Nature in the City Grants
Background and Guide to Submitting a Proposal

Thank you for your interest in the Nature in the City Grants program. Nature in the City (NIC) seeks to connect City of Fort Collins (City) residents to nature while also protecting and enhancing habitat for native plants and animals. This document provides step by step guidance to the application process. We recommend you read the full document before beginning the application process.

The Nature in the City Grants program supports projects to create or improve natural spaces in your neighborhood. Projects within the Fort Collins City Limits and the Growth Management Area are encouraged to apply and will be given full consideration. Top priorities for funding include projects that demonstrate strong alignment with the program and City strategic plans and sit within the City Limits.

Submission Process

Proposals for project funding must be submitted through the grant application portal between **Friday, November 15 and 11:59 PM on January 15, 2020**. The application process consists of two steps:

1. **Pre-Application** – These quick questions will help the NIC staff determine if your project qualifies for funding. Staff will review and approve pre-applications within 2 business days of submission. Once approved, you will have access to the portal for submitting your full application. If your pre-application is not approved, NIC staff will reach out directly to discuss concerns and determine if your project can qualify for potential funding.
   Pre-application must be submitted by 11:59 PM on Wednesday, January 8, 2020.

2. **Application** – Questions ask for detailed responses outlining the vision, plans for, and intended impact of your project. The application is divided into four categories: General Information, Alignment with Nature in the City Strategic Goals, Project Approvals, Funding, and Timeline.

   Required Attachments – In order to complete the application process, you will be required to submit supporting documentation including:
   - Project budget worksheet (budget template provided)
   - Project team members and short description of each person's role (template provided)
   - Draft landscape plan including intended/sample plant list.

Applications will be reviewed by the Grant Review Committee between January 15 and March 1, 2020. Applicants will be notified about receipt of funding and a list of awarded projects will be released in March 2020. All grant recipients will be required to submit a final report on project activities upon completion of project implementation, as outlined in the sample Nature in the City Capital Project Agreement.

Project Types and Available Funding

2020 NIC Grants will be awarded to three project types: residential-scale, neighborhood-scale, and community-scale. The following information describes these project types and provides funding guidelines for each category.

Residential-scale projects – up to approximately $1,000 in support

Nature in the City seeks to support residential projects working to promote habitat enhancements and inspire stewardship and connection to nature in your neighborhood. Priority will be given to projects that enhance habitat, including existing native plantings and natural spaces. Additionally, priority will be given to projects seeking to convert sections of yard, turf, and non-native plantings into diverse, native

habitat. It is recommended that residents interested in the Certified Natural Areas program and the associated Enhancement Fund explore the residential-scale grant opportunity.

Neighborhood-scale projects – up to $25,000 in support
Funding will focus on supporting projects that increase access to nature by converting areas around schools and other community gathering places. Priority will be given to projects that inspire stewardship and connection to nature by providing diverse engagement opportunities for our community. Projects may seek to integrate native plantings and pollinator gardens into public spaces and/or provide safe routes to nature for underserved audiences.

Community-scale projects – up to $40,000 in support
Projects serving as a demonstration of how to complete a significant conversion effort that increases native habitat and access to nature are eligible to apply for community-scale funding. These projects must serve as a public demonstration of land stewardship and policy implementation. Priority will be given to projects that inspire stewardship and connection to nature by providing diverse engagement opportunities for our community, in addition to enhancing nearby habitat through integration of native plantings across a landscape. If you are an HOA interested in the Certified Natural Areas program for a common space within your community, you may want to consider applying for this type of grant.

Planning Grants
Nature in the City is not specifically seeking planning grant applications this year. However, if your neighborhood or community-scale project needs initial support for early project outcomes such as identification of project priorities through community engagement and meetings, work with a landscape architect to draft a landscape plan, or work through the City's minor amendment process, a smaller planning grant may be awarded. Planning grants provide up to $5,000 to specifically support these early project efforts. Projects that receive planning grants are eligible to apply for a project implementation grant in future years. However, receipt of a planning grant does not guarantee future NIC funding. If you are at this stage, apply for the appropriate category above and explain in your application that you are in the planning phase.

Support for Nature in the City and City of Fort Collins 2018 Strategic Plan
Nature in the City's vision is a connected open space network accessible to the entire community that provides a variety of experiences and functional habitat for people, plants, and wildlife. The grants program seeks projects that help achieve one or more Nature in the City program goals:

- **Easy Access to Nature** - by ensuring every resident is within a 10-minute walk to nature from their home or workplace.
- **High Quality Natural Spaces** - by conserving, creating, and enhancing natural spaces
- **Land Stewardship** - by shifting the landscape aesthetic to more diverse forms

Nature in the City Grants will prioritize funding for projects that support one or more of the following City of Fort Collins priorities as defined by the 2018 Strategic Plan.

Neighborhood Livability & Social Health
1.3 Improve accessibility to City and community programs and services to low- and moderate-income populations

1.6 Protect and preserve the quality of life in neighborhoods

Culture & Recreation
2.4 Protect the health and longevity of the tree canopy

Economic Health
3.4 Foster infill and redevelopment that enhances the community

Environmental Health
4.8 Protect and enhance natural resources on City-owned properties and throughout the community

4.9 Sustain and improve the health of the Cache la Poudre River and its watershed

Safe Community
5.5 Address water, wastewater and stormwater infrastructure needs for the protection of people, property and the environment

Application Guidance
Please reference the following guidance to help answer any questions you have as you work through the grant application process. If you need additional assistance during the grant application process, please contact NIC staff. Please note, NIC staff will reply to your inquiry within 3 business days.

1. **Start the grant application process** by accessing the NIC Grants portal. If you have previously applied for a grant using the ZoomGrants site (i.e. 2018 Nature in the City Grant, 2019 XIP Grants for HOAs and Commercial Properties) please login using your existing account information. If this is the first time you have applied for a grant using ZoomGrants you will need to create a new account.

2. **Navigate around the application site** by beginning with the button on the middle, right side of the first screen, **Apply Now/Start an Application**. After you've started your application, you can navigate through the different steps using either the tabs on the left side of this main screen for **Summary, Pre-Application, Application Questions, and Required Attachments** or after completing one section, navigate to the next section by clicking Next at the bottom of the page.

3. **Summary** information provides basic background information about you and your organization. If you are applying for a residential-scale program, please use your home address to populate the organization fields and list yourself or the homeowner as the CEO/Executive Director.

4. **Pre-application questions** are intended to provide quick information to NIC staff to help determine if your project is eligible for grant funding. If staff have questions or concerns about your project's eligibility, staff will contact you directly. Pre-applications will be reviewed and approved to continue to the full application within 2 business days.

   Legal Agreement will need to be signed and executed upon award of grant funding. Please review the sample Nature in the City Capital Projects Agreement and confirm that you and/or your organization will be able to enter into such an agreement with the City of Fort Collins. If you are school in the Poudre School District (PSD), please contact Facilities Services to inform them of your project and proposal. PSD schools awarded grant funding will fall under an umbrella agreement between the District and the City of Fort Collins.

5. **Application questions** will vary based on how you answer question 1, indicating the type of grant you are applying for: residential, neighborhood, or community. Please see the Application Questions to determine which questions you will be required to answer.

6. **General information questions** on the full application will help provide an overview of your project and the intended impact. We recommend completing the budget worksheet before answering questions 5 and 6. The responses provided to these questions must match the information submitted with the final budget worksheet.

7. **Alignment with Nature in the City Strategic goals questions** will help identify ways your project support program and City-wide priorities, specifically those called out in this document. If you are interested in learning more about program and City-wide goals, please visit the Nature in the City Strategic Plan and City of Fort Collins 2018 Strategic Plan.

8. **Project approvals** will vary based on your project type. For residential-scale projects, please make sure you have written approval by the homeowner to make proposed changes to the area surrounding your home, if that is someone other than you. For neighborhood and community-scale requests, your project might require a Minor Amendment from City Planning Services. To learn more about submitting a Minor Amendment, please review the information under the following Key Terms and Definitions section of this definition. Neighborhood and community-scale projects may also require HOA Board or Poudre School District Facilities/Maintenance approval. We recommend that these representatives are on your project team and/or are fully informed before submitting your grant application.

9. **Required Attachments** must complete and uploaded before submitting your application, including budget worksheet, project team worksheet, and landscape plan. Please download and use the provided templates for your budget and project team worksheets. Additionally, you must upload a landscape plan as either a PDF or JPEG.

   Budget worksheet (template provided) must detail all anticipated expenses related to completing your project. Each item should include a quick description (column A), the anticipated total cost (column B), the amount requested from the grant (column C), and funding from other sources (column D). As a reminder, NIC Grants cannot be used for staff, overhead, or maintenance costs. Also, while a specific percentage of the project budget does not need to be matched by other funding sources, we encourage applicants to identify and reflect additional funding sources in the total project budget. Staff time and sweat equity count as match.

   Project team worksheet (template provided) needs to identify key members of your project team, including individuals from within your organization, as well as collaborators from other organizations and groups. Please be sure to note the project manager in the description of that person's role. The project manager is the main point of contact for NIC communication and for disseminating timely information across the project team. For residential projects, your team may consist of one or two people. However, based on feedback from past residential-scale projects, we encourage you to assemble a team of friends, neighbors, family members, and/or professionals to help implement your project.

   Landscape plan – illustration of the project space that specifically identifies the proposed layout, plant list, existing and new plantings, changes in elevation, hardscapes, and building structures. Residential-scale projects may submit a simple plan while neighborhood and community scale-projects are encouraged to work with a professional to prepare this document.

Key Terms and Definitions

Allotment Management Program - provides eligible Utilities water customers with a temporary waiver from their Excess Water Use surcharges if they meet certain qualifications and submit an application detailing a project that demonstrates a long-term water reduction.

Biodiversity – quantifiable measure of the variety of life in a habitat or ecosystem.

Certified Natural Area – program of the City of Fort Collins Natural Areas Department that encourages site management practices focused on protecting, restoring, and enhancing native animal and plant communities; the Natural Areas Certification Program was created to provide natural areas management guidance to private landowners and non-City public landowners.

Enhancement Fund – for 2020, funding for enhancement of previously Certified Natural Areas has been folded into the Nature in the City Grants.

Landscape plan – either an informal or technical drawing that details the natural elements like flowers, trees, and grass as well as hardscapes and built structures.

Minor Amendment – changes to a property's approved landscape plan must receive a Minor Amendment before the beginning of a project. This process ensures the proposed landscape and irrigation plan changes are reviewed by the appropriate City staff. For questions about whether or not your project will need a Minor Amendment, please email Missy Nelson or call 970-416-2743.

Native Species – plants or animals that have evolved with the Colorado ecosystem over a long period of time.

Nature – places that support plants, animals, and natural processes.

Natural Area – land acquired by the City of Fort Collins Natural Areas Department that provides residents access to open space and protects important habitat.

Natural Space – public or private land that provides residents access to nature and creates important habitat for diverse plants and animals.

Project Budget – total cost to complete the project outlined in the landscape plan; this should include all expenses you hope will be covered by a Nature in the City Grant, as well as those expenses that will be funded through other sources.

Sweat equity – the value of volunteer labor contributed to the completion of your project.