

Summer 2026 Sustainability Scholars Program Internship Opportunity

The UBC Sustainability Hub is pleased to offer current UBC graduate students the opportunity to work on sustainability internship projects. Successful candidates work under the guidance of a mentor from the partner organization, and are immersed in real world learning where they can apply their research skills and contribute to advancing sustainability across the region. The pay rate for the summer 2025 program is \$31.25/hour or \$7,812.50 for a 250-hour project.

- Visit the [Sustainability Scholars Program website](#) to learn [how the program works](#) and to [apply](#).
- Be sure to review the application guide on the Apply page to confirm your eligibility before applying.

Applications close at 11:59 pm on Sunday February 1, 2026.

Project title: Best practices research to inform municipal development servicing standards that include urban forest values

Project Background

The City of Courtenay is currently working with BC Hydro on a pilot “solutions lab” project to develop a clear, practical process mapping to support shared understanding of the management of trees (protection, pruning, removal, replacement) between City of Courtenay and BC Hydro during servicing and electrical infrastructure projects. Provincial housing legislation now requires all municipalities to require infill development in the form of minimum 4 dwelling units per traditionally single-residential lot.

The City of Courtenay has embraced this mandate, and won an award for the development of the Small-scale Multi-unit (SSMUH) Zone by permitting small lot sizes and maximum coverage for housing and demonstrating the viability of these zoning parameters through the use of 3D digital modelling for community, interest-holder and Council consideration. The City’s Official Community Plan (OCP) also demonstrates strong environmental values, including an Urban Forest Strategy and Tree Bylaw focusing on policies for protection and restoration. Minimizing conflict between electrical servicing and the urban forest will be increasingly important in an increasingly electrified and urban environment. Courtenay Council has directed staff to review and update the urban forest strategy and tree bylaw and communicate urban forest values to the community. Courtenay’s Subdivision and Development Servicing Bylaw specifications (e.g., road cross sections including street trees and electrical utilities) will also be updated in 2026.

Project description

The purpose of this project is to understand the regulatory and jurisdictional context for municipal development servicing standards to support electrical servicing project planning. The results of the project will inform the City of Courtney’s Subdivision and Development Servicing Bylaw

SUSTAINABILITY SCHOLARS PROGRAM

update and development application procedures to reduce friction points between service providers, and improve customer services including more rapid development approvals.

Supporting infill development not only can facilitate much needed housing supply, support housing affordability, diversity and help residents age in place, (with coordinated land use planning) it allows for complete community services (daily needs, commercial, schools, parks) to be more accessible by walking, biking and transit, and can delay the need for municipal boundary annexations into greenfield, thus supporting low carbon transportation, cost-effective servicing (by all authorities) and protecting rural ecological assets, all areas of community sustainability foci.

Project scope

- Policy and regulatory review to understand who the interest-holders and service providers are, their respective authority and decision-making factors, when decisions are made and who makes them, in the context of land use planning and electrical servicing]. Documents to review include the City of Courtney's OCP, the tree bylaw, Subdivision and Development Servicing bylaw, public tree management policies, Hydro and Power Authority Act, Local Government Act, Land Title Act, and any regulations associated with said acts including any interpretive best management guides. The review should include the findings from the BC Hydro led "Roots and Routes" Solutions Lab.
- Jurisdictional scan of 3 to 5 leading jurisdictions globally to identify best practices relevant to the City of Courtney's context for electrical servicing. The Scholar may wish to contact one or two subject experts at one of the leading jurisdictions to get information on barriers and lessons learned.
- Interest-holder engagement through interviews with City departments, agencies, the development industry, and environmental stewardship organizations to better understand barriers and opportunities.
- Develop a draft framework showing the ways the different governing bodies and utilities can work together through proactive data and information sharing, development approval referral processes, coordinated information provided to clients (those applying for a permit for development and electrical service) and regular review cycles of how the process is working towards achieving the stated goals.
- Recommend approaches for cross-sector collaboration and suggest changes to the City's Subdivision and Development Servicing.
 - Time permitting do a deeper dive into 1 or more of the regulatory or jurisdictional pinch points and draft a detailed operating procedure document to guide improvements in the development and servicing approval process.

Deliverables

- A final report containing a summary of the work completed
- Notes from the interviews
- A final report for the online public-facing [Scholars Project Library](#).
- Presentation to BC Hydro and City of Courtenay staff on findings and recommendations.

SUSTAINABILITY SCHOLARS PROGRAM

Time Commitment

- This project will take 250 hours to complete
- This project must be completed between May 1 to August 14.
- The Scholars is to complete their hours between 9 am and 5 pm, Monday to Friday, approximately 17 to 20 hours per week.

Required/preferred Skills and Background

- Excellent research and writing skills
- Demonstrated interest in sustainability
- Experience conducting stakeholder engagement events, including facilitation skills, is an asset
- Excellent public speaking and presentation skills
- Familiarity conducting focus group research
- Ability to work independently
- Deadline oriented
- Project management and organizational skills
- GIS training or experience, an asset but not necessary.
- Comfortable interacting with strangers to conduct interviews
- Design and layout skills, an asset for preparing the presentation
- Interest in or familiarity with the impacts of utility servicing on the urban forest, an asset

Applications close at **11:59 pm Sunday February 1, 2026**

Apply here: [Click here to apply](#)

Contact Karen Taylor at sustainability.scholars@ubc.ca if you have questions

Useful Resources

We are holding a special **resume preparation workshop for prospective Scholars** on January 19, 2026. [Click here for details and to register.](#)

Below are some links to useful resources to help you with your resume, cover letter and preparing for an interview (there are many more online).

<https://students.ubc.ca/career/career-resources/>

<https://www.grad.ubc.ca/cover-letter-cv-resume-templates-ubc-career-services>