

Partners in Parks program guide

Program established in 1996



The Partners in Parks program provides an opportunity for the community to make a difference through park enhancement activities in Waterloo.

This program guide will help you get started.

How to reach us

CONTACT INFORMATION

City of Waterloo
Parks, Forestry and Cemetery Services
Waterloo Service Centre
PO Box 337 Station Waterloo
265 Lexington Court, Waterloo ON N2J 4A8

stewardship@waterloo.ca

519-886-2310

TTY 1-866-786-3941

waterloo.ca/stewardship

EMERGENCY AFTER-HOURS

If a serious accident or incident takes place during your volunteer activities immediately call 911. Follow the instructions on safety and reporting.

If you require city staff assistance after hours for securing or cleaning up a site due to vandalism or other, call 519-886-2310 (after 3 p.m. Monday to Friday or on weekends and holidays). During office hours, contact your city staff liaison.

Community action process

From May to October, interested groups can coordinate a one-time community stewardship activity or a long-term park project in Waterloo. Follow the steps below to implement a park enhancement project in your neighbourhood park.

1. Select a community project

One-time community stewardship activities in a city park

Get involved in your neighbourhood park by organizing a two-hour community stewardship activity with your group between May to October. The city provides all supplies and hand tools. City staff provide an orientation, tool safety talk and monitor each activity, with the exception of community litter cleanup, where the group leader receives an orientation and assumes this responsibility. View activity information sheets in the Appendix for more details.

One-time community stewardship activities take place in city parks and include:

- birdhouse maintenance along the Walter Bean Trail at RIM Park
- community litter clean-up
- manage an invasive plant species, known as Common Buckthorn, in natural areas
- mulch woodland trails
- other approved stewardship activities that enhance the environment

If you're over 18 and interested in organizing an activity for your group, complete the online application form a minimum of **one month** in advance.



The City of Waterloo is recognized as a Bee City due to our efforts to support native pollinators and their habitat. Each fall, our Pollinator Working Group and Friends of Waterloo Park host small [community planting events](#) that you can participate in. Dig in and plant native trees, shrubs and wildflowers to enhance habitat for pollinators and other wildlife.



Long-term park projects

Long-term opportunities for park enhancement involve ongoing maintenance throughout spring to fall for a five-year renewable term.

A **Park Project Community Lead** volunteer plans, implements and maintains a long-term park project which involves scheduling community workdays with group participants.

Park projects may include:

- Plant and maintain a native pollinator garden or ornamental garden.
- Manage an invasive plant species within a natural area in a park (specific species).
- Adopt a park (regular litter cleanup, maintain existing garden beds or other activities).
- Other approved park enhancement projects.

An **Individual Park Project Volunteer** plans, implements and maintains a park project that does *not* involve group participants.

Park projects may include:

- Purchase and maintain a Little Library or community message board.
- Plant and maintain a living fence buffer at rear of your property up to 2m into the park.
- Plant and maintain large trees in neighbourhood parks.
- Other approved park enhancement projects.

For unique ideas, contact us to discuss your idea prior to completing the online application form. View project information sheets and planting and maintenance resources in the Appendix.

Application timelines include:

- March 31 for a spring or summer project (May 1 – August 31)
- May 31 for a fall project (September 1 – October 31)



2. Park project review

The City of Waterloo Parks, Forestry and Cemetery Services are responsible for the maintenance of the park. A team of city staff review all long-term park project proposals in terms of scope, feasibility, appropriateness and environmental and community benefit. A site visit with volunteers coordinating the project is required to confirm details and location.

Gain neighbourhood support and secure materials

We encourage community involvement and input to ensure the neighbourhood is in full support of your park project idea. After city staff have provided initial feedback, share project details with neighbours surrounding the park and complete the provided community support list.

Below are details of City staff support and resources for long-term park projects. Vegetation, amendments and materials for your project can be secured through grant funding or donations.

City staff support and resources for long-term park projects

Community message boards and Little Libraries:

- Obtain utility locate clearance, assemble and install the structure in the park.
- Order and receive community message boards from the supplier.

Community planting of large trees in parks:

- Order and deliver trees and supplies, obtain utility locate clearance.
- Day of event staff, equipment, community planting trailer with tools and event supplies.

Garden beds:

- Obtain utility locate clearance and prepare bed (remove sod, loosen soil, deliver mulch).
- Install a small educational pollinator garden sign for projects involving native wildflowers.

Invasive plant species management:

- Day of event (initial only) orientation, provide hand tools, removal of harvested plants.

Living fence / vegetated buffers:

- Install city demarcation posts at the park property boundary, as required.

3. Volunteer registration and orientation

One-time community stewardship activities require the group leader to complete the online application form to initiate your group activity. Registration as a City of Waterloo volunteer is not required for these one-time events.

Long-term park projects require the volunteers coordinating the project to review the **volunteer position description** (Appendix B) and complete the volunteer registration process outlined below. Your signature on a Partners in Parks agreement confirms your commitment to adhere to the terms and conditions outlined in the program guide and volunteer position description.

Volunteer registration process

For long-term park projects, volunteers coordinating a project complete an online volunteer application form. If group participants are involved in their project, two references are required.

Volunteers must be registered, screened and officially accepted as a City of Waterloo volunteer and receive a mandatory orientation session, prior to performance of the task. While on duty, the City of Waterloo volunteer must wear a city-issued lanyard with ID tag.

Orientation

A mandatory orientation session is provided to long-term park project volunteers during a site visit in the park prior to implementing your project. We review safe work procedures that focus on roles and responsibilities, participant safety and reporting.

Group leaders organizing and leading a community litter cleanup activity in a park will receive an orientation information sheet with safety guidelines to ensure a safe and successful cleanup.



Garlic mustard pull community workday - orientation provided to group participants



4. Implementing your park project

Ensure you follow the guidelines outlined below relating to group participants (if applicable), safety, reporting and municipal by-laws and standards.

Group participants

- Activities are most appropriate for participants ages 14 years and up, who are able to undertake moderate physical exertion such as bending, walking on uneven terrain, digging, pushing and/or lifting up to 20 lbs (depending on activity type).
- Parent or guardian must supervise participants under 18 with suitable age-appropriate tasks.
- Adults must sign an informed consent agreement prior to participating once per year.

Safety

Safety is of primary importance. All participants must understand the required personal protective equipment (PPE) and proper use of acceptable tools (Appendix C) and have an awareness of the potential elements of risk for this activity or project as indicated by the group leader, Park Project Community Lead volunteers or city staff in attendance.

We recommend the Park Project Community Lead volunteers and group leaders have access to a first aid kit and cell phone during workdays or community litter cleanup activities.

Elements of risk may include but not limited to:

- **Inclement weather conditions** - Suspend activities during severe weather conditions (thunderstorms, heavy rain, high wind, extreme heat/humidity).
- **Potential water-associated risks** – Stay clear of waterways (creeks, ponds, lakes).
- **Potential risks in natural areas** include but are not limited to, slippery conditions, exposure to stinging insects or plants (e.g. Giant hogweed, poison ivy, stinging nettle), branch or tree failure, uneven ground or other natural area conditions.
- **Sharps** are defined as needles, syringes, blades, lancets, broken glass, clinical glass and any other items that could cause a cut, puncture, or abrasion. **Participants are not to pick up any sharps** in addition to wood, metal or items that are heavy, bulky, difficult to grasp or unstable.

If you find a **needle** in a park, trail or other public space, follow instructions on our [safe needle disposal webpage](#).

Reporting

Within 24 hours after your activity, the group leader (for community litter cleanups) and Park Project Community Lead volunteers submit completed reporting forms. Forms are provided in your orientation package. Request additional copies by emailing: stewardship@waterloo.ca.

A. Informed consent agreement form – Each adult group participant is required to read and sign a waiver prior to participating in the stewardship activity or park project once per year.

B. Photo consent form – Share a great photo of your group in action by submitting this form and photo (preferably horizontal orientation, jpg format).

C. Accident / Incident report form

For minor injuries taking place during a community stewardship activity or park project, offer basic first aid assistance to participants as needed (e.g. bandages or disinfectant).

For serious injury, assist the participant in seeking emergency medical care by calling 911.

Once the incident is under control, complete and submit our Accident / Incident report form.

- a. Report all accidents and incidents (i.e. injury involving bleeding, pain or any kind of injury to the head, property damage or accidents involving group participants during the activity) by completing the Accident / Incident report and submit to the email above.
- b. If city staff assistance is required for securing or cleaning up the site after hours (after 3 p.m. Monday to Friday or on weekends and holidays), call 519-886-2310.

D. Online community cleanup report – Submit within 24 hours after your community cleanup.

E. Other reporting: Report any incidence of vandalism, damage or graffiti impacting your park project directly to your city staff liaison as soon as possible via phone or email.

5. Modification, renewal and termination

Discuss any changes to your park project with the city staff liaison such as volunteer resignation, alterations to the project or terminating the Partners in Parks agreement. City staff must review and approve any future alterations prior to carrying out the work.

If deemed necessary, the city may modify the scope, alter or discontinue the long-term park project at any time during the agreement. This may involve the city assuming maintenance, downsizing the scale or removing some or all contents of the project if it finds that:

- The terms and conditions of the Partners in Parks agreement are not being met.
- City volunteers and/or group participants are acting contrary to the guidelines of the program and/or policies and standards of the City.
- City volunteers have resigned and there is no community commitment to continue maintaining the project.
- Undesirable effects are resulting from the project such as increased litter, loitering, vandalism, safety hazards, reduction in aesthetic quality or community disharmony.
- The city, at its sole discretion, decides to discontinue the program or the specific project.

6. Municipal by-laws and standards

Partners in Parks volunteers coordinating a long-term park project must adhere to relevant municipal by-laws and standards including but not limited to the following:

- Adhere to the City of Waterloo's Parks by-law (COM 2014-077).
- Park project must meet city park standards throughout the duration of the agreement.
- If using the municipal water system to water vegetation, follow the Region of Waterloo's [water conservation by-law](#).
- Avoid application of pesticides including "Weed 'N' Feed" herbicide on city parkland (refer to the Ontario Ministry of the Environment's [Cosmetic Pesticides Ban](#), 2009).
- Refrain from using power tools or riding equipment in city parks. An exception is the Individual Park Project Volunteer who is required to mow grass, using their own standard push lawnmower, around vegetation planted within their living fence buffer project.
- Minimize impacts to drainage (e.g. swales), public safety and allow for free and clear access for park users and city maintenance crews.
- Park projects involving vegetation, additional features and approved structures become the property of the City of Waterloo and will not be replaced by the city if damaged, vandalized or removed. Where possible, prior notification will be given to the volunteers coordinating the project of proposed removal or alterations.



One-time community stewardship activity - mulching woodland trails

APPENDICES

Partners in Parks program guide

A. Planting resources

- i. Planning your planting project step-by-step
- ii. Maintaining your planting project
- iii. Recommended list of native deciduous trees

B. Volunteer position descriptions

- i. Park Project Community Lead Volunteer
- ii. Individual Park Project Volunteer

C. PPE and acceptable tools

D. Activity information sheets

- i. One-time stewardship activities
- ii. Long-term park projects

Planning your planting project step-by-step

Neighbourhood groups may be interested in planting and maintaining vegetation within a city park. This may include creating a pollinator garden, a living fence buffer or planting and maintaining large trees in neighbourhood parks.

Garden beds and living fence buffers must reflect the aesthetic goals and consistency of the park as well as the gardening and maintenance capabilities of the group.

Follow the steps outlined below to plan your planting project.



1. Determine who owns and maintains the land

Before working on any land, it is important to find out who owns it and to obtain permission. Community stewardship activities and long-term projects take place within city-owned parks. The City of Waterloo's park directory provides a list of park names and addresses.

Newly developed parks require a two-year post-development warranty period whereby the developer is responsible for park maintenance. Project requests within new parks will be placed on hold until after final inspection is completed and the city assumes maintenance of the park.

2. Gain community support and secure materials

Two project coordinator volunteers from separate households submit the online application form to initiate your park project.

After city staff have provided initial feedback, project coordinator volunteers confirm project details and obtain written support from the Neighbourhood Association and neighbours surrounding the park area using the community support list. Any public concerns can be directed to the city staff liaison before project implementation.

Engage community involvement during the initial planning stages to ensure the community supports the project idea, especially those backing directly onto the park. Seek capable, committed group participants to assist with community workdays.

Review the program guide for details on city staff support and resources. Vegetation, amendments and materials for your project can be secured through the City's Neighbourhood Fund or Mini Grants for Neighbours program, or through donations.

3. Determine suitability of the site and create a planting plan

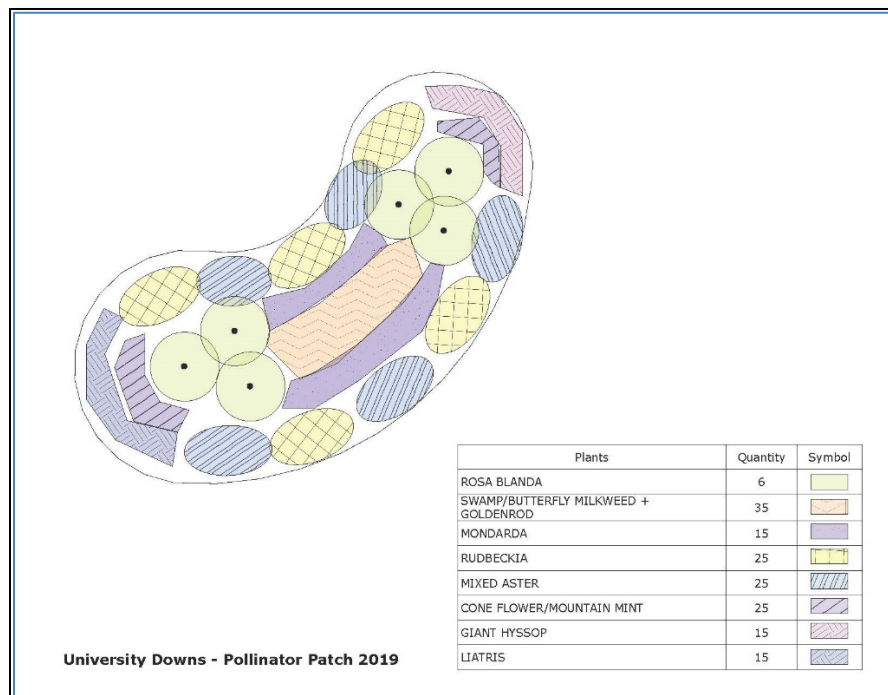
Follow the guidelines below for designing a planting plan by following the City of Waterloo standards and specifications outlined below.

Consider suitability of the site:

- sun exposure, soil moisture, soil drainage, shelter and prevailing winds
- nearby water source (excludes natural water features such as creeks or ponds)
- site visibility and adequate distance from private property for safety, to prevent vandalism and to ensure accessible for all park users
- Recommended distance of planted vegetation from park boundary:
 - Garden beds: minimum of 15 meters.
 - Living fence buffers: within the 2-meter buffer.
 - Large trees for neighbourhood parks: a minimum of 3 meters.

Inventory existing features in the proposed planting area including:

- park boundaries including fences and city demarcation posts
- permanent structures such as buildings, signage, playgrounds, public trails
- light standards, utility boxes and fire hydrants (1.2m clearance required)
- existing vegetation (include width of mature tree canopy)
- seasonal use of the site such as tobogganing, passive sports, community ice rink
- drainage patterns (e.g. swales, poorly drained areas, sloped land, catch basins)



Example of a planting plan for garden bed with list of plant species and quantity.

4. Design layout

When completing the online application form, upload a planting plan or hand-sketch using the guidelines below.

Garden beds

- Select a low-maintenance design and start small such as 2m x 4m in size.
- All vegetation must be planted within a continuous mulched bed to minimize mowing around individual plants.
- Ensure a minimum mowing strip width of 3m around the garden bed and between the garden bed and existing vegetation like trees or shrubs with curves that are easy to negotiate for city machines.

Living fence buffers

- Select a low-maintenance design with a recommended maximum size of 2m wide x length of private property situated at the rear only facing the park, depending on site specific conditions.
- PIP project coordinators mow the grass between the shrubs within the vegetated buffer until the plants are mature and well-established.

Large trees for neighbourhood parks

- Trees can be planted beside trails, playgrounds or seating areas to provide shade.
- Trees can be planted around the park perimeter, which leaves the main area of the park open and clear for future amenities.
- Ensure adequate spacing between trees (7m) and park features (1.5 to 2m from public trails, 3m from playgrounds, 3m from boundary line around park perimeter), depending on site specific conditions.



Vegetation and additional features

Species selection

The City of Waterloo is designated a Bee City due to our efforts to support native pollinators and habitat.

We encourage you to choose native plant species to enhance pollinator habitat in Waterloo.

Refer to [Bee City Canada](#) for program information, resources on designing a pollinator garden and information on native plants and where to buy them.



Species selection guidelines

- pollinator gardens → wildflowers and shrubs, native to southern Ontario
- ornamental gardens → annuals, hardy perennials, clumping grasses and shrubs that are low maintenance, drought tolerant and salt tolerant (avoid invasive species that spread such as periwinkle, goutweed, Japanese Spurge, non-clumping grasses)
- living fence buffers → native shrubs
- large trees for parks → Appendix A3. Recommended list of native deciduous tree species

Spacing and size requirements

Consider mature size of the plant for adequate spacing:

- perennials: 0.3m (12 inch) spacing and plant in clumps of 5 or more of the same species
- shrubs: 1.5 to 2m spacing and a maximum 3-gallon pot
- trees: 7m spacing and 10- or 15-gallon pot (large trees for neighbourhood parks)

Additional features for garden beds

- Coarse natural wood chips are delivered by the city during the 2nd and 4th week in May after PIP project coordinators submit the online mulch order form mid to end of April.
- A small Bee City Canada pollinator sign will be installed by the city for garden projects consisting of native plants.
- Large fieldstones, armor stone and habitat features that support pollinators such as a watering dish, log or bee hotel or educational signage will be considered.
- Amendments such as good quality topsoil and compost are acceptable.
- Benches, logs, moveable rock, lighting, bird baths, ornaments and coloured wood chip mulch are not permitted.
- Garden beds that extend private property into the park or are situated a few meters away from the park boundary and exclude access to park users are not permitted.

Planting projects: Maintenance guidelines

Below is a general guideline for various maintenance tasks that may be required for your project.

Maintenance task	Description	Frequency
Watering vegetation	Application of water to vegetation that has been recently planted, or when experiencing drought conditions. The City provides a water bag for first year trees. Water bags should be removed before winter and stored in a dry place. Follow the Region of Waterloo's outdoor watering schedule if using the municipal water system (e.g. ice rink tap) to water plants (Reference: Region's Water Conservation Bylaw 07-069).	Water plants frequently (every few days) during the first week after planting, then at least three times per week for the next month. For subsequent years, a long slow soak is best for young trees so the water has time to move deep down into the soil, which encourages deep rooting. Leave a hose to trickle slowly for at least 45 minutes or use about 20 gallons of water, poured slowly. Water about 2-3 feet from the base of the trunk a couple times a month or as needed during drought.
Litter removal	The removal and disposal of inorganic waste from the project area.	Inspect once a week from spring to late fall and deposit in the park garbage can.
Mulching	The addition of standard coarse wood chips to a depth of six inches in a shrub bed and two inches in a flower bed, keeping mulch from contacting the bark of woody plants of trees and shrubs.	Annually with a heavy mulching the first season and topped up to control weed growth thereafter, as needed.
Removal of dead foliage of annuals, perennials and grasses	The removal of dead foliage of annuals, perennials and grasses by hand pulling or use of pruning shears.	Leaving seed heads, 15" plant stalks and leaves in the fall and waiting until late spring to cut back plants will help protect habitats that pollinators need over winter. Dispose of with your household yard waste collection.

Maintenance task	Description	Frequency
Weed removal	The removal of undesirable weeds by hand pulling with a shovel or trowel to uproot the total root. Avoid application of cosmetic pesticides including “Weed ‘N’ Feed” herbicide on city parkland (refer to MOE’s Cosmetic Pesticides Ban, 2009).	Inspect regularly from spring to late fall. Remove undesirable weeds as needed and dispose of with your household yard waste collection. Keep weeds under control so that they don’t get out of hand.
Pruning shrubs	The removal of diseased, dead or broken branches or thinning out of shrubs using pruning shears.	Shrubs may be pruned once a year according to their flowering sequence: • Shrubs which produce flower buds <i>before</i> spring should not be pruned until <i>after</i> they flower (e.g. lilac). • Shrubs which flower on the new growth of the plant can be pruned before they flower in the spring (i.e. honeysuckle).
Turf maintenance within the living fence buffer.	Mow turf around vegetation within the living fence buffer using own standard push lawnmower (sharp reel mower or rotary mower).	Mow on a regular basis throughout the growing season before turf reaches 4 ¾” (12cm) in height and trim no shorter than 3” – 3.5” for healthy turf.
Vandalism or damage	Remove or repair minor damage to vegetation within the garden bed or buffer using pruning shears or spade shovels.	Repair minor damage immediately and report significant vandalism within 72 hours. Trees on public property (including parks, greenspaces, trails) are the city’s responsibility to protect and maintain. To report damage or request maintenance call 519-886-2310.

Appendix A3. Recommended list of native deciduous tree species

Long-term park project: Large trees for neighbourhood parks



The City of Waterloo is recognized as a Bee City due to our efforts to support native pollinators and their habitat. We do this through education and community stewardship on municipal parkland. Visit [Bee City Canada](https://www.beecitycanada.com/) to learn more about the program and for resources such as gardening tips and a list of native plant nurseries.

Below is a list of recommended native tree species for our community planting program involving the planting of large trees in parks. Select some early spring flowering trees as they provide food sources in April to May when wildflowers are not in bloom. Pollinators like bees, butterflies and their larvae (caterpillars), and birds are best adapted to our local native plants so choose some of their favorite trees including basswood, birch, cherry, maple, oak, poplar, willow and serviceberry as outlined below.

Common name	Genus	Moisture	Sun	Approximate height (ft)	Bloom time	Attracts pollinators	Other interesting features
American plum	<i>Prunus americana</i>	well drained	sun	20-25	spring	birds, butterfly larvae, other pollinators	Foliage – yellow to red; edible fruit
American basswood	<i>Tilia americana</i>	dry, moist	full sun	70	Mid June - August	Bees (bumble bees, sweat bees), many caterpillars feed on leaves such as tiger swallowtail butterfly	Fragrant yellow flowers
Birch, River	<i>Betula occidentalis or nigra</i>	moist	partial shade to full sun	60	late spring	Eastern Tiger Swallowtail butterfly, birds, other pollinators	Riparian habitat, interesting bark
Birch, Yellow	<i>Betula lutea or alleghaniensis</i>			60			Large spreading tree with fall colour and interesting bark
Black cherry	<i>Prunus serotina</i>	moist-dry	full sun	60	late spring	larval host for many butterflies/moths	Racemes of white flowers; good fall colour

Appendix A3. Recommended list of native deciduous tree species
Long-term park project: Large trees for neighbourhood parks

Common name	Genus	Moisture	Sun	Approximate height (ft)	Bloom time	Attracts pollinators	Other interesting features
Bitternut hickory	<i>Carya cordiformis</i>	mesic, wet	sun	60-75	spring	Hickory Hairstreak, other pollinators	Produces flattened spherical nuts
Common hackberry	<i>Celtis occidentalis</i>	dry, mesic, wet	full sun	50	spring	butterflies, other pollinators	Tough shade tree, interesting bark
Eastern Redbud	<i>Cercis canadensis</i>	mesic	partial shade to full sun	30	April – mid May	Orchard mason bee, leaf-cutter bees use leaves to line nests	Very showy pink flowers; <i>prefers sheltered areas</i>
Honeylocust (thornless variety)	<i>Gleditsia triacanthos</i>	dry, mesic, wet	full sun	40-45	spring	butterflies, other pollinators	Delicate, ferny appearance
Maple, Red Maple, Sugar	<i>Acer rubrum</i> <i>Acer saccharum</i>	dry, mesic, wet	full sun	50 60	early spring	bees and other pollinators	Good shade tree; brilliant fall foliage
Oak, Red Oak, White Oak, Burr	<i>Quercus rubra</i> <i>Quercus alba</i> <i>Quercus macrocarpa</i>	dry - mesic	full sun	70 90 80	May - June	Bees; leaves feed caterpillars such as hairstreak butterfly, tussock moths, saddleback, etc	Red – fast growing White – dark red fall foliage Bur – corky twigs
Serviceberry, Downy or Smooth	<i>Amelanchier arborea</i> <i>Amelanchier laevis</i>	dry - mesic	partial shade to full sun	20	April – mid May	Bees (mining bee, sweat bees), birds and other pollinators	Large showy flowers, excellent fall colours



VOLUNTEER POSITION DESCRIPTION

Volunteer Position:	Individual Park Project Volunteer, Partners in Parks program
Reporting To:	Stewardship Coordinator, 519-886-2310 x30296

Objective

The Partners in Parks (PIP) program provides an opportunity for park enhancement projects that involve on-going maintenance throughout spring to fall for a five year renewable term. Long-term park projects, that do not involve group participants, may include:

- purchase and maintain a Little Library or community message board
- maintain community plantings large trees in parks through regular watering
- plant and maintain a living fence buffer from rear of your property into the park
- other approved special projects

The Individual Project Volunteer signs a PIP Agreement and assumes responsibility for carrying out project work in a safe and responsible manner, consistent with guidelines outlined in the Partners in Parks program guide.

Responsibilities

- follow City of Waterloo Safety First guidelines
- adhere to the guidelines outlined in the Partners in Parks program guide and safe work guidelines
- understand the required skills, potential risks and proper use of acceptable tools, wear protective personal equipment when carrying out project work, and sign an Informed Consent Agreement
- complete project tasks, safely and to the highest standard
- discuss any changes to your park project with City Stewardship Coordinator, prior to carrying out

Time, Place and Commitment

- in a city park within Waterloo, during the months of May to October
- commitment of a five year renewable term or the duration of the park project

Training and Orientation

- participate in a mandatory orientation session with City Stewardship Coordinator and complete any additional health and safety training

Qualifications

- adult able to responsibly and reliably complete the project work for the duration of PIP Agreement
- able to undertake moderate physical exertion such as walking, bending, digging, pushing, lifting up to 20 pounds, as required
- willing to work cooperatively with City Stewardship Coordinator throughout the duration of the project

Benefits

- contributes to the health, safety and aesthetics of Waterloo's greenspaces, fostering stewardship

Screening Requirements

- completion of application form and project approval by city



VOLUNTEER POSITION DESCRIPTION *

Volunteer Position: Park Project Community Lead, Partners in Parks Program
Reporting To: Stewardship Coordinator, 519-886-2310 x30296

Objective

The Partners in Parks (PIP) program provides an opportunity for park enhancement projects that involve on-going maintenance through spring to fall for a five-year renewable term. Long-term park projects, that involve group participants, may include:

- Planting and maintaining a garden bed or living fence buffer.
- Maintaining invasive plant species in natural areas.
- Other approved projects.

This volunteer role is the link between the City's Partners in Parks program and group participants whereby two project coordinator volunteers from different households, sign a PIP Agreement and assume responsibility for coordinating and monitoring project work in a safe and responsible manner, consistent with the policies and guidelines outlines in the Partners in parks program guide.

Responsibilities

- Follow City of Waterloo Safety First guidelines.
- Adhere to the guidelines outlined in the Partners in Parks program guide and safe work guidelines.
- Schedule and monitor regular community workdays throughout the growing season, using participant's tools.
- Monitor and complete project tasks, safely and of the highest standard ***note: this position is not responsible for the supervision of others, including youth or vulnerable persons.**
- Discuss any changes to your park project with City Stewardship Coordinator prior to carrying out.
- Provide an annual update on your PIP project and submit participant waivers.
- Recruit adult group participants capable of undergoing moderate physical exertion and ensure self and group participants:
 - Understand the required skills, potential risks and proper use of acceptable tools and are wearing protective personal equipment during the workday.
 - Have read, understood and signed the PIP Informed Consent Agreement for self and any youth (under age 18) in their care, prior to undertaking project work and return completed forms for each participant with your annual update.

Time, Place and Commitment

- In a city-owned neighbourhood park within Waterloo, during the months of May to October.
- Commitment of a five-year renewable term or the duration of the park project.

Training and Orientation

- Participate in a mandatory orientation session with City Stewardship Coordinator and complete any additional health and safety training.



Qualifications

- Adult able to responsibly and reliably complete the project work for the duration of the PIP Agreement.
- Able to undertake a leadership role, ensuring a safe and positive experience for group participants.
- Able to undertake moderate physical exertion such as walking, bending, walking, digging, pushing, lifting up to 20 pounds, as required.
- Willing to work cooperatively with City staff and group participants involved in the project.

Benefits

- Contributes to the health, safety and aesthetics of Waterloo's greenspaces and quality of life.
- Fosters community stewardship of Waterloo's greenspaces.
- Provides a meaningful way to contribute to the natural environment.
- Builds a sense of community.

Screening Requirements

- Written support from your community Neighbourhood Association or project participants within the neighbourhood willing to commit to assisting with project using the community support list.
- Completion of the volunteer application form, interview and two satisfactory references after project approval.

PPE and acceptable tools

General safety guidelines

- Ensure all group participants wear Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) required for the task and each adult signs an Informed Consent Agreement once per year.
- Ensure that proper instruction on hand tool safety is offered to all group participants to minimize hazards and prevent injuries.
- Inspect all tools carefully prior to use and avoid using damaged or dull tools.
- Practice safe handling and storage of hand tools while on site by keeping the site uncluttered with tools out of traffic areas and positioning tools with the sharp, pointed end down to avoid being stepped on or tripped over.
- Practice safe lifting and bending techniques such as bending at the knees, keep the load as close to the body as possible and keep the twisting of the torso to a minimum if turning to one side.
- Avoid handling loads that are heavy, bulky, difficult to grasp or unstable.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

- closed-toe, hard-sole footwear which must be fully laced to provide full support to prevent accidents (it is recommended to wear safety footwear approved by [Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety](#))
- cloth gloves to protect participants from being exposed to the hazard of injury from contact of skin with a sharp or jagged object
- appropriate clothing such as long pants/sleeves, and hats, sunglasses, as required
- any additional PPE which may be advisable or appropriate for the conditions such as ear and eye protection (e.g. for living fence buffers that require mowing grass)

Tool safety talk

Below is a list of acceptable tools that may be required for your Partners in Parks project. Using the safety tips below, the project coordinators, group leaders or City staff liaison provide an overview of the proper use of hand tools to all group participants prior to the activity.

The City is not responsible for any lost or damaged supplies or tools provided by project participants. Any borrowed tools supplied by the City must be returned upon completion of the park project.

Acceptable tools

Hand-held power tools

Registered city volunteers and group participants are not permitted to use hand-held power tools through this program with the exception of the Individual Project Volunteer's own push lawnmower required for living fence buffer projects.

Safety tip: Refer to the safe work guidelines for planting and maintenance projects.

Spade shovel

Spades have an angled blade at the end of the handle and are designed for digging and loosening soil. Using the heel or ball of the foot, press your foot down on the blade vertically, with your weight over the spade. Pull up and loosen the soil.

Travel: Carry spade with point facing forward, close to your side.

Safety tip: Watch behind you and keep away from others. Avoid kicking or jumping on the blade.

Garden trowel

Trowels are small versions of spade shovels and are used for hand-digging flowerbeds, window planters or potting plants. While working on your knees, with one hand on the handle, push the blade into the soil and shift the material to its desired location.

Flat or scoop shovel

You can identify a flat shovel by its short handle and square flattened blade, intended for scooping and lifting material such as wood chips. With two hands on the handle, bend and lift with your knees, working from as low position as possible. Push the blade into the material horizontally, letting it fall onto the blade. Shift the material to its desired location.

Travel: Carry shovels close to your side.

Safety tip: Watch behind you and keep away from others. Avoid twisting at the waist.

Pruning shears

Pruning shears are used for pruning woody vegetation such as shrubs up to a thickness of 3/4 inches in diameter. Open the locking device and hold handles with one hand, opening and closing the blade to cut straight across the grain of the wood, leaving the least amount of woody surface open to infection.

Travel: Carry pruning shears at your side in a closed position, with locking device on.

Safety tip: Do not exceed the cutting capacity of tool, wear safety glasses to protect eyes, and keep your free hand away from the cutting surface.

Flat head rake or leaf rake

Flat head rakes are designed to spread out materials such as wood chips or topsoil, while leaf rakes gather light material such as fallen leaves. To operate, hold the handle with two hands then swing the rake away from you and roll the material towards you, keeping your back straight and using your arms and legs.

Travel: Carry rake with the prongs pointed away from you and down at your side.

Safety tip: Be aware of what is behind you and keep away from others.

Wheelbarrow

Wheelbarrows help transport materials such as wood chips or topsoil from one location to another.

Safety tip: Ensure the tire pressure is adequate before using. Avoid moving too heavy of a load and avoid carrying anything besides suitable materials required for your project (i.e. avoid transporting participants).

Garbage nipper

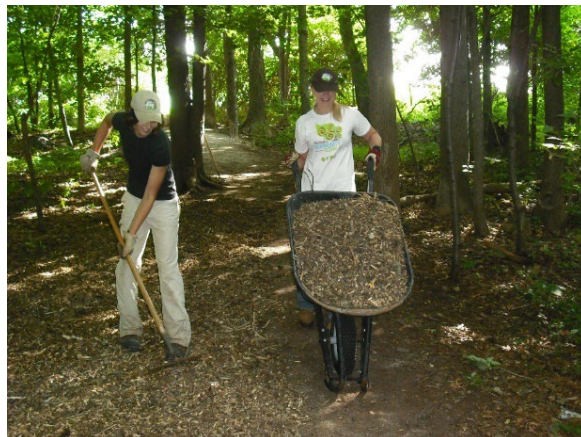
Garbage nippers are used for picking up litter from a standing position to avoid constantly bending over (see photo on bottom left). Hold the plastic garbage nipper in one hand and squeeze the handle. This will result in the tool's fingers clasp together, allowing you to pick up litter easily. Place litter in a garbage bag or bucket held in the other hand.

Travel: Carry nipper down at your side.

Safety tip: Wear safety glasses to protect eyes from branches if reaching into shrubbery. Avoid using hand-made tools that have a sharp nail or spike on the end.

Watering devices

Participants may use watering cans, buckets, jugs or garden hoses to water newly planted vegetation. If using water from an ice rink hydrant in the park, ensure the hydrant is maintained in a locked position when not in use. Immediately report any leaks, deficiencies or operational concerns to parks staff (parkservices@waterloo.ca) and return the key upon project completion.



Partners in Parks activity information sheet

Maintaining bird houses at RIM Park

In Canada, about 50 species of birds nest in natural cavities, such as decaying trees or stumps. To provide additional habitat, approximately 30 bird house boxes on cedar posts are situated at RIM Park environmental reserve along the Walter Bean trail.

This one-time group activity involves a thorough cleaning, repair and/or installation of new nesting boxes late October to early November. We also record which bird species used the boxes based on clues found inside each box.



Responsibilities

- City staff lead the event, providing education, an orientation, hand tools and cloth gloves.
- The group leader ensures group participants wear protective clothing, sign a waiver and are directly supervised. Transportation to the activity site is the sole responsibility of the participants.

Group participants

- Group leader is 18+ years; activity is geared to group participants ages 14 years and up.
- Moderate physical activity is required such as handling hand tools, lifting up to 10lbs and walking on uneven terrain within natural areas.
- Area A is ideal for 5 to 15 participants per group with your own adult supervision.
- Area B uses up to 3 golf carts to travel along the walking trail and can accommodate 2 adult participants who drive the carts plus 3 youth or adults, and a city staff person.

Time and place

- Typically, 3 hours in length depending on the number of group participants.
- Late October to early November, on a weekday or Saturday between the hours of 9 a.m. to noon or 12 p.m. to 3 p.m.
- Existing bird houses along the Walter Bean walking trail at RIM Park in Waterloo.

Partners in Parks activity information sheet

Help remove litter. See the difference your efforts can make!

Lend a helping hand by removing litter from your neighbourhood park in Waterloo. We will support you every step of the way with special “Only Cure for Litter is you” bags and gloves, safety tips and picking up the collected litter.

If you are 18 years of age or older, review the information below and register your group’s litter cleanup activity a minimum one week in advance using the online form.



Time and place

- City-owned parks and trails in Waterloo (view City of Waterloo’s [online map](#)).
- May to October through the [Partners in Parks program](#).
- Last weekend in April ([Earth Day Community Cleanup in a park](#)).
- No statutory holidays and daylight hours only (1 hour before sunset and 1 hour after sunrise).

Group leader responsibilities:

- **Orientation information:** Safety guidelines and instructions will be provided when you register for your community cleanup.
- **Participant safety:** Ensure group participants wear protective clothing, sign a waiver and follow our safety guidelines during the cleanup.
- **Reporting:** After your event, drop off participant waivers and submit results from your community cleanup using our online reporting form.



Managing invasive buckthorn in natural areas

Neighbourhood groups can help reduce the spread of invasive, non-native buckthorn in city parks in Waterloo. Help create healthy habitat for pollinators by learning about and removing invasive plants.

Common buckthorn (*Rhamnus cathartica* L.) is an invasive, non-native shrub that can invade a variety of habitats such as woodlands, hedgerows and open areas, where it often forms dense stands. Buckthorn produces berries that are eaten and spread widely by wildlife.

TECHNIQUES

We follow [Ontario Invasive Plant Council](#) Best Management Practices for guidance on managing invasive plant species in Ontario, using mechanical control measures.

Hand-pulling: Using spades or extractors, we mechanically remove plants that are less than 2" diameter, roots and all!

Solarization: This process involves covering a cut tree stump with black tarp or buckthorn baggie, to prevent new leaves and deprive the plant of sunlight and nutrients.

Critical period cutting: This process involves cutting large trees early spring, leaving a 4-to-5-foot stump. Regular pruning of sprouts during the growing season is required to eventually deplete the plant of sunlight and nutrients in approximately two years.



Use of extractigators to remove buckthorn

Buckthorn Baggie

Critical cutting period method

Group participants

- Group Leader must be 18 years of age or older; activity is geared to ages 14+ years.
- Minimum of 10 and maximum of 25 participants per group.
- Moderate physical exertion required such as bending, walking, lifting up to 20 lbs and pushing wheelbarrows filled with harvested plants.

Time and place

- Natural areas within public parks in Waterloo (view City of Waterloo's [online map](#)).
- May to October as a one-time stewardship activity led by city staff.
- A two-hour activity, typically during the weekday between 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. or a weekday afternoon directly after 4 p.m., or Saturday morning.

Mulching woodland trails

The City of Waterloo works with the neighbourhood, community groups and corporate teams to mulch woodland trails in parks as a one-time stewardship activity.

We deliver coarse wood chips to woodland trail entrances and participants use wheelbarrows, bins and garden rakes to move and spread mulch onto the trail.

Spreading a thick layer of mulch on woodland trails encourages trail users to stay on the path, preventing soil compaction and erosion throughout the woodland. Mulch is especially helpful in soaking up excess moisture in lowland areas.



Group participants

- Group Leader must be 18 years of age or older; activity is geared to ages 14+ years.
- Minimum of 10 and maximum of 25 participants per group.
- Moderate physical exertion required such as bending, walking, lifting up to 20 lbs and pushing wheelbarrows filled with wood chip mulch.

Time and place

- Woodland trails that have a mulched surface within parks in Waterloo.
- July to September when the ground is dry and before the fall leaves cover the trails.
- A two-hour activity, preferably during the weekday between 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. or a weekday afternoon directly after 4 p.m.

Community planting

The City of Waterloo is recognized as a [Bee City](#) due to our efforts to offer community programs and initiatives that support native pollinator populations. Each September and October, we plan small community plantings within city parks to help increase our urban forest and establish healthy pollinator habitat.

Learn how you can get involved in our community planting programs outlined below.

Naturalization plantings in parks

Each fall, our **Pollinator Working Group** and **Friends of Waterloo Park** organize small community plantings in park natural areas such as meadows or woodland edges.

These two-hour events are open to public participation and are geared to the surrounding neighbourhood. This activity is appropriate for all ages since small manageable plant material and hand tools are used.

Learn more about native pollinators and healthy habitat, meet new people and help green our community together. View our [community planting webpage](#) for up-coming events that you can participate in.



Large trees for neighbourhood parks

Help enhance the urban forest and create habitat for pollinators and wildlife! Neighbourhood groups can coordinate a park project involving the planting and maintenance of up to 15 deciduous trees (10-15 gallon) in your neighbourhood park.

Your community project involves hosting a fall planting event and scheduling regular community workdays to water the trees from May to September for two years. The City will support you by providing all equipment, trees and supplies on planting day.



Where can the trees be planted?

- Passive areas within city-owned parks in Waterloo.
- Parks having a nearby water source (i.e. ice rink hydrant or other water source).
- Parks having minimal shade (i.e. low tree canopy cover or parks that have had significant tree removal).
- Near playgrounds, seating areas and public trails for shade, and/or 3 metres from the park boundary around the park perimeter.

Application process

1. View our planting resources (Appendix A) to plan your project from start to finish.
2. Select one or two parks in your neighbourhood that meet the criteria above.
3. Coordinate with your neighbourhood to see if there is interest.
4. Submit the online application form between March 1 to May 31.

Large trees for neighbourhood parks

Next steps

In June, City staff review applications and select up to five planting projects. City staff and project coordinator volunteers work together to confirm a planting plan and species selection, engage the neighbourhood and host a fall planting event.

Park Project Community Lead volunteers:

- Involve the community from start to finish, including residents that back onto the park, to ensure a community-desired project and effort (complete the community support list).
- Host a fall planting event (late September to October) with support from the city.
- Schedule regular watering for two seasons after planting to ensure tree survival following the watering guidelines outlined on the City's [Trees and yards webpage](#).
- Register as a City of Waterloo volunteer and sign a PIP agreement to commit to the project.

The City of Waterloo supports the community planting event by supplying the trees, supplies and hand tools, and leading and monitoring the planting activity on the day of the event.



Partners in Parks activity information sheet

Long-term park project: Garden bed

This project involves planting and maintaining a mulched garden bed within a neighbourhood park. Project coordinators and group participants require basic gardening knowledge and skills.

The city delivers coarse wood chip mulch in May annually and assists with initial bed preparation. A small Bee City Canada pollinator garden sign is installed in garden beds that consist of native vegetation.

Garden bed requirements:

- Select a low maintenance design and start small such as 2m x 4m in size, ensuring a minimum mowing strip of 3 metres around the garden bed and from private property.
- Approved vegetation includes shrubs, perennials, annuals and clumping grasses. We encourage native species to create ideal habitat for pollinators.
- View the planting resources (Appendix A in program guide) for details on spacing, species selection and additional features for garden beds.

Park Project Community Lead Volunteer role:

Two project coordinator volunteers from separate households will be responsible for the following activities for a five-year renewable term:

- Purchase and deliver all vegetation and additional materials, including replacement costs (if desired) for materials that are damaged or removed.
- Plant and maintain vegetation, as per City specifications and standards (see program guide).
- Schedule and monitor regular workdays throughout the growing season, using participants' tools.
- Dispose of organic waste (weeds, perennial stems, trimmings) in suitable containers and remove from the site according to the Region of Waterloo's yard waste collection schedule or contact your city staff liaison for assistance with large quantities.
- Repair vandalism, excessive litter and/or damage immediately.



Long-term park project: Living fence or mown buffer

This project involves planting and maintaining a living fence or mown buffer at the rear of private property in the park. Project coordinators purchase, plant and maintain native shrubs within this buffer, including mowing the turf for a five-year renewable term or until the shrubs are well established. One option to only mow turf within this buffer is acceptable. The city will install city demarcation posts at the park property boundary, as required.

Living fence buffer requirements:

- Ensure adequate spacing of shrubs (1.5 to 2 metres) with a maximum buffer of 2 metres wide x length of your private property situated at the rear only, facing the park and depending on site conditions.
- Approved vegetation includes native shrubs only to create ideal habitat for pollinators.
- Amendments such as good quality topsoil and compost are acceptable.
- Mulched garden beds that extend private property into the park are not permitted.

Individual Park Project Volunteer role:

The project coordinator volunteer will be responsible for the following activities for a five-year renewable term:

- Purchase, deliver and plant all vegetation and additional materials, including replacement costs (if desired) for vegetation that is damaged or removed.
- Maintain the buffer, as per City specifications and standards (see Appendix A), which includes using a standard push mower to mow the grass within the buffer.
- Dispose of organic waste (weeds, perennial stems, trimmings) in suitable containers and remove from the site according to the Region of Waterloo's yard waste collection schedule.
- Repair vandalism, excessive litter and/or damage immediately.



Long-term park project: Managing invasive plants in parks

Interested in maintaining the biodiversity of natural areas? Neighbourhood groups can help reduce the spread of invasive, non-native plant species in city parks in Waterloo.

Through this program, group participants remove the invasive plant species listed below through mechanical control measures such as hand pulling, digging or cutting. We follow [Ontario Invasive Plant Council](#) Best Management Practices for guidance on managing invasive plant species in Ontario.

Invasive plant species

Garlic mustard (*Alliaria petiolata*) is a biennial herb that is especially troublesome in shaded habitats such as moist woodlands, waterways and disturbed areas along trails. It can out-compete native plants and the seeds remain viable in the soil for up to 10 years.



Common buckthorn (*Rhamnus cathartica* L.) is an invasive, non-native shrub that can invade a variety of habitats such as woodlands, hedgerows and open areas, where it often forms dense stands. Buckthorn produce berries that are eaten and spread widely by wildlife.



Partners in Parks activity information sheet

Time and place

- Natural areas such as woodlands or meadows within city-owned parks in Waterloo.
- The initial community workday is led by city staff who provides an orientation, hand tools and other supplies, and removes harvested plants from the park.
- Garlic mustard removal requires a minimum five-year commitment from May to June, with regular community workdays to hand pull or harvest the plant at ground level.
- Buckthorn removal requires a minimum one-year commitment from May to October or consider a one-time stewardship activity led by city staff. If using the critical cutting period method, a minimum two-year commitment is required, with an initial harvesting, followed by monthly visits during the growing season to trim any new shoots, depleting the plant of nutrients.

Park Project Community Lead Volunteer role:

- Hand-deliver educational materials to homes adjacent to park prior to initial workday.
- Schedule and monitor regular community workdays using participants' tools.
- Involve group participants ages 14 and up, capable of moderate physical exertion such as bending, walking on uneven terrain in natural areas, digging and lifting up to 20 lbs.
- Dispose of plant stems in provided yard waste bags or other suitable containers and remove from the site according to the Region of Waterloo's yard waste collection schedule or contact your city staff liaison for large quantities.
- Provide an annual summary indicating the number of workdays / participants / groups involved and successes or challenges with this activity at your project location.



Long-term park project: Little Library

Neighbourhood Associations or a group of neighbours may be interested in having a Little Library installed in their neighbourhood park. Little Libraries are small, weather-proof boxes attached to a post. The box is filled with books and residents are invited to take a book, leave a book. The purpose of the Little Library is to promote literacy and connect the community.

The city installs the provided structure in the park adjacent to a hard surface (i.e. sidewalk, public trail or existing concrete pad). A concrete patio stone is placed within the turf, flush with the ground, leading up to the box, as required.

Structure requirements

- A maximum of one Little Library is permitted per neighbourhood park in Waterloo.
- Purchase a kit from Little Libraries of Kitchener-Waterloo (www.llkw.ca) or build-your-own box ("shed" or "gable" box) following their dimension specifications.
- Paint and seal the box in a way that is not offensive. Attach a City of Waterloo sticker to the lower left corner of the plexiglass front panel (provided).
- Purchase and supply an 8-foot pressure-treated post (4'x4') and one to three plain concrete patio stones (minimum 18" or 450 mm square), depending on the placement in the park.

Individual Park Project Volunteer role:

Upon project approval, two project coordinators (from separate households) will be responsible for the following activities for a five-year renewable term:

- Purchase and deliver all materials including a little library box, hardware, post and concrete patio stones, including replacement costs (if desired) for materials that are damaged or removed.
- Repair vandalism, graffiti and/or damage immediately and notify the city if assistance is required.
- Regular upkeep of the little library, such as painting and replacing parts, to ensure safety and aesthetic appeal.
- Monitor to ensure only appropriate reading material is located within the structure (i.e. books that would be found in a public library) and remove any inappropriate material as soon as possible.
- Clear the snow with a shovel leading up to the Little Library if it is active during the winter.
- Consider registering your box locally on the [Little Libraries of KW map](#) and communicate your project through your Neighbourhood Association newsletter or social media, if applicable.



Long-term park project: Community message board

Neighbourhood Associations may purchase and maintain an approved community message board within a neighbourhood park. These message boards communicate Neighbourhood Association events and other relevant information to the public. Some neighbourhoods may choose to leave one door panel off so that residents can post information. Guidelines are created and posted by the neighbourhood group for this option. The structure is ordered, assembled and installed by city staff, and requires a minimum of 8 weeks to receive the board.

Structure requirements

Using our approved supplier, [Barco Products Canada](#) select the message board options desired following these guidelines:

- size and orientation: medium (horizontal)
- colour: desert tan
- mount type: in-ground with posts
- number of sides: single-sided or double-sided
- tack center type: recycled rubber upgrade (required)
- add city sticker to lower left corner of the acrylic glass door having a keyed lock
- no lighting or literature rack permitted

Individual Park Project Volunteer role

Upon project approval, two project coordinator volunteers from separate households are responsible for the following activities for a five-year renewable term:

- Cost associated with the purchase of the message board including shipping and taxes.
- Communicate your project to the neighbourhood through social media, if applicable.
- Develop and post guidelines on appropriate information that can be posted by the neighbourhood on the unlocked panel for double-sided boards.
- Post up-to-date Neighbourhood Association information in an organized manner and remove posted information that was not approved, is offensive or inappropriate.
- Clear snow with a shovel leading up to the message board if active during winter.
- Responsible for general maintenance of the structure and notifying the City of any repairs required that are beyond the capacity of the neighbourhood group (i.e. heavy graffiti, installing replacement parts).

