Naturalization is a process for transforming an open space into one that reflects the naturally-occurring landscape of the region. Naturalization includes the purposeful reintroduction of native plant species to an area in order to enhance the natural environment and increase biodiversity.

Who can do Naturalization?
A community project manager leads the project on behalf of the community and follows the Steps to Naturalization (see other side).

Guiding Principles
There are seven guiding principles that frame our naturalization projects:

Connectivity: Increasing the connectivity of Calgary’s parks and open spaces will enable wildlife movement and native plant growth

Biodiversity: Increasing the variety of plants and animals in an ecosystem

Structure: Constructing a landscape that has multiple layers which can include: the upper storey (tall trees), understory (smaller trees and shrubs), and groundcovers (grasses and wildflowers)

Management and Monitoring: Performing stewardship and regular care of the landscape

City-Led Engagement: Undertaking purposeful dialogue between The City, citizens, and stakeholders when appropriate

Community-Led Engagement: Holding informal discussions with the community and local residents

Education: Helping the community understand ecology and the importance of parks and open space

Why is Naturalization important for Calgary?

Naturalization supports biodiversity conservation
The City of Calgary aims to restore 20 per cent of open space by 2025 (key target of Our BiodiverCity: Calgary’s 10-year biodiversity strategic plan).

Naturalization is cost-effective
Naturalization can reduce maintenance costs when compared with traditionally manicured areas (mowing, fertilizers, pesticides, etc).

Naturalization builds resilience
Naturalization improves an ecosystem’s ability to cope with extreme weather events and pest outbreaks.

Naturalization provides the opportunity for nature education
Naturalization fosters education about nature and develops ecological literacy in Calgarians.

Naturalization is beautiful
Naturalization has aesthetic value and adds to the diversity of landscapes across Calgary.

Naturalization is healthy
Naturalization promotes mental health and relaxation. It encourages more diverse recreational uses of a space.

Variety of plants
Naturalized areas contain a variety of different types of plants. Forested naturalized sites may contain trees, shrubs, perennials and grasses. Grassland or meadow sites may contain a variety of shrubs, grasses, and wildflowers.

Early Years
Naturalized areas can appear unkempt during the first several years. Given time to establish, they will appear like a landscape that has always been there.

Size
Naturalized areas can be as small as a garden of several square meters, or as large as a regional park.

Site Usage
Some naturalization sites will take mowed areas with little active use by citizens and change them to areas that can be enjoyed through activities such as wildlife viewing, photography, nature appreciation and relaxation. Naturalized sites are sensitive to foot traffic in the early years, so please respect area closures in effect.

Site Maintenance
Naturalized sites do not look formal or manicured (traditional horticultural practices). Once established, they may not require costly maintenance practices like pruning, trimming, fertilizing, or pesticide spraying.

For more information: Visit www.calgary.ca/biodiversity and download a copy of the Naturalization Guidelines (2017). The City can be reached by phone: + 311
These steps to naturalization are provided as a guideline for community associations and groups within Calgary who are interested in working with the City to create a naturalized open space.

**Site Analysis**

Complete a thorough review of the existing conditions on the site to identify areas that could be considered for naturalization.

- **Who is involved?**
  - Community project manager
  - Calgary Parks
  - Design professionals (if assistance is needed)

- **Things to consider:**
  - Site history, current site usage and activities
  - Site context, soil analysis, topography, microclimate, existing vegetation
  - Budget

- **Step Deliverables:**
  - Project summary and purpose
  - Site description / observations
  - Base plan with existing conditions and project boundary

- **Timeline:** 2-3 months

**Initial Discussions**

Discuss with local residents as early as possible. Inform The City of the project to discuss goals and feasibility.

- **Who is involved?**
  - Community project manager
  - Calgary Parks (if assistance is needed)
  - Residents

- **Things to consider:**
  - Engagement fosters stewardship
  - Project eligibility and feasibility

- **Step Deliverables:**
  - Written record of resident feedback

- **Timeline:** 6-12 months

**Concept Planning**

Create a general, schematic plan that illustrates the site layout and the proposed naturalization area.

- **Who is involved?**
  - Community project manager
  - Calgary Parks
  - Design professionals (if assistance is needed)

- **Things to consider:**
  - How to show the intended design of the site (signage, pathways, strategic mowing)
  - Native plant species appropriate for the site conditions
  - Seating, existing plants, built elements, topography, pathways, distinct edges, water, exposure and views, signage

- **Step Deliverables:**
  - Schematic concept plan

- **Timeline:** Schematic concept plan

**Detailed Discussions + Final Planning**

Discuss potential funding, construction strategies, and the level of City involvement needed for implementation.

- **Who is involved?**
  - Community project manager
  - Calgary Parks
  - Design professionals (if assistance is needed)

- **Things to consider:**
  - Changes to timing
  - Funding
  - Community stewardship
  - Regulatory approvals and permits required

- **Step Deliverables:**
  - Formal City approval
  - Construction plans
  - Management and maintenance plan

- **Timeline:** 4-6 months

**Implementation + Construction**

Coordinate with The City, a contractor, and/or volunteers to implement the naturalization project.

- **Who is involved?**
  - Community project manager
  - Calgary Parks
  - Design professionals (if assistance is needed)
  - Landscape contractor
  - Community volunteers

- **Things to consider:**
  - Site preparation
  - Control of invasive plants
  - Appropriate time and conditions for planting
  - All necessary approvals have been obtained

- **Step Deliverables:**
  - Construction schedule
  - Contract with landscape contractor
  - Construction and planting

- **Timeline:** 1-3 months

**Post-Construction**

Monitor the site and plant growth carefully and regularly. Weeding and watering will be required while the site establishes.

- **Who is involved?**
  - Calgary Parks
  - Local community association (if stewardship is desired)

- **Things to consider:**
  - Naturalization takes time
  - Site may appear unkempt while it establishes
  - Care and maintenance is most intense during the first 2 years

- **Step Deliverables:**
  - Record of activity monitoring

- **Timeline:** 2+ years

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