or registered charitable organization in good standing with the Canada Revenue Agency
- There must be evidence of a clear mandate and competent administration
- Applicant organization must not be in arrears with the City of Victoria, in bankruptcy or seeking creditor protection

Eligible expenses for placemaking funding include:

- Materials (e.g., paint, wood, metal, etc.)
- Insurance and permit fees
- Equipment rentals
- Professional labour costs

Eligible expenses for activity and resiliency funding include:

- Program materials (e.g., craft supplies, food, etc.)
- Insurance and permit fees
- Equipment rentals
- Professional facilitation costs
- Room rental fees

My Great Neighbourhood grants are an investment in community and often include payment to individuals (e.g., project facilitation) to ensure the project is successfully implemented. Honourariums may also be helpful in undertaking a community project where specific contributions are deserving of acknowledgement. An honourarium is intended to be modest and a small part of the budget. Staff salaries cannot be paid by this grant, but they can be accounted for in the matching portion of the budget.

The following guidelines should be followed in budget preparation:

- Project facilitation costs for an individual are capped at 25 per cent of items funded by the grant.
- Honorariums per individual contributors are capped at $100 per person.
- Administration costs for the sponsoring not-for-profit agency are capped at 15% of the grant up to $100
- Non-profit agencies applying for a grant on their own are not eligible for an administration fee.
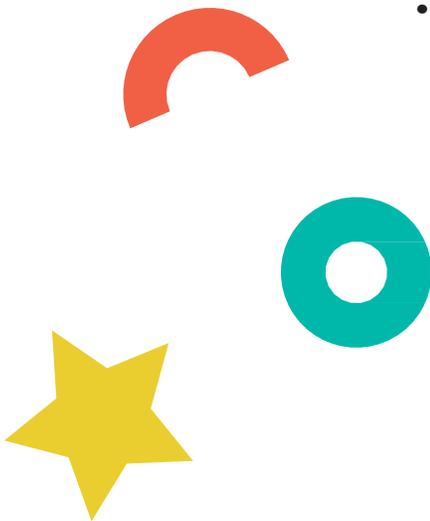
Ineligible Expenses

Ineligible expenses include any costs not related to the project, such as but not limited to:

- Fundraising
- Direct financial assistance to individuals or families
- Maintaining ongoing programs, services or events
- Acquisition of equipment and tools for the organization
- Funding staff positions and staff training or professional development costs
- Deficit or debt repayment
- Commercial activities and related costs
- Purchase of land or buildings, or physical improvements to buildings
- Travel and accommodation expenses

This program also does not fund:

- Solo artist projects
- Projects that fall within the jurisdiction of other levels of government or other City departments
- Maintenance or replacement of existing infrastructure, especially on private property
- Art shows, galleries, art retreats or artist-led projects
- Additions to or maintenance for allotment gardens
- Enhancements to commercial buildings

Please note: The grant program cannot be used for commercial ventures, improvements to business facades or any project that is commercial in nature. Funding is intended exclusively for community-based, non-commercial initiatives that benefit the neighbourhood as a whole.

Hillside Avenue mural

Laws & Regulations

- Projects must adhere to City bylaws, policies and regulations.
- Projects cannot cancel or delay projects already planned or underway by the City of Victoria or other community groups.
- Insurance, permits, organizational partnerships and project locations must be confirmed in writing when submitting projects.

Limitations on Applications

- Applicants are limited to one application per category per year for a maximum of three applications
- Registered non-profit organizations in good standing can sponsor multiple applicants without impacting their own application limits.
- For a multi-phased project to be considered, a substantial new element must be introduced with each application for a maximum of three phases over three years.
- Applications for new projects will be prioritized over recurring applications, factoring in quality of application.

*Denman Street
Little Library*

Clockwise from top left: Leonard Street Emergency Bench, Edible Landscapes, George Jay Elementary Welcoming Pole, Boomerang Court gathering space

Accessibility

All proposals must include accessible design. At least a part of the project must be accessible to community members with disabilities.

The project must be open and accessible to the general public. It must be free of charge to visit or view, even if on private property. If situated on private property, it must be adjacent to a public space (e.g., sidewalk, public pathway, park, etc.) and have access during the duration of the activity or life of the project. Little Free Libraries on private land are an example of this. Accessing projects and activities that occur on school properties are subject to the rules of the school district (e.g., visits are restricted to outside of regular school hours).

The Application Package

The following items are required as part of the application package and should be discussed at your pre-application meeting:

- A complete and balanced project budget clearly showing how funds will be used, along with your matching contributions
- Letters of support, sponsorship and permissions as necessary
- Consideration of any risk and mitigation strategies
- Identification of any insurance and permit requirements
- For placemaking projects, design information, including a site map and visual images of the location as well as consideration for maintenance and removal of the project.

Groups that are not registered non-profit societies must include a sponsorship letter from a non-profit partner with their application. Sponsors are responsible for receiving funds on behalf of the applicant, managing the disbursement of the grant and ensuring the submission of a final report. In some cases, sponsors may also provide insurance, which should be arranged between the applicant and the sponsor. Sponsors are permitted to charge an administrative fee, which must be included in the project budget. Administrative fees are capped at 15 per cent of the total grant-funded expenses.

Grant Review Process

The process of reviewing the grants includes the following steps:

1. Applications submitted when ready through the intake period.
2. Staff review applications for eligibility.
3. Staff conduct a technical review of the applications to ensure they meet City of Victoria standards and bylaws. Applicants will be advised of insurance and permit requirements.
4. Applications that impact public space are vetted through appropriate departments to assess the project or program feasibility.
5. Eligible applications are presented to the Director of Business and Community Relations (or designate) for approval at the end of each month.
6. Recipients are contacted with results of their application. Successful applicants will be required to sign a Letter of Agreement prior to funds being released.
7. Successful recipients have up to one year to complete their project.
8. Recipients complete a final report within 60 days of completion of the project.

Grant Limitations

Not all applicants meeting the eligibility requirements will receive a grant. Grants are one-time approvals and are not an automatic ongoing source of annual funding.

Yates Street Pollinator Garden

Maintenance and Project Lifespan

Successful placemaking projects will be maintained for a mutually agreed upon lifespan for a minimum of two years and a maximum of five years. If the item created through the project falls into disrepair, requires replacement or becomes a safety concern, it may need to be removed. Placemaking projects may be continued beyond the initial term through a renewed agreement between the City and the community organization. Activity projects with a physical nature will be maintained for a period of up to six months by the community organization.

Monitoring and Reporting

Each grant recipient will be required to submit a final report as specified by the City of Victoria. A final report template will be supplied. In addition to answering the questions, your report must include a financial reconciliation and photos that can be used by the City for the purposes of promoting this grant program.

Time Extensions and Repayment of Grants

If the grant is not used for the stated purpose, the full amount must be returned to the City of Victoria.

At the discretion of the Neighbourhood Team, an extension for an approved grant may be allowed under extenuating circumstances. If after 18 months the project is not complete, the City will ask for the funds to be returned.

Still Have Questions?

Reach out to your neighbourhood liaison by email at neighbourhoods@victoria.ca.

This policy was most recently updated in 2026.