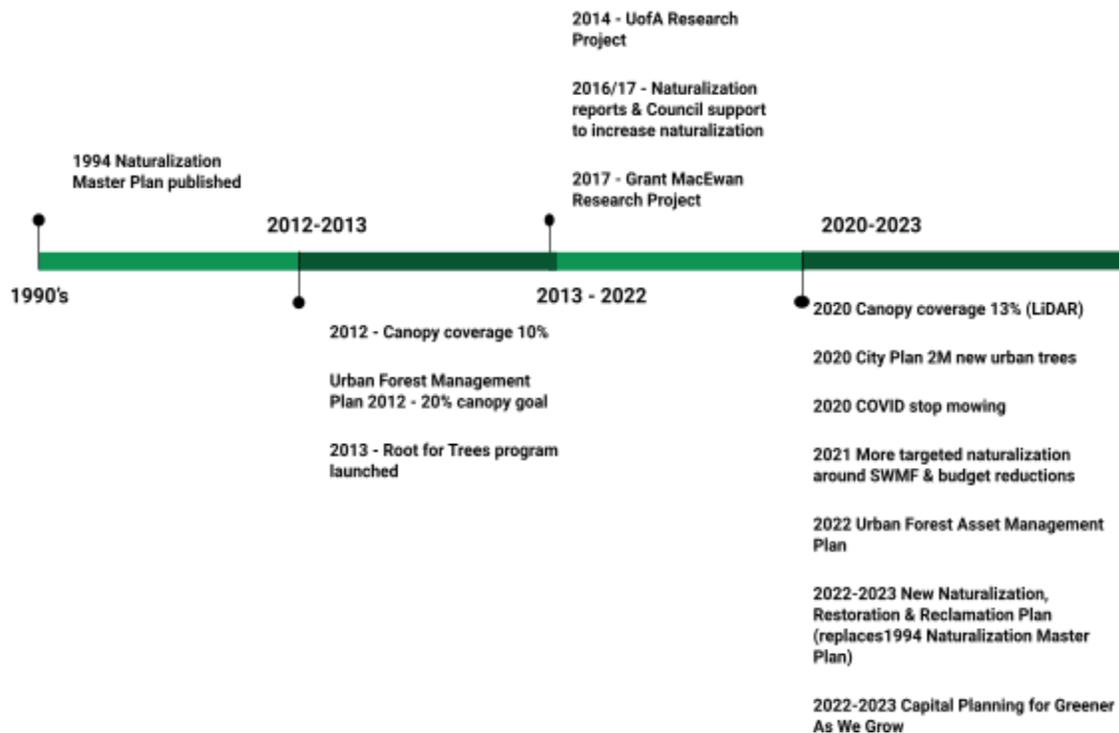


History of Naturalization in Edmonton

Naturalization is an ecologically-based approach to landscape management. In many cases, it is intended to transform highly-maintained land and achieve a more naturally functioning plant community. Naturalization has several environmental, economic, social and quality of life benefits for Edmontonians.

Naturalization aligns with the principles and goals of The City Plan (Greener As We Grow), ConnectEdmonton, the Climate Change Adaptation and Resilience Strategy and more.



1994

The 1994 Naturalization Master Plan informed where and how naturalization should be implemented in parks and open spaces, utility corridors and stormwater management facilities, and along roadways.

2012-2013

In 2012, the Urban Forest Management Plan was published and included a goal increasing the City of Edmonton’s Tree Canopy from 10 per cent to 20 per cent canopy coverage. In 2013 the launch of the Root for Trees Program brought a renewed focus to planting trees in naturalized areas. Since 2013, almost 30,000 volunteers have planted over 290,000 trees, shrubs and wildflowers in naturalized areas.

2014-2019

In 2014 and 2017 Edmonton partnered with the University of Alberta (Department of Renewable Resources) and MacEwan University to carry out research on naturalization. These collaborative projects focused on effects of naturalization on living and non-living habitats, and improving the growth and survival of woody species in the Edmonton urban area. The results of this research have been presented at local and international conferences.

In 2016 and 2017, Administration received support from Council to increase naturalization in Edmonton as a result of three reports — Naturalization Enhancements (CR_3018), Naturalization Procedures (CR-4027) and Naturalization in Medians (CR_4315).

The Parkland Management Public Relations Plan was in place from 2016-2019 and focused on naturalization, weed control and other park services. This campaign was replaced by the Parkland Care and Naturalization Campaign starting in 2021.

2020-2021

In 2020, LiDar technology measurements showed that the forest canopy had grown to 13 per cent coverage, up from 10 per cent in 2012. The Urban Forest Asset Management Plan was published in 2021, which includes naturalization as a significant contributor to urban forest canopy growth targets.

Most stormwater management facilities (SWMFs) contained some naturalization as part of their initial design. However, in 2020, COVID-19 service reductions resulted in stop-mowing in the remainder of SWMF areas that were still maintained turf. In late summer 2020, mowing service levels resumed across the turf inventory city-wide in response to feedback from residents and Council. In 2021, 150ha of SWMF area was then added to the planned naturalization inventory with continuing COVID-19 budget impacts. Out of this target, 82ha were completed at 113 sites in alignment with the Design and Construction Standards Vol. 5 Landscaping (minimum of 65 per cent of the total area above normal waterline naturalized). Following the April 4, 2022 Council meeting, Administration paused naturalization around these SWMFs and resumed regular turf maintenance (i.e. mowing) in the SWMF areas that had been naturalized in 2021, in order to conduct further public engagement.

2022-2023

In 2022-2023, a joint project for Capital Planning for Greener As We Grow and the development of the new Naturalization, Restoration and Reclamation Plan is

underway. This work is designed to identify City lands for planting 7,200 net new boulevard and open space trees and over two million naturalization trees and shrubs across 300 hectares from 2023 to 2030, and will continue to assist planning and implementation of tree planting and naturalization in the years beyond. The project will also make recommendations to the Design and Construction Standards for naturalization. Implementation of these planting plans is funded by the Greener As We Grow capital profile (2023-2030), Trees for Life Grant (2023), and the federal 2 Billion Trees Grant (2022-2030, upon successful application).

Past Council Reports for Reference

CR_3018 Naturalization Enhancements (2016)

That Administration provide a report on the City's naturalization program and options to future enhance the program.

At the direction of City Council, Administration has identified eight program enhancement options that will help guide, support and significantly increase the City's naturalization efforts. Each option can be achieved within existing budget resources and/or through the generous support of outside organizations, partners and volunteers.

1. Refresh the City's Naturalization Master Plan (1994).
2. Ensure the naturalization program and principles are integrated into future corporate strategic plans (e.g. Open Space Master Plan/Breathe).
3. Update the naturalization specifications in the "Landscape Design and Construction Standards" to provide clear direction to City departments and industry incorporating naturalized landscapes into new developments.
4. Establish operational resourcing for the naturalization program to ensure program sustainability and support for land restoration efforts.
5. Increase support for reclamation projects (e.g. replanting trail closures, or enhanced planting after roadway or drainage-related construction).
6. Enhance the inspection process for new land, that are designated as naturalized, to ensure they are maintained as naturalized before 'Final Acceptance Certificate' handover to the City.
7. Create and enhance industry partnerships with like-minded groups that support naturalization.
8. Enhance the current sponsorship program (see Attachment 2).
(Sponsorship program was focused on Root for Trees program delivery - in support of the volunteer planting program.)

CR_4027 Naturalization Procedures (2016)

That Administration provide a report that identifies the amount, location and justification for the City's naturalization procedures.

CR_4315 Naturalization in Medians (2017)

That Administration provide a report on naturalization practices on medians within the city including the type of naturalization practices used and locations of naturalized medians.

CR_8442 Alternative Landscape Options for Boulevards and Turf (2022)

That Administration provide a report on options to transform boulevards and turf with low maintenance permaculture plantings, and further low maintenance beautification, diversification, and cost savings efforts, short-medium and long term.

- Naturalization was one of the landscaping methods described in this report.

CO01165 - Homeowners' Associations - Maintenance on City Land (2023)

That Administration provide a report on the status of the implementation of public engagement, public communications, agreements in place and other items identified in the March 8, 2022, Citizen Services report CS00619rev Engagement with Homeowners' Associations as City Building Partners, including how City Standards are applied in the Homeowners' Association.

- An update on naturalization around stormwater management facilities completed in 2021 was provided as part of this report.