

# Vopni Park Tree Lighting Project

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## Vopni Park—A Downtown Greenspace

Vopni Park was established in 2006, and named after a Portage la Prairie citizen and business owner, the late Wilfred Vopni. Mr. Vopni established Vopni Press in 1946, and the greenspace now remains in the Press building's previous location. The park may be small, but it is reminiscent of a scene out of a "Hallmark movie", and could be considered our own very tiny version of New York City's "Central Park". While Vopni Park is small, it is a much-needed greenspace in downtown Portage la Prairie, being one of the few places people can stop and sit while walking downtown to take a break, or get out of the sun and sit in the shade of the mature trees (and this is of particular benefit to vulnerable populations such as the homeless or elderly). People can also use this park as a meeting place with others in the community, with some indicating they have parked nearby and taken a picnic lunch to the park to sit and enjoy with friends.

## Community Spirit & Beautification

The benefits of public greenspaces are many, and bringing community together is one of the main ones. Beautifying cities also increases residents' sense of community pride and feelings of safety. With the new lights installed on all of the trees at Vopni Park, it adds to the

beauty of downtown Portage la Prairie all year round, and particularly at Christmas-time. The park's safety also increases with the lighting, and means more people can safely use the park after dark. The CFPD Grant Selection Committee recognized the benefits to lighting the trees in Vopni Park and was pleased to fund this project. CFPD and HAP hope that the lighting of the trees invites more people to make use of this little greenspace, and are certain that it will at least add to the beauty of downtown Portage as people walk and drive by. The twinkling lights indeed have resulted in a "magical" sight this holiday season.



## Holiday Avenue Project

The Holiday Avenue Project (HAP) began in 2020 when a group of ladies came together with a vision to "beautify Portage la Prairie". For every major holiday, they decorate the meridian containers along Saskatchewan Avenue—the main thoroughfare across the City. They were also responsible for installing the "shooting star" lights along the causeway toward Island Park. The HAP ladies had a vision to also light up Vopni Park, and applied for a grant from CFPD to assist them.



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# Southport

Thanks to the ongoing support from Southport, the Community Foundation of Portage & District is able to share this grant story and show how your donations make an impact on Portage la Prairie & area.