

## **Naturalization Working Group Final Report**

# **Community Action On Greening**

**"transforming our school yards and neighbourhood parks"**



**Commissioned by: Joint Use Site Planning and Design Committee**

**Final Report Submitted: February 1997**

**Approved by: Joint Use Site Planning and Facility Design Committee  
May 22, 1997**



## Foreword.....

This report on “**Community Action on Greening**” flows from the members of the Naturalization Working Group and summarizes how community initiative and the Joint Use Partnership can be mutually supportive to transform our schoolyards and neighbourhood parks.

The Naturalization Working Group was set-up by the Joint Use Site Planning and Design Committee, to investigate the potential for naturalization projects on school and parkland. The working group included representatives from the community, Edmonton Federation of Community Leagues, Public and Catholic School Boards, and Edmonton Community Services.

This is a working document. We hope that over time, our initiative will help to bring the city and its community partners together to shape a future that embraces a respect for the nature in our landscapes, in our communities and in our lives.

Respectfully submitted:  
Naturalization Working Group

Janet Albert	Program Aid, Mt. Pleasant Elementary School
Margaret Campbell	Community Volunteer, Greenfield Community League
Mike Dorchak	Teacher, Lago Lindo Elementary School
Dwayne Edge	Director , District Parks Operations, Edmonton Community Services
Larry George	On secondment from Public School Board, Consultant Public Works
Dan Haley	Assistant Principal, Father Leo Green Catholic School
Jim Hancharuk	Assistant Principal, Crawford Plains Elementary School
John Helder	Principal of Horticulture, Edmonton Community Services
Elna Nash	Edmonton Federation of Community Leagues
Elizabeth Marsland	Community Volunteer, Girl Guides of Canada Volunteer
Wes Stevens	Garneau Public School , Community Volunteer
Bea Fricson	Chairman, Naturalization Working Group Strategic Planner, Parks Development Branch, Edmonton Community Services



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## **INTRODUCTION: NATURALIZATION WORKING GROUP**

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The Joint Use Site Planning and Design Committee established the terms of reference and confirmed the participants for the Naturalization Working Group in November 1996. The terms of reference established the mandate of this group, as follows:

*“To investigate the feasibility and appropriateness of adopting a more naturalized approach to the management of neighbourhood and district level school and park sites.”*

The twelve (12) member working group held six (6) meetings in total, to complete its investigation and prepare this final report for the Joint Use Site Planning and Design Committee. A series of workshop style meetings were held to investigate and confirm the support for extending the naturalization approach on school and park land.

The Naturalization Working Group focused on developing a common understanding on the term “naturalization” and investigating the nature and extent of current naturalization initiatives on school grounds and neighbourhood parkland. The group confirmed a wide spectrum of initiatives currently in place, ranging from the establishment of ornamental gardens, the planting of prairie grasses and the existence of numerous school site outdoor wilderness centers.

This report on “Community Action On Greening” reflects the collective thoughts of the group on the need for a broader vision beyond that mandated by the original terms of reference. The working group has recognized a genuine opportunity to enhance and create new spaces for nature, in landscape, in our communities and in our lives.

*Our Bold New Vision: “To support the integration of greening projects and natural learning environments on school and park land through community action.”*

In the context of this report, “naturalization” refers to an alternative landscape management technique to conventional high maintenance landscapes. The term “greening” was coined to reflect the broader spectrum of initiatives that is possible on schoolyards and neighbourhood park sites. Naturalization projects are included in the broader term “greening projects”.

### **ABOUT THIS REPORT:**

This working document is divided into four main sections with the first section focusing on our changing landscape and attitudes. Part two highlights the rationale for community action on greening. Part three defines the key principles to guide the building of new spaces for nature in our schoolyards and in our communities. The last section documents the Naturalization Working Group implementation strategy.



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## **PART ONE: CURRENT CONTEXT**

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### **Changing Landscape**

A wide spectrum of initiatives is evident on Edmonton's schoolyards and neighbourhood parkland. School children are busy protecting and using nearby woodlots, designing and planting native prairie grasses, building ornamental gardens, and providing for animal and plant habitats in outdoor classrooms. Staff from Edmonton Community Services are involved in city wide initiatives to naturalize highway corridors and support the planting of native plants on neighbourhood parkland. Community leagues members are involved in redeveloping their building sites to include a variety of landscapes, combining naturalized areas and interconnected play spaces. ( Further examples are highlighted in the appendix.)

Are these locally driven initiatives a short lived phenomon or indication of our changing values in society? The Naturalization Working Group confirmed a major shift in values and a growing environmental awareness amongst its stakeholders.

### **Changing Attitudes**

A number of factors can be identified that are contributing to our changing attitude towards our school grounds and neighbourhood parkland.

Concerns over:

- longer term environmental health related to our urban environments,
- increased demand for suitable places for walking, cycling, bird watching, gardening and other outdoor physical activities,
- demands of an aging society and its impact on use and type of public green spaces,
- existing high maintenance cost of our parkland and open space buffers,
- higher costs to naturalization practices and the ineffectiveness of "plant and forget" strategies.

Growing interest in:

- using schoolyard as places of environmental and educational significance,
- use of native species, naturalization landscaping practices,
- the protection and maintenance of our natural areas ,
- embracing chemical free lawns and gardens,
- having an immediate connection with the natural environment in local neighbourhoods and school grounds.

Changes in our understanding, appreciation and concern for nature offer an unprecedented oppourtinty for the future design of our communities. School administrators and civic managers



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will have the extra challenge of providing opportunities to connect with nature while working within limited green spaces and restricted budgets.

### **Our Shared Experiences**

The group confirmed a number of positive benefits and a number of similar project struggles commonly experienced by working group regardless of the nature and scale of the individual naturalization/ greening projects that have been undertaken. These observations have helped to focus the group on evolving an common approach to the future project activities of the naturalization working group.

#### Positive Benefits Of Naturalization /Greening:

- adds to a more interesting visual landscapes,
- provides participants with a hands on environmental education,
- enhances the conservation and preservation of natural environments,
- provides a beautiful space that can be enjoyed by everyone,
- fosters a positive attitude towards the natural environment,
- is enjoyable, and involves kids in the process,
- adds new life and excitement to schoolyards,
- provides a daily contact with the natural world,
- can be affordable for schools, communities and civic government,
- encourages participation and partnerships approaches to projects, and
- supports a variety of personal, health, and educational needs of individuals and groups.

#### Individual Project Challenges:

The Naturalization Working Group could not identify any formal or informal city wide program in place to guide the development of greening projects. As a result, all persons and or groups interested in greening are left to doing their own thing. Project mistakes and are often repeated through this individual approach. Most projects are initiated by one enthusiastic and dedicated person, but they only succeed with the support many people. A wide range of project expertise is needed in site planning, design and implementation.

The working group expressed numerous project frustrations and information challenges, and they are summarized as follows:

- a general lack of information on how to get started,
- lack of knowledge as to where to go for help or project ideas,
- lack of landscaping design skills
- lack of specific knowledge on suitable plant materials,
- limited project dollars to undertake projects,
- limited support from the School Boards,
- approval processes that are too long and cumbersome for small scale greening projects,



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- and a real confusion about the 50' meter area around the school building envelope as to who approves what, and who needs to be involved in site planning.

## **PART TWO: COMMUNITY ACTION ON GREENING**

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One of the simpler and more effective ways in which individuals can manage change for their own benefit is through community action. The challenge for school board administrators and civic managers will be to provide project assistance where and when needed without restricting community driven initiative.

### **Individual Action Leading the Way**

The Naturalization Working Group members confirmed a growing interest amongst their colleagues, community members and school age children for learning about the natural environment, managing environmental issues and participating in beautifying school grounds and local parkland. (See the appendix, for the range and diversity of projects currently underway in Edmonton area.)

The group would like to see the continuation of these community based initiatives but would also like to improve the direct benefits of these individual projects to the community as a whole. Improved project support for site planning and design, and sharing of resources will go along way to support the development of more attractive, and healthier schoolyards and parkland.

Currently, civic government, school boards and community leagues do not have greening programs nor policies in place. Local grass roots initiatives are able to thrive without direct programming but not without great difficulty and frustration.

### **Community Driven Model**

The Naturalization Working Group confirmed the need for a bottom up process as an alternative to processes mandated by local government, school authorities or other governing bodies. This key philosophical value should drive local governments thinking on how to best support and guide the transformation of our schoolyards and parkland.

The Neighbourhood Park Development Program 1997-2006 (NPDP 97-2006), sponsored by Edmonton Community Services, has recently recognized naturalization, landscape and habitat improvements as eligible projects for community partnership funding. Community partners define locally their project needs and expectations. Project assistance is available for site planning, plant material selection and project development. This city wide program is an excellent example of the type of financial and project support needed for community greening initiatives.



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Without strong community will, volunteers and imaginative development, individual initiatives will not be sustainable and will run counter to the importance of environmental pursuits. Children, schools and community groups can help to provide a strong foundation for supporting local greening projects and encouraging longer term thinking on our natural world.

### **Community Action on Greening**

The Naturalization Working Group refocused its mandate, as follows:

*“ To support the integration of greening projects and natural learning environments on school and parkland through community action.”*

We recognized that this is a broad mandate and that a single bold action will rarely be sufficient to improve the green spaces at our local schools and park sites. Success, we believe will be the cumulative impact of many smaller, mutually compatible actions in shaping and defining our schoolyards and parkland.

### **Role of The Joint Use Site Planning and Design Committee**

Community Services and the School Boards are currently involved in planning, designing and financing of school and parksites through the Joint Use Agreement. The coordination of improving the green space at local schoolyards and neighbourhood parks is within the mandate of this group.

The Naturalization Working Group recognizes that our community based greening approach is novel but offers the Joint Use Site Planning and Design Committee an opportunity to be a pace setter and be a needed mentor in this new initiative. **The Joint Use Committee can lead the province, and establish the first *Schoolyard and Parkland Habitat Improvement Program*.**

The Joint Use Committee can build a coalition of support and partnerships between government, schools, businesses, and community organizations for this new community based greening approach. The challenge will be to create opportunities for making landscape improvements, protecting habitats, learning first hand about nature in our landscapes, on our schoolyards and in our neighbourhood parkland.

Similar initiatives in Ontario (Guide To School Ground Naturalization, Evergreen Foundation) and British Columbia's (Naturescaping, British Columbia Kit) have received wide public and government support and endorsement. The Learning through Landscapes, a program established in Britain in the mid-eighties has had remarkable successes.

### **Role of Community Services, and The School Boards:**

- to help sponsor a *Schoolyard And Parkland Habitat Improvement Program* with community stakeholders,
- provide site planning guidelines and project prototypes,



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- provide opportunities for sharing information and link with expertise in the city,
- cosponsor greening projects that are of lasting contribution, and
- develop a range of environmental value education and curriculum opportunities.

### **PART THREE: PRINCIPLES FOR COMMUNITY BASED GREENING**

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This section of the report defines the principles for improving the coordination and integration of greening projects on schoolyards and parkland. These principles are designed to explain and give example to the type of project information and design assistance needed by project initiators. The principles highlight the project management approach required to deliver a coordinated city wide initiative.

These principles will help guide and inform individual future action. A broad range of stakeholders will be interested in this information including: the public, elected officials, parks planners, communities, developers, the school administrations, parks maintenance staff, the Edmonton Federation of Community Leagues, school councils, environmental and other special interest groups.

#### **PRINCIPLES**

The Naturalization Working Group have developed a group of principles to help shape and support a city wide greening program. These techniques are offered for the consideration of the project mentor or sponsor. The group believes the Joint Use Committee, the School Boards and Edmonton Community Services can take a lead role as project sponsors.

The following principles will contribute to developing a successful community based process. Most techniques are simple and involve minimal costs to support the enhancement and creation of new spaces for nature on our school grounds and neighbourhood parkland.

1. A Diversity Of Approaches To Implementation
2. Recognize A Broad Spectrum Of Greening.
3. Clarify And Coordinate Responsibility Areas.
4. Provide Project Information.
5. Be Organized To Respond.
6. Need For A City Perspective.
7. Approve Only Sustainable Green Projects.





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## **PRINCIPLE ① A Diversity Of Approaches To Implementation**

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One of the simpler and more effective ways in which individuals can manage change for their own benefit is through community action. For those individuals concerned with the conservation of landscape and nature, and the quality of schoolyard and neighbourhood parkland; the challenge is in engaging individual action.

There are no easy formulae or single cookie cutter response that will address all landscape and environmental site concerns. Opportunities must exist for a diversity of approaches to implementation. Each project will be unique because it will depend upon such factors as the amount of money you can spend, the number of community volunteers and students involved, ownership of land, interests of your group, and the size and characteristics of your schoolyard or park area. These factors account for diversity and each alone should not constrain the approach taken.

The Naturalization Working Group recognizes that our community based greening approach is novel but offers the Joint Use Site Planning and Design Committee an opportunity to be a needed mentor in this new initiative. The Joint Use Site Planning and Design Committee can build a coalition of support and partnerships between all the different actors. They can also support the development of demonstration sites.

### **Exhibit #1 Building Greening Projects Together**



Engaging individual action and building opportunities for a diversity of approaches to implementation.



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## **PRINCIPLE 2** Recognize A Broad Spectrum Of Greening

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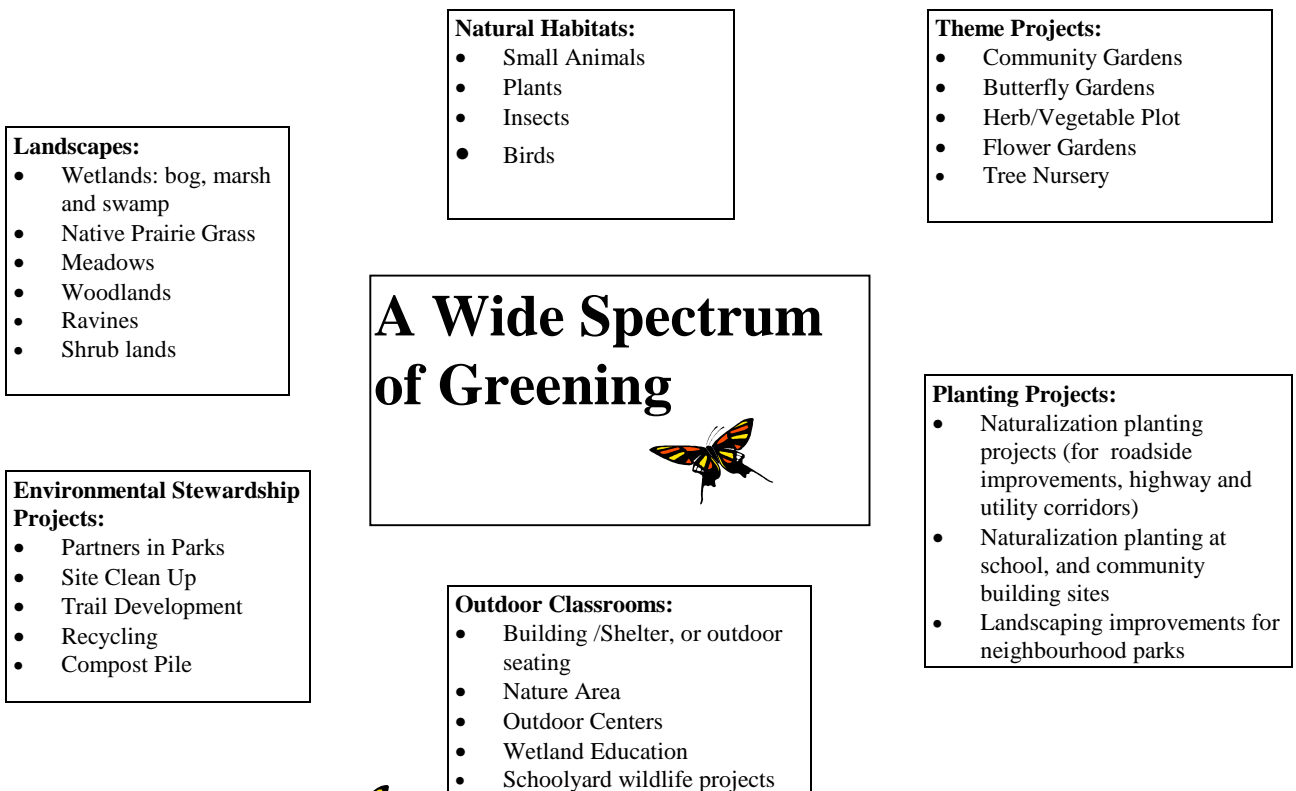
Realistically, most people find it difficult to define naturalization, conservation, preservation, and any other number of terms that may be used to describe opportunities to reconnect with the natural environment. Many of the words in use today are interchangeable yet may mean very different things in how the public connects to the natural environment.

What is needed is a way to cut through the language confusion and simplify all the terms to a common understanding or grouping of like activities.

In the context of this report, “*naturalization*” reflects only one landscaping method of creating natural areas and outdoor education opportunities on school and park sites. The term “*greening*” was coined to reflect the broader spectrum of initiatives that is possible on school and park sites.

The following exhibit groups project ideas into common headings in order to cluster similar activities and project goals.

### **Exhibit #2 Spectrum of Greening Projects**



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**PRINCIPLE 2** con't.

**Classifying Green Projects**

It will be critical to clarify confusing terminology, recognize variations in project approaches, and to communicate the overall individual project goals. Standardized classification of green projects will also be useful for project planning and to the various partners who will need clarity to ensure project support.

By way of example, a wetlands project can either be man made or within in a natural setting for purposes of outdoor education. The planting of native grassland and nursery materials in two different site locations can have two very different effects. Replanting along highway corridors or in a damaged parkland setting will support the naturalization of sites while the same planting on a school ground may be for beautification or for purposes of outdoor education.

The naturalization working group developed this original chart to improve the communication amongst all partners, and add clarity to the different approaches and use of project planning terminology. This chart also lists project areas of current interest to schools and communities.

**Exhibit #3                      How To Classify Your Project Activities**

<b>Different Approaches</b>				
<b>Range of Project Activities:</b>	<b><u>Preservation</u> Efforts to maintain the natural environment</b>	<b><u>Conservation</u> Wise use of the natural environment</b>	<b><u>Reclamation</u> Efforts to improve a disturbed site</b>	<b><u>Enhancements</u> Efforts to improve or create nature areas in the urban environment.</b>
<b>Landscape Projects:</b>				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wetlands</li> <li>• Native Prairie</li> <li>• Woodlands/Woodlots</li> <li>• Ravines/River valley</li> </ul>	X	X	X	X-man made wet pond
<b>Habitat Projects:</b>				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Small Animals</li> <li>• Plants</li> <li>• Insects</li> <li>• Birds</li> </ul>				
<b>Theme Gardens:</b>				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community Gardens</li> <li>• Butterfly Gardens</li> <li>• Herb/Vegetable Gardens</li> <li>• Native meadows</li> </ul>				
<b>Planting Projects:</b>				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School site beautification</li> <li>• Parks site naturalization</li> <li>• Street Tree Planting</li> <li>• Park Tree Planting</li> </ul>				
<b>Environmental Stewardship Projects:</b>				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adopt A Park</li> <li>• Site Clean Up</li> <li>• Trail Development</li> </ul>				



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## PRINCIPLE ③ Clarify and Coordinate Responsibility Areas

Project friendliness applies to design of new school sites, as well as to the design of future green initiatives on school and neighbourhood parkland. The public is not always aware of who manages what, or what project approvals are necessary before a project is initiated. There is mutual gain when authorities and the public have access to the same project information and understand who is the primary contact and secondary partners in developing, maintaining and managing specific properties across the city. Similarly the various primary contacts need clarity to ensure support for community driven projects.

The following exhibit outlines the basic structure for defining key contacts and other groups and agencies that should also be contacted. This project information is needed for sites beyond the neighbourhood level. Greening projects are currently being conducted through out the community.

### Exhibit #4 Community Contact Sheet- ( example)

Project Examples:		Project Site Locations				
Range of Project Activities:	Within 50' of the school building envelope	Neighbourhood and district parkland sites Outside the 50' of the school building	On Utility Corridors	Along City Roadways & Highways	Community League Sites (lease area)	On undeveloped City Property ( e.g. ravines, woodlots)
<b>Landscape:</b>						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wetlands</li> <li>Native Prairie</li> <li>Woodlands</li> </ul>		Primary Contact (P) Community Services				
<b>Habitats:</b>						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sm. Animals</li> <li>Plants</li> <li>Insects</li> <li>Birds</li> </ul>			P -Utility Companies S- Community Services		P- EFCL	
<b>Theme Gardens:</b>						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Community Gardens</li> <li>Butterfly Gardens</li> <li>Herb/Veg. Gardens</li> <li>Native Meadows</li> </ul>		P- Community Services		P- Transportation and Streets S- Community Services	P-EFCL	
<b>Planting Projects:</b>						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>beautification projects</li> <li>naturalization planting</li> </ul>		P-Community Services S- Community Stakeholders		P- Transportation and Streets S- Community Services	P-EFCL	
<b>Environmental Stewardship Projects:</b>						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adopt A Park</li> <li>Site Clean Up</li> </ul>		P- Community Services				



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• Trail Development						
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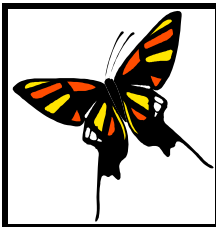
## **PRINCIPLE 4** Provide Project Information

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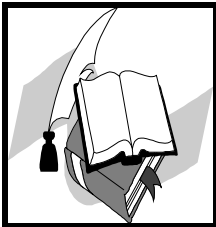
Good site planning and resource information is essential. This information will be useful to a broad range of stakeholders, including the public, elected officials, community planners, landscape architects, developers, civic and school administrations.

It is important to guide the public in project planning, design and development realities. Civic governments financial, and human resources are limited. Similarly, community sponsorship, volunteer support, and maintenance realities often curtail community driven projects. Trade off and compromises are often necessary amongst stakeholders in order to secure wide community support and effectively site plan for multiple public interests.

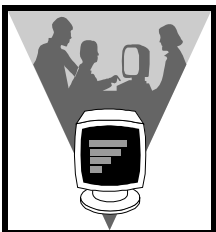
### **Exhibit #5 Information Needs ( example of resource needs )**



**Community Brochure-** Action On Greening



**Resource Manual-** Self help, work book, and project guide



**Web Site-** for project questions and answers



**Hosting** -an annual educational seminar



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## **PRINCIPLE 5 Be Organized To Respond**

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As the name implies “Community Action On Greening”, it will be important for the authorities to be ready to respond to community inquiries and for requests for project assistance. There is mutual gain when authorities and the public have access to the same project information and understand who they can go to for assistance. Authorities need to confirm the specific level of support to be provided.

### **Neighbourhood Park Development Program 1997-2006**

- Provides a good model for community based projects
- Community Recreation Coordinators can be a community contact
- Project assistance and partnership funding is available

**Problem Area: School based programs are not in place.**



A potential list of community inquires and information needs:

#### **Professional Assistance:**

- redesigning school and park sites,
- planning steps for creating a plan, and
- methods for evaluating environmental projects.

#### **Site Design and Maintenance Guidelines:**

- helpful hints on maintenance and on finding supplies,
- tree and shrub selection, and sources,
- useful ground covers,
- creating a butterfly garden and selecting suitable plant materials,
- and other specific project ideas.

#### **Education and Curriculum Support**

- ideas for outdoor lessons,
- curriculum connections, support materials,
- and helpful hints on maintenance and finding supplies..



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## **PRINCIPLE 6**      **Need For A City Perspective**

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The city needs to establish a strategic management approach to identifying the key natural resources that need to be supported and protected within the urban environment. Edmonton Community Services can take a lead role in working with other Civic Departments to help develop a city wide perspective on important natural areas and habitats near and adjacent to neighbourhood parkland. The Planning and Development Department recent study on “Conservation Of Natural Sites In Edmonton’s Table Lands” can be expanded to include built up areas of the city.

Some community and school groups may want to map and document their local neighbourhood habitat network before commencing a new projects. Civic Departments may want to identify sites that are suitable for greening, or sites in need of rehabilitation. There is an excellent opportunity to take advantage of greening sites already in place and help define new site development guidelines, planting and resource material guides. We all can learning from the mistakes and share in the knowledge gained from the successful projects.

### **Exhibit #6**                      **Confirm, Modify And Develop New Site Practices And Standards.**



#### **Sample Opportunity Sites:**

Resolving site issues at current project sites, provides an opportunity to develop common answers to be adopted else where.

- Mt. Pleasant Elementary School - problems with a fenced in wilderness site that is too small
- Lago Lindo Elementary School - problems with site location and selection of plant materials
- Crawford Plains Elementary School - problems with adjacent woodlot that reaching maturity
- School sites near woodlots, ravines - missed opportunities to make connections to nature
- Garneau Community League - working out a long term maintenance strategy
- Riverbend Junior High School- identifying plant material for the shaded area in the inner court yard.



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## **PRINCIPLE 7 Approve Only Sustainable Green Projects**

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There is a growing environmental trend which argues that economic decisions must be integrated with ecological, social and cultural concerns and values. More and more, people are realizing that the Earth is their only habitat, and one that must be protected, nurtured and sustained if they are to survive.

Public concern is growing for the creation of development practices that are more consistent with these ecological and environmental values, and based on the concept of appropriate and sustainable development. “Plant and forget” strategies no longer fit current economic and environmental demands.

The naturalization working group has confirmed these trends and has adopted the term “sustainable” for community action on greening. The naturalization working group would recommend that “sustainability” should be used as an key evaluation criteria for project approvals and funding support.

### **Exhibit #7 Defining Sustainable Green Projects**



#### **Basic Performance Criteria**

Project sustainability requires all of the following criteria to be in place.

- projects which promote more healthful and livable schoolyards and parks;
- projects in which natural systems are built into the places where people play and live,
- project where development practices are consistent with ecological and environmental values;
- projects that involve low maintenance projects, or projects with long term maintenance agreement in place;
- projects which involve long term community leadership, support and commitment;
- projects where long term maintenance and ownership belongs to project initiators;
- and the long term continuity of support is well understood by all the participants.



## **PART FOUR: IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY**

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The following implementation strategy is necessary to achieve the vision of the Naturalization Working Group. These action steps encourage a coordinated approach to community based greening. The group believes that community initiative and an integrated program with all the joint use partners can help to transform our schoolyards and neighbourhood parkland.

### **The Joint Use Partners**

1. Take on a leadership role in the Province of Alberta in shaping a new program to bring nature back into our schoolyards and neighbourhood parks.
2. Take lead role in helping to build a city wide collaboration and community momentum for this new program area.
3. Undertake a prototype projects across the city. Showcase examples of successful and working green project.

### **Joint Use Site Planning and Design Committee**

1. Present this report and its recommendations to the Joint Use Committee for project endorsement and support.
2. Confirm with the principal stakeholder groups their support for the project.
3. Initiate production and funding support for a community based brochure and project manual.
4. Appoint a project manager to complete the brochure, manual and communication plan within four months.
5. Reconfirm that 50'/15m around the school building envelope is available for school and community based greening projects and eligible for Neighbourhood Park Development Funding. A common project planning approach is needed in this area.
6. Take a lead role in working with other Civic Departments to help develop a city wide perspective on identifying the important natural areas near and adjacent to neighbourhood parkland. Identify significant woodlots, natural tree stands, and ravine sites with links to school sites.

### **Edmonton Community Services**

1. Identify a project manager within the organization to be charged with the ongoing responsibility to carry out the successful implementation of this initiative.
2. Review your own organizations and prepare necessary systems to enhance this Joint Use project initiative and help deliver report recommendations.
3. Make available financial and manpower assistance for an annual greening workshop, development and maintenance of a web site on greening for schools and community groups.



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4. Provide project opportunities for those groups in needs of volunteer and other resources.
5. Community Services needs to train front line staff on role of community based greening initiatives, suitable site areas within school and park sites, and make available resource materials and support.
6. Community Services needs to develop and distribute more information on how to design low maintenance sites. information on what materials to use, on what native plant material to use, site preparation practices and on the timing of projects.

### **Edmonton Public School Board And Edmonton Catholic School Board**

1. School Boards need to communicate to schools on the role of community greening and increase the level of project and funding support.
2. School Boards need to provide training sessions to provide educators with the resources, inspiration and planning support to be part of this project.
3. School Boards need to communicate to its stakeholder the opportunities for supporting greening initiatives within their school areas and make available a list of resources and project assistance.
4. School Boards need to encourage the integration of greening projects with curriculum goals.

### **Edmonton Federation of Community Leagues**

1. EFCL need to communicate to its stakeholder the opportunities for supporting greening initiatives within their lease areas and make available a list of resources and project assistance.
2. The EFCL's Presidents Manual could be adapted to include this information.

### **FINAL OUTCOMES:**

#### **A Communication Plan**

1. Get an Communication Plan prepared and in place for this project.
2. Develop as many possible community links as possible.
3. Host an annual school and community based workshop on greening.
4. Host a trade fair or seminar to enhance specific project skills, exchange of project resources and information. Tie in with other celebrations such as Arbour Day in May, Earth Day in April , World Environment Day in June or International School Ground Day in May.
5. Develop a Web site for questions and answers on greening projects.
6. Information on Neighborhoods Development Program 1997-2006 should be distributed in any future communication plan.



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### **A Community Brochure**

1. Prepare a easy to read brochure and make it readily available within communities, schools and all appropriate civic departments.
2. Outline specific project steps. What you need to know before you get started
3. Outline site planning constraints, available resources and where you can go for help.
4. Use a cartoon approach and lots of illustrations to convey the message.
5. Help groups and individual to be proactive and value natural environment
6. Provide the action steps from idea to implementation.

### **A Resource Manual**

1. Compile an easy to read magazine style manual. The manual should provide a detailed planning guide on how to plan, design and build individual green projects.
2. The resource manual should have tabs, to define the various headings and make it easier to use as reference guide. Include a sample school and park sites for site planning, a listing of native plant materials, local and national funding sources, and other project resources .
3. Put in local data about current projects and contact names in Edmonton.
4. Use other sources like “ Green Teacher”, to cut down on amount of original work needed to be done in developing the resource manual.
5. Distribute the manual widely and encourage city wide interest and support.

### **Site Planning Guidelines**

1. Remind all participants that projects need long term planning and commitment.
2. Consider only low maintenance projects or other means to ensure long term maintenance of sites. The use of annual maintenance contracts may be useful.
3. Gardening and beautification projects require a high degree of school and community wide support to be effective and be self sustaining.
4. Site reclamation plans should be prepared for each project. Develop a plan to turn the area back to its former use when the project is no longer sustainable.
5. Plans for ongoing maintenance and replacement of plant materials should be prepared for each project.
6. Prepare only safe, direct, barrier free design plans to reduce safety concerns and to provide for community access to project sites.



## **Naturalization Working Groups Final Comments**

The Naturalization Working Group is committed to this report and its recommendations. We would like to be reconvened within the next six months to review the final draft of the community brochure, resource manual and communication plan.

As a part of our last comments to all the stakeholders, please heed the following advice:

*Stay away from:*

- *doing nothing,*
- *a confusing and fragmented process,*
- *too rigid definition of projects,*
- *assuming that the loudest voices are necessarily right, and,*
- *projects that are not sustainable and of lasting contribution.*

Thank you for the opportunity to guide current policy making. We hope our contribution will provide a starting point for *Community Action On Greening*. We can shape a future that embraces a respect for nature in our landscapes, and in our communities and in our lives.



**COMMUNITY ACTION ON GREENING...**

**APPENDIX: COMMUNITY ACTION ON GREENING.....**



**Connections With Nature:**

**Outdoor Classrooms**

**Community Gardens**

**Woodlots**



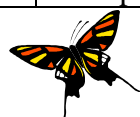


**COMMUNITY ACTION ON GREENING...**

## Glossary of Terms:

This glossary of definitions was developed by the Naturalization Working Group to provide a consistent source for terms used in the report on Community Action on Greening.

<b>An Environmental Yard</b>	A general term used to describe process of cutting back on the time to maintain and return to natural landscaping practices.
<b>Assessment</b>	An analysis of an inventory or piece of land.
<b>Beautification</b>	A term use to describe projects and activities that have aesthetic value as the primary purpose and intent. Such projects are ornamental , plant materials are chosen for colour, and their aesthetic attributes.
<b>Butterfly Gardens</b>	A landscape planting developed and planned for the purposes of attracting butterflies. The plant materials may be native species and exotic imports.
<b>Biodiversity</b>	A general term use to describe the variety of life in all its forms, levels and combinations. This includes genetic diversity within species, the diversity of species within an ecosystem and the diversity of ecosystems within the landscapes.
<b>Building Envelope</b>	The land area round a school and /or community building that is set aside for school and community use. The land area is often paved with asphalt.
<b>Community Action On Greening</b>	A community based initiative aimed at engaging individual action towards the greening of schoolyards and neighbourhood parkland. This community based initiative recognizes and supports a diversity of approaches for making landscaping improvements, protecting habitats and respecting nature in our landscapes, on our communities and in our lives.
<b>Community Gardens</b>	A garden planned and maintained by community groups for the provision of flowers, herb, vegetables and or other similar products.
<b>Diversity</b>	The variety of species, vegetation communities, habitats or landform in a given area.
<b>Ecology</b>	The study of relationships between living things, with each other and with their environments.
<b>Ecosystem</b>	A community of organisms and their physical environment.
<b>Education</b>	The knowledge and development arising from training.
<b>Enhancements</b>	Any project or activity that will add value, interest or other benefits to a site or landscape. Often these site improvements are directed to improving and creating green spaces in the urban environment.
<b>Environmental Reserve</b>	An open space area, established in accordance with the Municipal Government Act, which is usually not physically suitable for development. These areas are left in their natural state and include swamps, ravines, flood areas, shore setback to a body of water.
<b>Environmentally Sensitive Natural Areas</b>	Undisturbed or relatively undisturbed sites, which because of their natural features have value to society and ecosystems worth protecting, but are susceptible to further disturbance.



**COMMUNITY ACTION ON GREENING...**

<b>Environmentally Significant Natural Areas</b>	Any land and/ or water area that has existing unique, supporting and /or significant characteristics of an environmentally sensitive natural area. Significance will be determined by a combination of factors, including: quality of biotic community, uniqueness, viability, ecological function and distinctive and/or unusual landform. Natural sites that have a potential to remain sustainable with the urban environment and are significant from an environmental perspective to the community of Edmonton because of their size or features on the site.
<b>Forested Area</b>	Healthy or relatively undisturbed stands, these areas have overstories made up of aspen balsam poplar, spruce or birch; relatively undisturbed understories characterize these areas.
<b>Greening</b>	A term used to describe a wide and diverse range of projects and activities relating to the natural world. This includes the projects directed towards: plantings of native species, planting of ornamental plants, providing habitat for a diversity of species, activities related to environmental education, and or other activities contributing to building and sustaining a healthier environment.
<b>Habitat</b>	A place where an organism lives. Suitable habitat provides all requirements of a species for one year round season.
<b>Invasive</b>	A plant that has moved into a habitat and reproduces so aggressively that it has displaced the original structure of the vegetation community.
<b>Landscapes</b>	A term used to describe various types of ecological areas and the associated plant communities found in the urban setting. This includes the terms woodlands, wetlands, grasslands and also refers to the visual landforms found in the cityscape.
<b>Learning Through Landscapes</b>	A national program in the United Kingdom for transforming school grounds as outdoor learning centers. Specialized curriculum has also been developed linking project activities with classroom studies.
<b>Maintenance</b>	The keeping of parks, buildings, equipment and supplies in accordance with standards for effective operation.
<b>Native Prairie</b>	An area of unbroken grassland or parkland dominated by non-introduced species.
<b>Natural</b>	Ecological processes that are relatively unchanged by humans.
<b>Natural Area</b>	An area that is in a largely undisturbed condition, characterized by plant and animal species native to the area. This includes the term “open green space” within the city, predominately covered with indigenous vegetation such as prairie grassland or riverine forest, and lacking substantial modification by man.
<b>Naturalization</b>	Naturalization is an alternative landscape management technique to conventional high maintenance landscapes. Landscape restoration is a natural processes were growth and change are less restricted and the landscape is allowed to become native.



	<p><i>Active</i> naturalization involves the use of native cultivars and natural plant setting in most of landscape functions to add interest, colour and attract wildlife.</p> <p><i>Passive</i> naturalization is viable where native vegetation exists nearby and native plants are allowed to spread into unmown areas through either seed dispersion or sucker growth.</p>
<b>Maintenance Envelope</b>	Land area designated for upkeep, and landscape management for public use as defined by the Joint Use Agreement.
<b>Parkland</b>	A specific use of open space which is managed to provide opportunities for recreation, education, cultural or aesthetic uses. In the city there are three types of parks city wide, district and neighbourhood level park. All three levels of parkland can be provide some site opportunities for greening initiatives.
<b>Park Reserve</b>	An open space area, publicly owned, intended for use as a park
<b>Partners In Parks</b>	An Edmonton Community Services program involving community partnerships in beautification projects.
<b>Preservation</b>	Efforts to maintain the natural environment in its present condition or to save an area from damage and destruction.
<b>Reclamation</b>	The process of reconverting disturbed land to its former or other productive use.
<b>Restoration</b>	The process of restoring site conditions to near its natural and native conditions, or other productive use.
<b>School Building Envelope</b>	A general term used to describe the use of school reserve/ municipal reserve lands for school and park use purposes.
<b>School Ground Naturalization</b>	This is a national educational program designed to give communities, teachers and their students the tools to transform their school grounds into natural outdoor classrooms sponsored by the Evergreen Foundation.
<b>Sustainable Green Projects</b>	In this context, project sustainability requires a shift to supporting only those greening projects which have development practices that are consistent with ecological and environmental values, involve low maintenance or have long term maintenance contracts in place, involves the long term community leadership, and the long term support and commitments are well understood by all of the participants.
<b>Wetlands</b>	An area that is inundated or saturated by surface or ground water at a frequency and saturation sufficient to support, and that under normal circumstances do support, a prevalence of vegetation typically adapted for life in saturated soil conditions. Wetlands generally include swamps, marches, bogs and similar areas.
<b>Woodlands</b>	A relatively dense vegetation community consisting of mixed deciduous/ coniferous tree strata, a deciduous shrub strata and groundcovers.



## Source Documents For This Report:

<b>Environmental Education Resources:</b>	<b>Green Teacher, Toronto, Ontario The Canadian Network for Environmental Education Go For Green, Active Living, Government of Canada</b>
<b>Programs:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>A Guide To School Ground Naturalization</b>, The Evergreen Foundation</li> <li>• <b>Learning Through Landscapes</b>, Winchester, Hampshire, UK</li> <li>• <b>Neighbourhood Park Development Program 1997-2006</b>, Edmonton Community Services</li> <li>• <b>NatureScaping Kit</b>, British Columbia</li> <li>• <b>Roadways and Parks Naturalization Master Plan</b>, Community Services</li> <li>• <b>Groundworks</b>, a regional conference series, The Evergreen Foundation</li> <li>• <b>Roots and Shoots</b>, The Jane Goodall Institute, Victoria Station, Quebec</li> <li>• <b>Habitat 2000, Backyard Habitats for Canada's Wildlife</b>, Canadian Wildlife Federation (CFW)</li> </ul>
<b>Agencies/Groups</b>	<b>Federation Of Ontario Naturalists World Wild Fund For Nature- WWF-UK Alberta Naturalization Network Society, Sherwood Park, Alberta National Audubon Society The Institute For Environmental Values Education, Victoria, B.C.</b>
<b>Resource Materials:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Restoring Canada's Native Prairies, A Practical Manual</b>, By John P Morgan, D. Collicutt, J Thompson</li> <li>• <b>Conservation of Natural Sites in Edmonton's Table Lands</b>, Edmonton Planning and Development Department</li> <li>• <b>Natural Area Management Plan</b>, Calgary Parks and Recreation</li> <li>• <b>A Guide To Using Native Plants on Disturbed Lands</b>, Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development</li> <li>• <b>Evergreen Foundation's Ecology Resource Network</b></li> </ul>



### Terms of Reference

#### The Feasibility And Appropriateness Of Adopting A More Naturalized Approach To The Management of Neighbourhood and District Level School and Park Sites.

**Introduction:** The introduction of parkland naturalization has helped to reducing maintenance costs in parks and open spaces. Concurrently, the public's interest in environmental issues has spurred the momentum in defining environmentally sensitive and significant natural areas within the City. Public input is now required to confirm the feasibility and support for extending the naturalized approach to neighbourhood and district level school and park sites.

**Current Context:** Edmonton Parks and Recreation, Edmonton Public Schools and Edmonton Catholic Schools work as partners to design and build and maintain school and park sites. The Joint Use Agreement clarifies how the joint use partners will work together. The members of the Joint Use Site Planning and Design Committee have agreed to set up a Working Group to scope out the community interest and support for extending the naturalization concept.

**Scope of Work** The Working Group will have a joint use approach, involving staff and community partners with responsibilities which relate to school and parkland use and development. The working group will review the issues surrounding the extension of naturalization concept to school grounds and neighbourhood and district level park sites.

**Areas of Examination** The Work Group will confirm community interest, preferences and priorities for a naturalized neighbourhood and district level school and park sites. The Working Group will also:

- prepare an inventory and assessment of naturalization projects underway;
- confirm the impacts and opportunities for using a naturalized approach;
- identify suitable project themes, site locations and designs;
- define a project development process for implementation;
- and recommend naturalization project guidelines or standards.



**Likely Outcomes:** The results of the study will be conclusions and recommendations on the benefits and appropriateness of using the naturalization concept at the neighbourhood and district school and park sites. Analysis of results will provide the Joint Use Site Planning Committee the basis for making a recommendation to modify the Joint Use Agreement.

**Timelines:** Proposal for six working meetings, to run from November 1996 to February 1997.

**Chairperson:** Bea Fricson, Strategic Planner, Parks Development Branch  
Edmonton Community Services

