



## Fernwood NRG Neighbourhood Native Flower Meadow Proposal

### Who we are

The Fernwood Neighbourhood Resource Group Society (**Fernwood NRG**) is a non-profit, charitable organization in Victoria BC (incorporated in 1979). The purposes of the Society are:

- a) to provide, administer, and maintain a multi-use facility for the community of Fernwood;
- b) to provide childcare, parenting classes, programs for senior citizens, and community gardens for the benefit of the community of Fernwood;
- c) to provide and operate non-profit residential accommodation and incidental facilities for adult persons of low income; and
- d) to undertake activities ancillary and incidental to the attainment of the above purposes.

### What we do

Fernwood NRG has significant experience planning and executing large scale projects, including:

- the creation and maintenance of the Fernwood orchard (since 2013),
- ongoing operation of the Fernwood Community Centre (since 1979),
- hosting the annual FernFest weekend attended by thousands of people (since 1995),
- the installation of a portable building sited behind 1240 Gladstone Avenue (2001) and developing an Infant & Toddler child care program (2004),
- the purchase and restoration of the Cornerstone Building (1301-13 Gladstone Avenue) (2005) including the creation and ongoing management of four 3-bedroom affordable housing units,
- establishing, producing and distributing 4,000 copies of the *Village Vibe* to neighbourhood residents (monthly 2005 to 2010, bi-monthly 2010 and onward),
- the purchase and construction of Park Place (1222 Yukon Street) and ongoing operation of six 3-bedroom affordable housing units (2008),
- managing and operating the Good Food Box (delivering 300+ boxes of produce bi-weekly across the Capital Region) (2012).

## Site description

Fernwood NRG identified the westward sloping land to the east of the Fernwood Community Centre as the site of the Native Flower Meadow. This site does not overlap with any municipal underground infrastructure (see site map below)



**Figure 1** Fernwood NRG meadow site and surrounding infrastructure. Base map source: Vicmap Underground Infrastructure (city owned) <https://maps.victoria.ca/Html5Viewer/index.html?viewer=VicMap>

The site is currently a grassy slope populated with aggressive invasive plant species (see table 1). The site is very rarely utilized. For three 20-minute observation periods at 9am, 1pm, and 5pm on June 23<sup>rd</sup> only two people were recorded using the space. In both cases the individuals used the space as a footpath and did not directly interact with the site in any other way. Over the course of the three years that I have worked as a Food Security Programmer for Fernwood NRG I have interacted with the space frequently and can confirm that this space is rarely used.

**Table 1** Vegetation survey of Fernwood Meadow site

Common name	Scientific name
Barren Brome	<i>Bromus sterilis</i> L.
Common chickweed	<i>Stellaria media</i> L.
Dove's foot geranium	<i>Geranium molle</i> L.
English plantain	<i>Plantago lanceolata</i> L.
fennel	<i>Foeniculum vulgare</i> Mill.
Gorse	<i>Ulex europaeus</i> L.
Hairy cat's ear	<i>Hypochaeris radicata</i> L.
Orchard grass	<i>Dactylis glomerata</i> L.
Prickly lettuce	<i>Lactuca serriola</i> L.
Unknown Elm	<i>Ulmaceae</i>
Unknown mustard	Brassicaceae
Unknown Rye	<i>Poaceae</i>

The area is well drained and sandy which is consistent with the needs of prairie oak species. The area experiences some shade over the course of the day; however, an 8-hour light profile of the site revealed that there is enough light to support the prairie oak species selected for the site.



**Figure 2** Fernwood NRG restoration site as seen from Gladstone Ave. Site includes the grassy area behind the staircase to the right of the paved path. Source: Google Street View, accessed July 10, 2022.

## **Project description**

The creation of the meadow would involve the conversion of this 200m<sup>2</sup> area into a camas meadow ecosystem. This area would function as a commons, open for the community to access. The site will be maintained and managed by the Food Security Coordinator at Fernwood NRG; a full-time staff member responsible for the care of all the Fernwood NRG gardens. Because the plants are native, they are adapted to the climate of Victoria and will not require irrigation or intensive maintenance. There are also no large plants that would need to be removed from the site prior to the planting of the meadow.

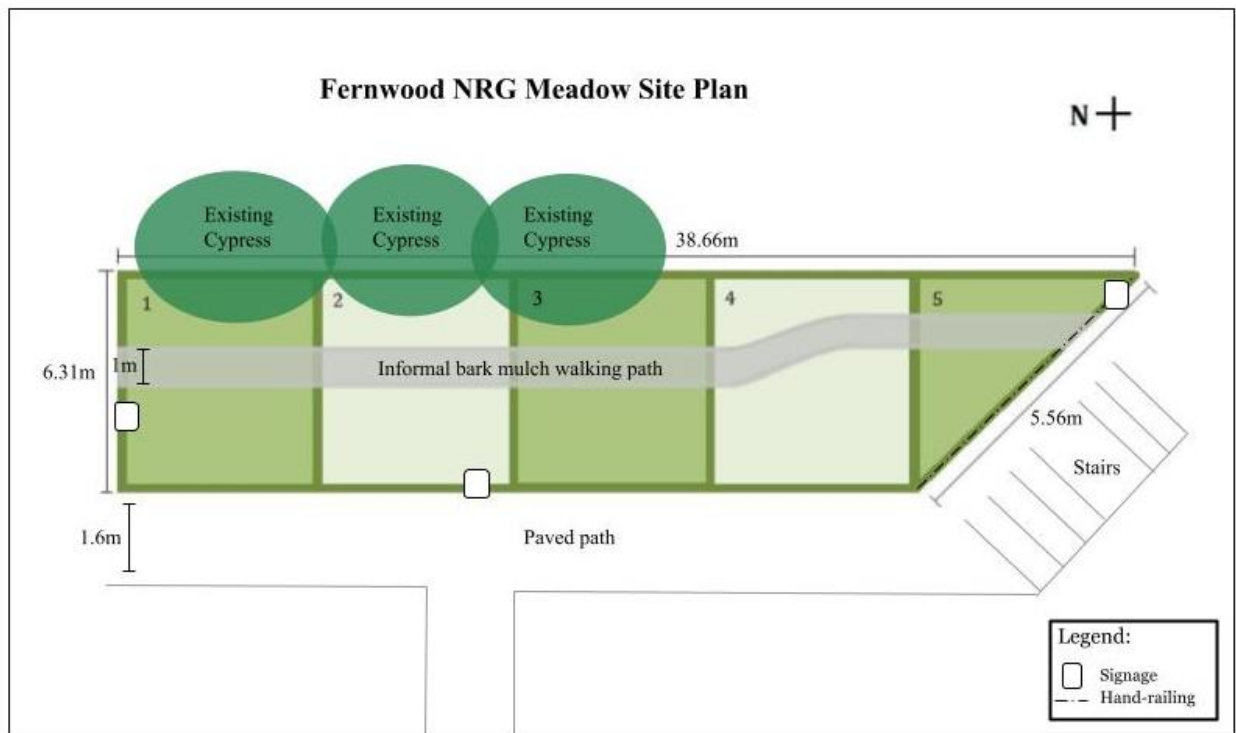
The site is composed of 5 sections (shown on site plan) each of which will be prepared with a different soil building technique. This experiment will provide valuable information for future urban prairie oak restoration projects. The sections will not be visibly divided but will appear as one continuous meadow so the experiment will not disrupt the aesthetic value of the space. The meadow will be planted with seed and bulbs from 21 prairie oak species selected in consultation with Satin Flower nurseries (see plant and seed species lists below). All the plants selected are short, under 1 m tall at their maximum height, which meets the sightline requirements laid out in the City of Victoria's boulevard gardening guidelines. There will not be any shrubs or trees included on the site. The plant will be spread throughout the meadow to create a diverse and complex prairie oak meadow. The pre-existing foot path on the hill will be left intact as it would re-emerge even if the area were planted. There will be educational signs posted at the three main entrances to the meadow (See site plan below). The signs will be no larger than 45cm by 30cm.

## **Species for seed mix:**

- *Allium cernuum* (nodding onion)
- *Trileleia hyacinthine* (fools onion)
- *Plectritis congesta* (seablush)
- *Collinsia parviflora* (small flowered blue eyed mary)
- *Clarkia amoena* (farewell to spring)
- *Cerastium arvense* (field chickweed)
- *Antennaria howellii* (howell's pussytoes)
- *Ranunculus occidentalis* (western buttercup)
- *Delphinium menziesii* (Menzie's larkspur)

**Table 2** Species list for meadow

Plant name	scientific name	Number
Common camas	<i>Camassia quamash</i>	30
Fawn lily	<i>Erythronium oregonum</i>	20
Chocolate lily	<i>Fritillaria affinis</i>	40
Wild strawberry	<i>Fragaria virginiana</i>	35
Woodland strawberry	<i>Fragaria vesca</i>	35
Roemer's fescue	<i>Festuca roemerii</i>	50
June grass	<i>Koeleria macrantha</i>	50
Satinflower	<i>Olsynium douglasii</i>	40
Broad leaved shooting star	<i>Primula hendersonii</i>	40



### **Neighbourhood Benefit**

One of Fernwood NRG's purposes is to maintain community gardens for neighbourhood benefit. In particular, the project will provide an educational space for people to learn about the endangered camas meadow ecosystem and demonstrate what is possible in terms of ecological restoration in the city. The features of this site will make it particularly valuable for community building. Firstly, the site is raised and bordered by a paved pathway and ramp that would make this one of few, and even the only, physically accessible native plant meadow in the City of Victoria. Secondly, the site is located directly beside the childcare facility and the planting of the meadow will be paired with educational programming to help encourage the children to develop a connection to place and to their local ecosystems. Finally, this garden is intended to add to networks of Songhees and Esquimalt food sovereignty by creating a safe harvesting place for traditional foods like camas, chocolate lily, nodding onion etc. The area will also act as a hub for native pollinator populations.

### **Project Partners**

The primary partner for this garden is Fernwood NRG, a "non-profit organization run by and for the residents of Fernwood" that offers childcare and family programs, facilities for events, and food security resources to members of the Fernwood community. This project has also received funding and support from Satin Flower Nurseries, one of Victoria's most established native plant nurseries and native plant gardening/restoration institutions. Plans for the meadow are also being developed in consultation with Dr. Deondre Smiles and Dr. Nancy Shackelford at the University of Victoria.

### **Implementation Plan**

Fernwood NRG will prepare the site by doing a sheet mulch over the pre-existing vegetation following City approval. After the area has been mulched, we will plant the bulbs and plugs and then seed the entire area. This will occur within the two days following the site prep. Some of the branches overhanging the site will be pruned by the Fernwood NRG Food Security Coordinator. The owner of the property has already been notified and has offered no objections. Plants with a tolerance to acidic soil will be planted under the overhanging branches of the cypress trees.

We have already identified approximately 15 volunteers who will attend on planting day. Our Food Security Coordinator will instruct the volunteers on the proper technique for planting and seeding. We will work with the City of Victoria to install appropriate signage and fencing. No additional maintenance should be required for the first year after planting; however, the site will continue to be monitored and if issues arise, they will be addressed in consultation with outside experts or City staff.

### Maintenance Plan

The accumulation of dead plant material would pose a fire risk and would also be detrimental to the health of the meadow ecosystem. As such, maintenance for the site will involve removal of dead plant material after flowering, seed collection, and pollinator nesting have occurred. The fire risk has been further addressed through plant selection. Although there are several species that die back in the summer months the plant assemblage includes plants that bloom from early spring until late fall. This will ensure that there is green vegetation cover for the meadow year-round. The plant material removed will be composted along with the waste from the other gardens managed by Fernwood NRG. This will be done by the Fernwood NRG Food Security Coordinator with a team of volunteers. Site maintenance will provide a valuable learning opportunity for the volunteers. The Food Security Coordinator will continue to monitor the site weekly and address any issues that may arise. Seeds collected from the meadow plants could be used to re-seed areas that are under populated or could be distributed to other restoration projects taking place in the city. Because we will be planting mature bulbs and plugs there will be flowers in the first spring following planting. The meadow will self seed through natural mechanisms, and it is likely that the density of flowers will continue to increase in the years following planting.

### Budget and Materials List

Item	Cost	Type	Source of Funds
Silage tarp	260	Weed Suppression	FNRG garden budget
Greenhouse plastic	100	Weed Suppression	FNRG garden budget
Weights	0	Weed Suppression	
Handrail	0	Infrastructure	City of Victoria
4 yards	0	Weed Suppression/ Infrastructure	City of Victoria
Woodchips			
10 yards Soil	800	Soil building	FNRG garden budget
Ash	0	Soil building	
Seaweed	0	Soil building	
Salvaged seed	0	Plants	
Seed	700	Plants	Satin Flower grant and FNRG garden budget
Bulbs	1900	Plants	FNRG garden budget
Salvaged blubs	0	Plants	
Signage	500.00	Signage	City of Victoria
Total	4,260		

## **Safety**

The Fernwood NRG will ensure sightlines along path for pedestrians and cyclists be maintained for safety at all times. Moreover, the Fernwood NRG will ensure the design will be maintained within the approved surface area as outlined, to avoid any debris spilling over into the paved pedestrian walkway.

The paved path at the base of the meadow will allow easy and safe access to the meadow that accommodates the use of mobility aids. Leveling and mulching the informal walkway through the meadow will increase the safety of the pathway and discourage the general-public from walking across and crushing sensitive seedlings. It is likely that if the pathway were to be removed or planted over it would quickly be re-established. Incorporating the informal walkway into the formal plan will allow us to maintain the trail and ensure the highest degree of safety possible. The woodchip pathway traversing through the centre of the garden will need an exit point at the connection to Gladstone Avenue. City staff have confirmed they will review and consider changing the fencing panel at the south end to allow an easy throughway at the south end of woodchip pathway, (as the current state requires pedestrians to step over the cement ledge of the stairwell and poses a potential tripping hazard).

Fence that belongs to City at north end of proposed site at top of slope is aging and deteriorating. The City has confirmed that this fencing will need to be replaced eventually and will be determined by the City at the appropriate time.

If watering is required at any point the hose running from the childcare building will be marked with pylons to highlight the tripping hazard; however, little to no watering should be required. During planting, weeding, and seeding the Fernwood NRG Food Security Coordinator will be leading the event and will give a brief overview of safety guidelines for the activity in question. Signage at the site will advise the public against harvesting unfamiliar plants. There is secure storage space at the Fernwood Community Centre for the storage of tools. Fernwood NRG's proof of General Liability Insurance will be sent once it has been renewed.

## **Neighbourhood Consultation**

Fernwood NRG contacted neighbouring residents to ensure they were supportive of the project. The Fernwood NRG also published an article on our website introducing the meadow project to the neighbourhood and inviting feedback from the community. Signage explaining the project was also posted in the future meadow site with the email address of the Food Security Coordinator for any questions or comments regarding the project in July. The Fernwood NRG Food Security Coordinator presented the plan for the Fernwood NRG meadow to the MeadowMakers program.





MeadowMakers is a course run by Satinflower Nurseries, Pollinator Partnership Canada, and City of Victoria that focusses on meadow habitat restoration in September. A feedback form was also posted in the meadow for the first week of October as well as an online form available through Fernwood NRG's social media. A neighbourhood consultation was hosted on the 20<sup>th</sup> of October to provide the opportunity for community members to find out more about the project and provide their feedback (See attached notes from the Fernwood Neighbourhood Meadow Consultation). The neighbourhood consultation was attended by 20 people and all attendees were supportive of the project.

## Consultation Strategies and Results

- Published article – 75 views of article on our webpage
- Social media posts – 13 likes, 7 reshares, 150 views
- Presentation to Meadow Makers Program – over 100 members
- Feedback form results – 17 participants

Total: 342 people engaged through consultation process. 17 directly engaged through feedback.

## Fernwood Neighbourhood Meadow Consultation

---

### Are you a resident of Fernwood

*Paper form in meadow*

- Yes (1)
- No (0)

*Personal responses*

- Yes (13)
- No (3)

### Based on the proposal showcased, do you approve of the project?

*Paper form in meadow*

- Yes (1)
- No (0)

*Personal responses*

- Yes (16)
- No (0)

### How do you use the site?

*Paper form in meadow*

- I don't

*Personal responses*

- I walked around this area daily
- I don't use it but will visit it if I'm in the area
- In transit to Fernwood community events
- I enjoy and walk it
- Recreational use
- Usually just walking through with my doggo
- Chilling with friends, looking at birds, enjoying life
- It's an effective connection
- I have benefitted from the gardens!
- Walking through
- Walking, skating, biking
- Just as a natural soace
- Just walking/enjoying
- Don't really use it

## What would you like to see in the meadow?

### *Paper form in meadow*

- Cornflowers

### *Personal responses*

- Native flowers
- Flowers
- Camas, native plants
- Native plant species
- I would like to see native plants
- Native plants, especially camas
- Wildflowers and native grasses
- Surprise me
- Camas, chocolate lily, shooting star, and other Garry oak meadow flowers
- Camas, native plants, pollinators, tea for harvesting (calendula, sage, etc) goji berries
- Benches and flowers
- Camas Garry oak birds
- Would to see the native plant choices made by any folks indigenous to Lekwungen land
- Native plants, bees, community volunteer/education opportunities
- Kwetlal/Camas

## What challenges do you anticipate for the project?

### *Paper form in meadow*

- Birds

### *Personal responses*

- It will likely involve a lot of restoration, maintenance to keep invasive species at bay and ensuring there is adequate information for the community so that this space is respected
- Vandalism and people walking off path during growth stage and DEER. (Fencing required 100%)
- Ensuring the proper care is arranged for the site and maintenance of the new space
- Keeping the area clean due to the homeless camps in the area
- I'm unsure, I don't have a lot of experience with gardening
- None, I think it looks great
- Weather, funding, time
- Trampling and deer
- Funding?

## Would you like to be involved with the Meadow? How would you like to get involved?

### *Paper form in meadow*

- Planting

### *Personal Responses*

- I'll be happy to look at it as I walk by
- Sure if I have time. I have limited gardening experience and mostly grow hardier crops
- No thank you, but thank you for putting together
- I would be involved in planting
- I would love to be apart of the project. Replanting/ invasive removal
- No
- I'm not sure
- Planting! Laying dirt
- I would love to volunteer with the work
- Yea. Landscaping or manual labour
- Perhaps. Harvesting and planting and weeding
- Yes! Planting/prepping
- I would be keep to volunteer for ongoing monitoring and upkeep