

2021

CITY OF VICTORIA | Parks, Recreation and Facilities

UNITED NATIONS DECADE ON  
**ECOSYSTEM  
RESTORATION**  
2021-2030

# Natural Areas Restoration Program

Update and Next Steps



*W̱SÁNEĆ/Coast Salish emerging artist Sarah Jim*



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## Purpose

To provide Council an overview of the restoration program, including work done to date, and the plan for 2021 to 2024.



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## Importance of Natural Areas

- Natural areas cover roughly 225 acres, or 40% of the City's total park area, and contain culturally and environmentally sensitive ecosystems
- Contribute to the biodiversity of southern Vancouver Island; many areas are of regional significance or contain federally protected species at risk
- Protecting and highlighting natural areas and environmental stewardship highly valued by residents who want to see improvement of existing spaces
- Restoration of these areas helps achieve multiple objectives in the OCP and Parks and Open Spaces Master Plan



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## Background: Impact of Sheltering During Pandemic on Parks

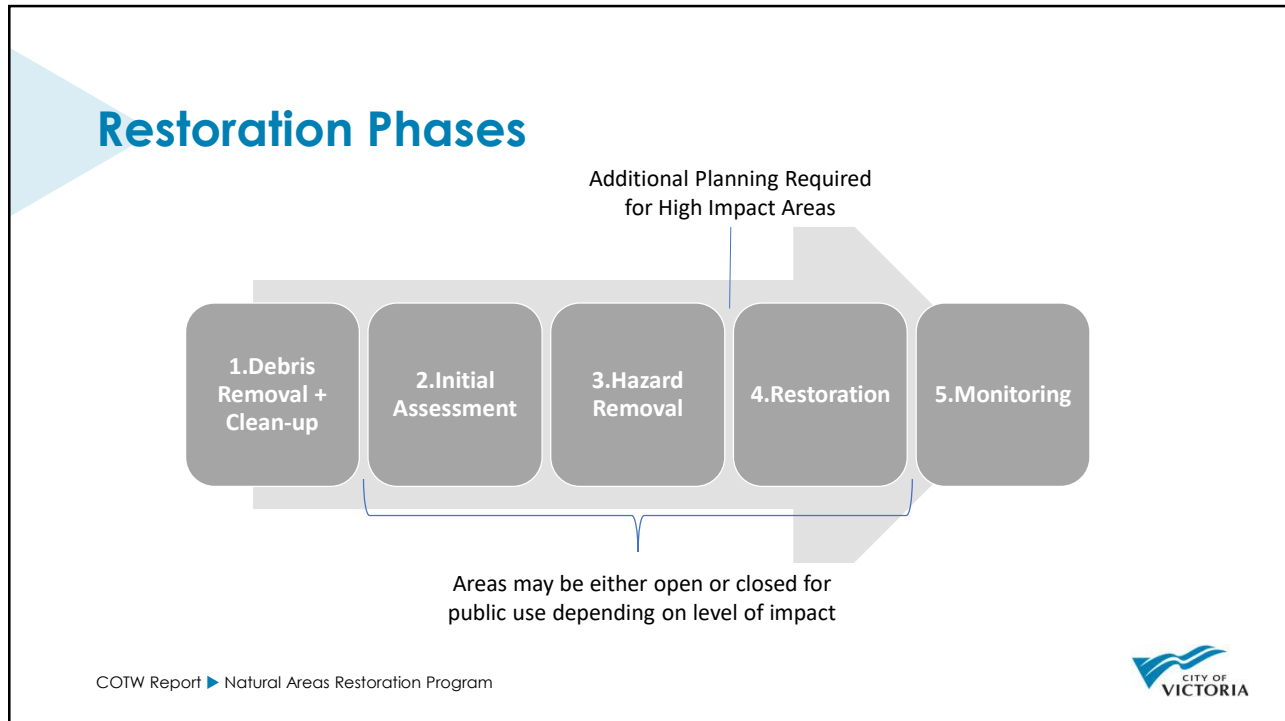
- Temporary shelters remaining in place 24 hours a day resulted in substantial impacts to parks
- Impacts occurred in both manicured and natural areas; 144 sites with visible impacts across 10 parks identified
- Work to date has focused on clean-up, assessment and hazard removal of all sites in manicured spaces and restoration will be complete by the end of 2021
- Impact assessments of natural areas in Beacon Hill Park and Stadacona Park have not yet been completed
- Restoration of sensitive areas is complex and will require a multi-year process



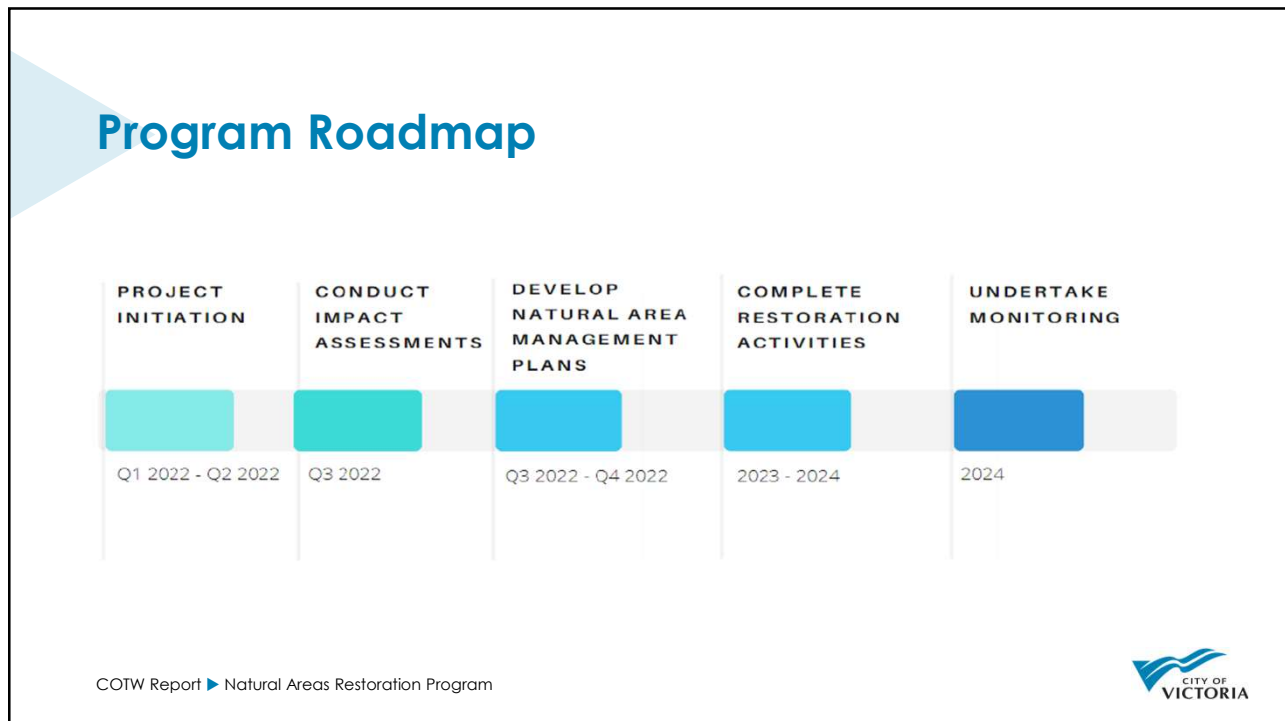
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## Engagement

- The Lekwungen are long-time stewards of these natural landscapes and have valuable perspectives
- Esquimalt and Songhees Nations will be engaged to help shape the program, and on an ongoing basis
- Key stakeholders will be consulted and the public informed
- Implementation of Natural Areas Management Plans will involve opportunities for volunteer participation



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## Resourcing

- Additional investments are required to complete the planning, engagement and field work required to restore natural areas, and will be outlined in the Draft 2022 Financial Plan
  - Temporary staff, consulting support for plan development and specialized equipment and materials (\$535,000)
- Operating impacts are unknown at this time but will be accounted for in future financial plans based on deliverables completed in 2022

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## Conclusion

- Restoring natural areas provides an opportunity to achieve multiple objectives, including:
  - Increasing knowledge of the City's natural areas
  - Strengthening practices to better protect environmentally and culturally sensitive areas, species at risk, and other important ecosystems
  - Advancing the City's commitment to reconciliation with First Nations
  - Promoting community stewardship through volunteer activities

## Recommendation

That Council receive this report for information on the restoration of natural areas in Beacon Hill Park, Cecelia Ravine Park, Topaz Park and Stadacona Park.

