



# Boulevard Garden Guidelines Review

*What We Heard – Options Identification and Refinement*  
February 18, 2021



## Engagement Summary

The City of Saskatoon is reviewing the Boulevard Gardening and Maintenance Guidelines (Guidelines), which provide information to residents on how to garden on City of Saskatoon (City)-owned boulevards in accordance with current bylaws and policies. This review and update of the Guidelines will provide more clarity on acceptable boulevard gardening practices, what is and is not allowed on boulevards and other types of City-owned rights of way, and bring the document into alignment with other City plans and strategies.

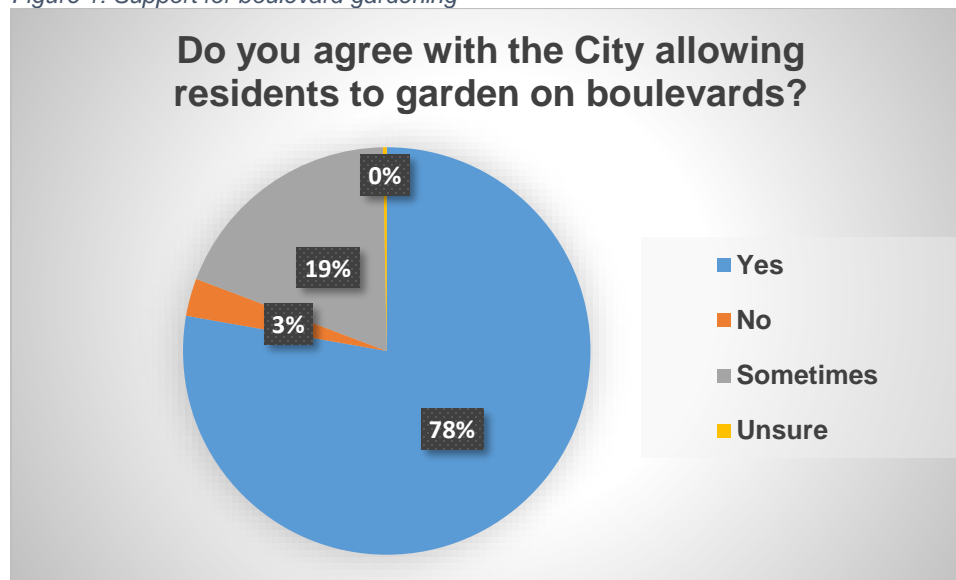
Engagement on the Guideline review is taking place from December 2020 to March 2021. Administration will update the Guidelines and look at options to expand the program based on what we hear from stakeholders, research in best practices from other cities, and an analysis of requirements and uses of City-owned rights-of-way across multiple departments. The Guideline updates and options for program expansion will be presented in a Decision Report to the Standing Policy Committee for Environment, Utilities & Corporate Services (EU&CS) in April 2021.

A total of 1,645 respondents participated in a survey during the second phase of engagement, which was focused on refinement of the current options and changes to the Guidelines. Guideline preferences that emerged from the online survey are discussed in this report.

### Overall View

Most participants agreed (78%) with the City allowing residents to garden on boulevards, with an additional 19% indicating support with the condition that gardens are well maintained. Many respondents stated they were unaware of the current Guidelines.

Figure 1: Support for boulevard gardening



### Special Use Category

Participants supported the City expanding the program through a special use application process (73%) and supported the proposed process (74%).

The main comments regarding the special use process included:

*Notify before City maintenance:* participants should be notified prior to any boulevard maintenance or impacts to their gardens due to City work, information should be provided as to what scenarios could lead to the City needing to impact gardens

*Safety:* allowing people to go into the street and adding plants and structures that block visibility for crossing pedestrians is a concern

*Standardize:* following the initial rollout all requests should be reviewed and the most common special requests should be incorporated as standard

### User Agreement

When asked whether the City should have residents sign a user agreement to garden on additional spaces once their application was approved, the majority of respondents said yes (68%). Comments on user agreements included the following main themes:

*Clear and simple:* the agreement should clearly define the guidelines and liabilities associated, lay out the expectations of both parties

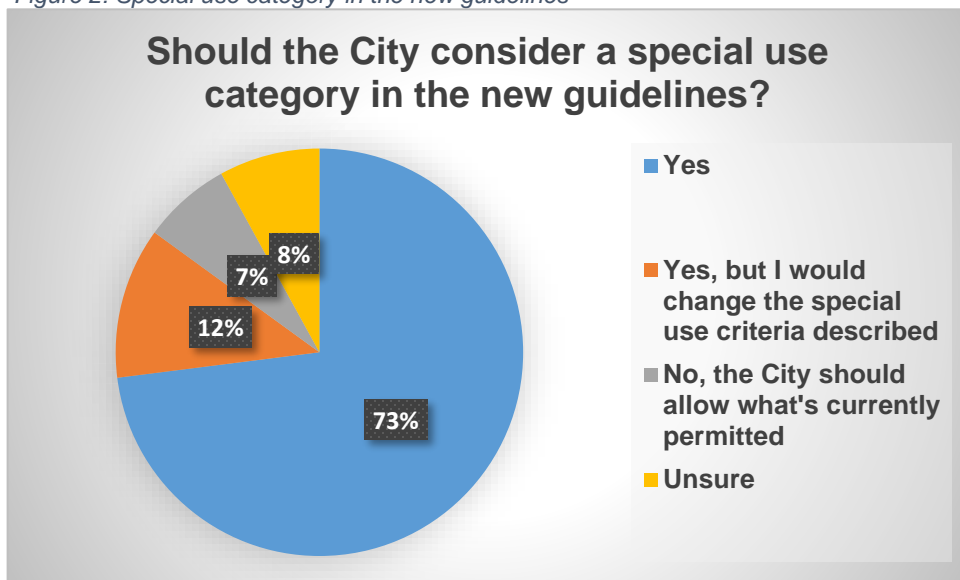
*Enforcement:* a major concern for many respondents, signing an agreement ensures the participants are aware of their accountability, sets expectations

*Moving:* questions if agreements tied to the property or the individual, what happens if individuals move, who is then responsible for maintaining/closing the plot

### Other City-Owned Spaces

The majority of respondents agreed (86%) with allowing residents to garden on other types of City-owned spaces. Other suggested types of City-owned spaces for consideration included City-owned dead zones (i.e., along fences, undeveloped sidewalk allowances, buffers, etc.), civic centres (ex. libraries), along the perimeters of parks, and along sound barriers. There was mixed support for median gardens; concerns included the potential for medians to not be aesthetically pleasing and the safety concerns regarding gardening within roadways, while the main reason for support was turning unused spaces into a potentially workable space for food security.

Figure 2: Special use category in the new guidelines



### Application Fees

Most respondents were not supportive of an application fee for special uses (49%). Furthermore, 26% of respondents supported the fee but felt that it should be waived for low income residents; 15% supported the fee with no conditions, and 10% were unsure. If fees needed to be administered, then the amount being between \$10 - \$25 was generally accepted by respondents. Comments included the following themes:

*City benefits:* the City and communities will benefit from not having to maintain these areas as the public beautifies them, there are also environmental benefits for the entire community

*Fees as deposits:* fees should be held and returned following removal of the garden or the selling of a home, fees could be returned to participants if there are no complaints and the gardens are maintained, fees are used only if the City needs to assume responsibility to cleanup the garden

*Fines over fees:* cost recovery should be gained from ticketing unmaintained gardens rather than those that follow the guidelines, residents should be charged (ex. clean-up fee) for any cleanup required rather than an initial fee

### Input from Neighbours

When asked whether the City should require residents to get input from their neighbours before gardening on City-owned spaces most respondents said no (47%), followed by yes except for boulevards and property frontages (25%) and for all City-owned spaces (14%). Respondents suggested that relationships between neighbours can be complicated, and the City may want to avoid creating unnecessary tension. The following main comments were suggested by participants:


*Differing opinions:* neighbours will inevitably have differing opinions on what a maintained garden is, differences in aesthetics between perennial flowers and native species

*Education:* information campaigns should be administered to let communities know about potential gardening in front of their properties

*Renters:* there are added complexities in rental units due to landlords potentially not allowing tenants to have gardens near their properties

### Barriers to Boulevard Gardening

Out of the suggested barriers that would prevent respondents from gardening on their boulevard, the following were ranked by respondents:

- 
1. I'm worried about garden damage or theft
  2. I'm concerned about the maintenance
  3. The process is confusing
  4. I'm a renter and I'm unsure if my landlord would be supportive
  5. My neighbours aren't supportive

Other suggested barriers included:

- Administrative process for applying
- Aesthetics and public approval
- City maintenance impacts to potential garden sites (ex. snowplowing, salting, etc.),
- Confusion as to what a boulevard garden is

- Lack knowledge of native and beneficial plant species

### Supporting Boulevard Gardening

Respondents were asked to identify three of seven proposed ways the City could best support boulevard gardening. The results included:



1. Provide free compost and wood chips
2. Support a volunteer program where residents maintain gardens in their neighbourhood
3. Provide garden incentives such as grants or in-kind support
4. Provide a map of areas where boulevard gardening works well
5. Develop educational materials

Numerous suggestions for additional support programs were provided, including delivering compost/mulch to new gardens, educating City staff (graders, sweepers, mowers, etc.) about the program and potential risks, increasing access to local seed banks, and involving community associations/groups/schools in the program.

### Wildflowers and Native Plants

When asked whether the City should increase their wildflower and naturalized plantings in City-owned spaces, the vast majority of respondents indicated yes everywhere that is appropriate in terms of cost and other criteria (80%). Comments surrounding wildflower and naturalized plantings in City-owned spaces included the following main themes:

*Aesthetics versus native plants:* many respondents support gardens looking aesthetically pleasing and planting native plants which do not always go hand and hand, neatly groomed gardens are not the natural state of the native prairie that Saskatoon was built on

*Invasive species:* work with local conservation authorities to screen for invasive species and plants that spread (ex. creeping bellflower)

*Pollinator species:* native species are extremely beneficial for pollinator species (ex. bees and insects) and wildlife which need all the help they can get

When asked if they would like the City to provide the community with design, planting, and maintenance support for wildflowers on City-owned spaces the majority of respondents said yes (66%). Participants provided suggestions for how the City could support the community further, which included providing delivery services for compost and mulch, providing educational information on invasive species, establishing a volunteer stewardship program, and providing suggested plant lists that incorporate Indigenous ways of knowing.

### Common Themes:

Overall, respondents greatly supported the revisions to the guidelines and expressed their excitement for participating in the program in the future. Overarching themes from the comments provided by participants are summarized below:

*Accessibility and low-income considerations:* boulevard gardening should be made financially accessible for everyone, fees act as a significant barrier for low-income residents

*Education:* education is important for the success of the guidelines and their support in the community, numerous educational opportunities exist but they must focus on stating the importance of boulevard gardens

*Enforcement and maintenance:* what enforcement measures will be taken for those that do not maintain their gardens, there should be consequences (i.e., fines, removal, etc.)

*Grass:* numerous respondents commented on the need to move away from typical green grass towards more native plants to encourage better local ecology

*Food security:* growing food is a right of every human on our planet and we should strive to create more ethical opportunities and less barriers to do so

*Promoting biodiversity:* plantings that protect bees, birds and native plants should be encouraged, limit invasive species which are a common problem in boulevard gardens

*Raised beds:* are important for boulevard gardening due to soil compaction/contamination, numerous respondents believed using raised beds is the only way to properly garden in boulevards, provide many benefits to accessibility groups and seniors, planters should not creep or lean onto the sidewalks to prevent tripping hazards, materials should not be treated wood

*Safety:* an important concern for many, reduce the height of plants and raised planters to prevent traffic visibility issues

*Simplify:* simplify the guidelines, application process and administrative procedures as much as possible, do not over-regulate

*Timely:* any approval/review system for agreements would need to respond in a timely fashion to ensure needs are met and gardening can be started within the optimal timeframe

*Unneeded bureaucracy:* are these additional administrative complexities truly needed, the application process could limit uptake, simply expand the allowed things people can or cannot grow and limit the administrative burden

### **Next Steps:**

The remaining phase of engagement will further validate the Guidelines by:

- Identifying preference and level of support for proposed changes in the Guidelines
- Validating key findings from the first phase of engagement and identify any outstanding issues that need to be addressed

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## 1 Background

The City of Saskatoon is reviewing the Boulevard Gardening and Maintenance Guidelines (Guidelines), which provide information to residents on how to garden on City of Saskatoon (City)-owned boulevards in accordance with current bylaws and policies. This review and update of the Guidelines will provide more clarity on acceptable boulevard gardening practices, what is and is not allowed on boulevards and other types of City-owned rights of way, and bring the document into alignment with other City plans and strategies.

Project outcomes include:

1. Updating the Guidelines for bylaw and policy requirements through engagement with internal/external stakeholders and a best practise scan of other municipalities.
2. Aligning with goals from associated City strategies (i.e., Green Infrastructure Strategy, Low Impact Development Guidelines, Boulevard and Median Asset Management Strategy, etc.) and updating City documents (i.e., Tree Protection Policy, Traffic Bylaw, Community Garden Guidelines, etc.)
3. Developing best practises and educational materials for communicating the Guidelines to internal and external stakeholders and the diversity of participants in time for the 2021 gardening season.

Engagement on the Guideline review is taking place from December 2020 to March 2021. Administration will update the Guidelines and look at options to expand the program based on what we hear from stakeholders, research in best practices from other cities, and an analysis of requirements and uses of City-owned rights-of-way across multiple departments. The Guideline updates and options for program expansion will be presented in a Decision Report to the Standing Policy Committee for Environment, Utilities & Corporate Services EU&CS in April 2021.

### 1.1 Strategic Goals

This project supports the Strategic Goal of Environmental Leadership, contributing to responsible land use. This work also addresses the City's goal of regular continuous improvement and performing a review of the guidelines after approximately three years.

### 1.2 City Project Team

- Jeanna South, Director, Sustainability
- Jessie Best, Project Manager, Sustainability
- Katie Burns, Manager Community Leadership and Program Development, Sustainability
- Megan Quintal, Marketing Consultant, Communications & Public Engagement
- Kenton Lysak, Engagement Consultant, Communications & Public Engagement

### 1.3 Spokesperson(s)

- Jeanna South, Director, Sustainability
- Katie Burns, Manager Community Leadership and Program Development, Sustainability

## 2 Summary of Engagement Strategy

The following engagement goals were identified to help inform the review of the Boulevard Garden Guidelines:

- Guidelines review and options identification
  - Review pre-existing program guidelines with internal stakeholders and boulevard garden users
  - Identify new program elements that enhance opportunities and mitigate barriers.
- Refinement of current guidelines
  - Review guidelines with a wider stakeholder base
  - Validate key findings and identify missed opportunities
- Close the Loop
  - Share components of the guidelines with stakeholders to confirm changes and provide opportunities to identify any red flags.
  - Validate key findings and test with wider stakeholder base.
- Education and Communication
  - Work with key stakeholders to ensure all education and communication materials are effective for a wide range of user groups

We Are Here

### 2.1 Stakeholder Groups

Four stakeholder groups were identified with the potential to be impacted by the Boulevard Garden updates. These groups include:

#### 2.1.1 Internal Stakeholders

- Internal stakeholders with associated knowledge or correlated projects involving boulevard gardens, including:
  - Bylaw Compliance
  - City Solicitors
  - Communications and Marketing
  - Community Development
  - Sustainability (Community Leadership and Program Development)
  - Community Standards
  - Compost Facilities
  - Indigenous Initiatives
  - Neighbourhood Safety
  - Parks – Urban Forestry and Maintenance
  - Roadways and Operations
  - Saskatoon Light and Power
  - Social Development
  - Transportation
  - Utilities

#### 2.1.2 Subject Matter Experts

- Internal and external stakeholders with experience or knowledge related to boulevard gardens, permaculture, and using green spaces for food security. These include:
  - Community Garden Groups:

- CHEP Community Garden Network
- Conservation Advocates:
  - Lichen Nature
  - Meewasin Valley Authority
  - Saskatchewan Environmental Society
  - SOS Trees
  - Wild About Saskatoon
- Existing boulevard gardeners
- Healthy Yards Partners:
  - CHEP Good Food and Community Garden Leaders
  - Little Green Thumbs
  - Native Plant Society of Saskatchewan
  - Saskatchewan Waste Reduction Council's Compost Coaches
  - Saskatoon Food Bank and Learning Center's Garden Patch
  - Saskatoon Food Council
- University of Saskatchewan:
  - College of Agriculture and Bioresources
    - Plant Science
    - Soil Science
  - Master Gardeners
  - MOST Facility
  - Office of Sustainability

### 2.1.3 Key Stakeholder Groups

- Key Stakeholder Groups are those who have potential to be disproportionately impacted (either positively or negatively) by the changes to the Guidelines and any residual or cumulative impacts that could be affected by the initiative. Specific stakeholders within this group will be identified as the engagement program progresses. The following groups have been identified to date:
  - Equity, Low Income and Newcomer Residents/Organizations
    - Low to moderate income residents and others who have difficulty accessing programs were identified as stakeholders who may experience disproportionate barriers to accessing boulevard gardens
    - Groups include:
      - Local Immigration Partnership
      - Newcomers Information Centre
      - Open Doors Society
      - OUTSaskatoon
      - Saskatoon Council for Aging
      - Saskatoon Poverty Reduction Partnership – First Voice Group
      - Saskatoon Services for Seniors
      - Truly Alive Youth and Family Foundation Inc.
  - Indigenous Groups/Organizations
    - Potential contacts include:
      - Central Urban Métis Federation Inc.

- City of Saskatoon – Indigenous Technical Advisory Group
- City of Saskatoon – Saskatoon Survivors Circle
- Gabriel Dumont Local #11
- Indigenous food security advocates
  - Decolonizing Food Access and Land Use Group
  - Saskatoon Health Authority
  - University of Saskatchewan College of Indigenous Studies
- Saskatoon Indian and Métis Friendship Centre
- Saskatoon Indigenous Community Action Plan
- Saskatoon Tribal Council
- Specific Community Groups/Organizations:
  - Accessibility advocates
  - Dog walkers
  - Safety advocates
  - Senior citizens

#### 2.1.4 Active and Potential Program Users

- Includes those stakeholder groups who currently use boulevard gardens and currently participate in Boulevard Gardening. Examples of target audiences for engagement under this category include:
  - Businesses and organizations
    - Business Improvement Districts (BIDs)
  - Community Associations
  - Developers
  - Industry Professionals:
    - Irrigation installers and suppliers
    - Landscaping businesses
  - Property Managers
    - Saskatchewan Landlords' Association
  - Residents (renters and homeowners)
  - Schools

A summary of stakeholder groups, level of engagement, engagement objectives, engagement goals and engagement activities completed are provided below.

Table 2: Summary of Engagement Strategy

| Phase | Stakeholder  | Level of Influence | Objective   | Engagement Goal                              | Potential Engagement Activities                        |
|-------|--|--------------------|---|--|--|
| 1     | Internal Stakeholders<br>Subject Matter Experts  | Collaborate        | Review guidelines and identify opportunities/barriers.  | Guidelines Review and Options Identification | Emails<br>Meetings<br>Phone Calls<br>Survey (Optional) |
| 2     | Internal Stakeholders<br>Key Stakeholders<br>Potential Users<br>Subject Matter Experts | Involve            | Review program elements with a wider stakeholder base to refine new program elements and identify red flags | Refinement                                   | Emails<br>Meetings<br>Phone Calls<br>Surveys           |
| 3     | Internal Stakeholders<br>Subject Matter Experts  | Collaborate        | Obtain feedback and validate key findings   | Close the Loop                               | Emails<br>Meetings<br>Phone Calls                      |
|       | Key Stakeholders<br>Potential Users  | Involve            | Obtain feedback.  | Close the Loop                               | Emails<br>Phone Calls<br>Survey                        |
| 4     | Key Stakeholders<br>Subject Matter Experts   | Consult            | Obtain feedback.  | Review Content                               | Emails<br>Meetings<br>Phone Calls                      |

### 3 Engagement Activities

Stakeholder meetings and a public survey were used to collect feedback to inform the review of the Guidelines. The public were also able to provide input through the City of Saskatoon Engage page forum, or contact the Project Manager directly via email, mail, or telephone.

#### 3.1 Stakeholder Meetings

Consultations were held with select Key Stakeholder Groups to determine barriers and opportunities related to boulevard gardening.

##### 3.1.1 Intended Audience

The stakeholders that participated in the Individual Stakeholder Meetings included the following:

- Healthy Yards Partners
- Internal stakeholders and committees

##### 3.1.2 Marketing Techniques

No marketing techniques were employed for these activities. Participating stakeholders were contacted individually by the project leads to organize meetings.

##### 3.1.3 Analysis

Meeting notes were provided by the project team and engagement consultant, which the engagement consultant analyzed using mixed methods. Qualitative methods included a thematic analysis and open coding of responses to identify key concepts.

##### 3.1.4 What We Heard

Results from stakeholder meetings were already captured within the Public Survey comments and therefore were not expanded upon in this report.

#### 3.2 Public Survey

The Administration conducted an online public survey from December 17<sup>th</sup>, 2020 to January 31<sup>st</sup>, 2020. The public survey comprised a total of 37 closed- and open-ended questions to identify their support for the guidelines and to determine any needed changes. Respondents were able to write-in an “other” preference for numerous questions and provide explanations for their preferences.

##### 3.2.1 Intended Audience

The Public Survey was intended for all stakeholders and potential program users.

##### 3.2.2 Marketing Techniques

A variety of marketing techniques were employed to reach the intended audience.

1. City Website
  - a. Updates to the Engage Page were made to encourage participation in the online survey.
2. Social Media
  - a. The social media campaign, which ran from January 1-31, included Facebook and Twitter ads promoting the survey. All paid social media ads used targeting optimization in an effort to reach our audience most effectively.

3. Digital
  - a. Online banner and display ads were also used, targeted to Saskatoon.
4. Email
  - a. Personalized emails were sent to organizations and community members asking them to share the information with their members.

### 3.2.3 Analysis

The suggested changes and review of the guidelines were analyzed for the following indicators:

- Most popular program changes and recommendations (count)
- Thematic analysis of reasoning offered for inclusion of certain program components over others
- Look for program component selections that might improve or reduce accessibility and uptake

Mixed methods were used to analyze the data. Qualitative methods included the thematic analysis and open coding of responses.

### 3.2.4 What We Heard

#### *Demographics*

A total of 1,645 respondents participated in the Public Survey. The majority of participants were not current boulevard gardeners (65%), followed by individuals planning to be boulevard gardeners (26%) and those that already were (7%).

The distribution for respondent ages was relatively even, with the majority of responses coming from a 35-49 age group (38%), followed by 20-34 (30%), 50-64 (25%), and over 65 (7%). All neighbourhoods within the City had representation, with representation being highest in the following areas: Nutana, College Park, Caswell Hill, City Park, Haultain, and Varsity View. The survey was shared amongst Indigenous, accessibility, low-income, and minority groups. There was little uptake within the business community (1%).

#### *General*

Most participants agreed (78%) with the City allowing residents to garden on boulevards, with an additional 19% indicating support with the condition that gardens are well maintained. Many respondents stated in their comments that they were unaware of the current Guidelines.

#### *Special Use Category*

Participants supported the City adding a special use category in the new guidelines, with 73% saying yes and 12% saying yes but they would change the special use criteria as described. 74% of respondents agreed with the proposed special use application process, with only 12% saying no and 14% saying they were unsure.

Participants were asked whether native plants should be considered in the special use category. However, many respondents suggested that planting native plants/wildflowers/grasses should be included within the regular rules due to their ecological benefits and their benefits being widely accepted amongst the gardening community. The inclusion of raised planters being a special use category was supported.

The top comments regarding the special use category in the guidelines were summarized by theme and included:

1. **Simple process:** the process should not be too complicated or cumbersome to apply for, streamline the process

*“The guidelines for special use are unnecessarily labor-intensive for both homeowners and the city. If boulevard gardens are permitted, then allowable gardens should be as broadly and inclusively designated as possible. Long lists of exceptions and case-by-case formalities are just deterrents. Disallowing certain things should be only complaint-driven, as are many other bylaws in this city.”*

*“If these have to be reviewed case by case, maybe they'll have mapped out neighborhoods that are automatically approved to speed the process along. You could have a website that auto filters the approval onto the final stages if they select certain areas from a drop-down menu. People shouldn't be restricted to the bottleneck of investigators workloads with the city, we want this process to be efficient.”*

*“If people are taking the time to garden outside of their yard, I feel like it will be beautiful. Less barriers the better. Maybe offer a small grant for planting veggies and native plants. Also, an elder told me planting perennials is an act of reconciliation as we are reclaiming the land.”*

2. **Unneeded bureaucracy:** are these additional administrative complexities truly needed, the application process could limit uptake, simply expand the allowed things people can or cannot grow and limit the administrative burden, time and money are better spent elsewhere, let complaints trigger review

*“I think they should be able to garden as they want, following guidelines. And if there's a complaint and The City follows up the provide proof after that it's a special circumstance. A lot of paperwork to file before, and people don't want to wait to get gardens going.”*

*“Why make it bureaucratic and complicated? Just clearly specify what you would permit on a Boulevard. If you absolutely don't want people to put raised beds on the boulevard then tell them that.”*

3. **Enforcement and maintenance:** what enforcement measures will be taken for those who do not maintain their gardens, mid season or annual pictures/review/reapplications could be sent by all participants to ensure gardens are being maintained, some individual gardeners could get fiercely protective of their gardens which could cast a shadow on the program, enforcement needs to be done in a timely fashion, there should be consequences (i.e., fines, removal, etc.) for individuals who do not follow the guidelines

4. **Promoting biodiversity:** plantings that protect bees, birds and native plants should be encouraged, limit invasive species which are a common problem in boulevard gardens

*“I think that wildflowers, native plants and grasses should be encouraged whenever possible. Native grassland is one of the most endangered ecosystems in the world, and people shouldn't have to jump through hoops to reclaim small sections of native plants, native plants should be encouraged!”*

5. **Raised beds:** are important for boulevard gardening due to soil compaction/contamination, provide many benefits to accessibility groups and seniors, raised beds potentially use more water, planters should not creep or lean onto the sidewalks to prevent tripping hazards, materials should not be treated wood

Additional comments provided by the respondents included:



*Accessible:* allowing for raised planters promotes greater inclusivity for individuals with physical disabilities and seniors who wish to garden, wheelchair accessibility to plots is a concern, provide information to individuals without internet access, stipulations should be in place to ensure walkways are available between the sidewalk and street for residential parking

*Aesthetics:* gardens should look maintained and inviting, who will be responsible for returning them to their original state/curb appeal, gardens must be maintained or else they can quickly look like a disaster

*Applicant review:* the applicant's track record should be considered, including bylaw complaints and open building permits

*Confusion:* there was some confusion on the difference between regular and special use categories, what constitutes as City-spaces within residential yards, will neighbours be able to garden in their neighbours plots, how will City practises (i.e., snow removal, mowing, salting, etc.) change to accommodate the influx of boulevard gardens, what are weeds versus native plants

*Consistency:* ensure all raised beds are the equivalent or have maximum dimensions

*Costs:* there were mixed opinions on this theme with many respondents calling for fees to provide incentive to maintain the gardens while others called for no costs associated with the application process, fees should be waived for school or community groups

*Education:* reference materials and photos should be made available to showcase a healthy boulevard garden, opportunities to educate on what is a native plant, provide building instructions/examples of raised beds, include workshops, keep messaging simple (i.e., lists of what can or cannot be planted)

*Food over grass:* numerous respondents commented on the need to move away from typical green grass towards more native plants to encourage better local ecology

*Height restriction:* introduce a height restriction for plants at minimum 10' from intersections, plants should not impede traffic visibility

*Indigenous considerations:* by bringing native plants back into the land it may also tie with the Truth and Reconciliation Commissions' commitment for Indigenous peoples

*Inform:* participants should be notified prior to any boulevard maintenance or impacts to their gardens due to City work, information should be provided as you apply as to what scenarios could lead to the City needing to impact gardens

*Neighbours input:* neighbours should be notified or allowed to give input on whether a user will be accepted or include representation from at minimum five owners to the entire block/street/crescent within a request, neighbourhoods should be unified in their support

*No restrictions:* if individuals want to garden on City spaces then there should be no restrictions, individuals should have the right to grow what they want in the spaces for food security

*"Citizen should have the right to plant and take care of these spaces without having to ask permission and go through a process that undermines personal determination and sovereignty."*

**Safety:** allowing people to go into the street and planting plants that block visibility for crossing pedestrians is a concern, do not allow fences or mesh around plots, do not plant plants with high toxicity

**Soil conditions:** will soil testing be required considering the potential for growing edible plants in potentially contaminated soil, growing food near parked cars creates apprehension for some, trees sucking up moisture could have a negative impact unless raised planters are used, will participants be able to use fertilizers/herbicides/pesticides in these plots

*“Raised beds are the only way people can grow food safely, because gardeners know what is in their soil. You can't safely grow food directly in the ground on a city boulevard (because you don't know what's in the soil), so I strongly believe raised beds are important for people who want to grow food.”*

**Sustainable gardens:** limit potential maintenance and resources by promoting indigenous plants

**Timeframe:** decisions and processing applications need to be made in a timely fashion, especially during the onset of the gardening season

**Watering:** how will watering be performed within median gardens, garden hoses could provide tripping and driving hazards

*“Boulevard's have a great potential for offering garden produce to those waiting for buses (as in our case where our Church has implemented a landscape policy on our grounds for garden plant produce for anyone who wants to help themselves) or any pedestrian traffic in the area. This should be subject to responsible upkeep by the holders of property agreeing to care for the boulevard.”*

*“If people don't look after their spot they get a warning and a 2-3 day time limit to do the upkeep required (weather permitting) and if they don't, they don't get their deposit back or they get a fine. A deposit could be required to those who want the specialty areas.”*

### **User Agreement for Special Uses**

When asked whether the City should have residents sign a user agreement for special uses of City-owned spaces the majority of respondents said yes (68%), with 15% stating no and 16% being unsure. The most mentioned comments that were provided included the following themes:

1. **Fees:** a large amount of respondents identified that there should be no fees associated with the agreements/applications in order to increase uptake overall and with low-income participants, however some respondents felt that a small application fee would weed out users that were not as serious about maintaining their gardens
2. **Enforcement:** a major concern for many respondents, signing an agreement ensures the participants are aware of their accountability, but it depends upon the true enforceability of the agreements and subsequent consequences (ex. fines, areas cleared after 30 days, etc.)

*“Without a signed agreement, the city may be left with multiple unkept or poorly managed gardens. Applicants must be kept responsible.”*

*“Again make sure you have enough by law enforcement officers because this is just going to open up a whole lot of complaints from neighbours who don't like the design or don't believe the spaces are being maintained properly.”*

3. **Unneeded bureaucracy:** too much of an administrative burden to manage, focus on enforcing the current bylaws already in place, this unnecessary red tape could deter many potential users

*“I don’t think their should be a user agreement. In the end it’s still city property and the city should be fully liable for that space. If a home owner wants to plant flowers or vegetation and agrees to take on the responsibility of that then they should be allowed without agreement contracts. Unnecessary paperwork and it’s another reason to “pass the buck” just like residential sidewalks.”*

*“Why treat them differently? Again, creating a new category adds more bureaucracy”*

4. **Clear and simple:** the agreement should clearly define the guidelines and liabilities associated, lay out the expectations of both parties, be a simple and quick process

*“In my experience, user agreements are impossibly long and unreadable contracts. If that’s the case, it’s disadvantageous to city residents. Any user agreement must be short, clear, written at a low reading level to be inclusive.”*

Additional comments provided were as follows:

**Accessibility:** all agreements will need to use plain language to allow newcomers and individuals with various disabilities the ability to fully understand what they are signing

*“Will you have translators to make sure people understand the agreements? Will all material/agreements be translated into other languages? What if someone is illiterate? The City needs to make this an accessible program and look at the strengths of the communities and residents and tap into that.”*

**Accountability:** an agreement supports participants needing to maintain their gardens, it also supports any safety requirements outlined in the current guidelines, sets expectations, if the gardens are not maintained then who is responsible (i.e., condo boards, neighbours, co-signers, CHEP, etc.)

**Assistance:** some respondents suggested including options for free/subsidized consultations with the City or other landscaping experts for designing their gardens, assistance can be granted if requested by the participants

**Exceptions:** back alley gardens should not require an agreement, but medians should

**Monetizing:** how will agreement approach urban producers that are looking to sell their food grown within the garden plots

**Moving:** are agreements tied to the property or the individual, what happens if individuals move, who is then responsible for maintaining/closing the plot, there should be a notification provided if participants are moving and they must return boulevard to its original state

*“Would the agreement be binding on a new owner if the residential property is sold? Would the current owner be held responsible for any remedial work required if the house sold?”*

**Provide information:** the agreement could include information that reaffirms a participant’s understanding of the guidelines, such as including lists of do’s and don’ts as well as invasive species

**Reassessment:** users should be reassessed each year by going through the application process to ensure they follow the guidelines and are updated on any changes, make the application process seasonal like the green cart program

**Timely:** any approval/review system for agreements would need to respond in a timely fashion to ensure needs are met and gardening can be started within the optimal timeframe

**Vandalism:** can cause gardens to be abandoned due to the loss of food/plants, whose responsibility is it to maintain/clean following vandalism

### **Other City-Owned Spaces**

The majority of respondents agreed (86%) with allowing residents to garden on other types of City-owned spaces. Suggested types of City-owned spaces for consideration included:

- Alleys
- Any spaces that do not impede safety
- Back lanes
- Bus stops – using container or vertical gardens
- Community gardens – create more opportunities, especially in low-income areas
- City-owned dead zones – along fences, developmental, undeveloped sidewalk allowances, buffers, utility areas/lines
- Civic centres/facilities - libraries
- Corridors
- Dog parks – outer fence line
- Downtown – raised planters
- Easements
- Empty/abandoned/vacant lots
- Highways – using microgreens along Circle Drive reduces mowing
- Medians – some hesitation due to the traffic concerns and aesthetics
- Meewasin trail
- Naturalized parks – only planting native species
- Parks – perimeter plots, pocket parks, can lead to demonstration projects
- Pathways
- Pop-up gardens
- Roof tops – residential, industrial, or civic buildings
- Roundabouts and clover roadways
- School yards
- Sound barriers
- Storm ponds
- Streetlights – hanging planters
- Vertical gardens on buildings

Some respondents suggested additional gardening spaces should not be explored until the program determines how active users have adjusted to the new guidelines and the success of the program is determined. If the program is viewed as a success, then the guidelines could be expanded to include the proposed other spaces.

Another area that was heavily commented on was medians, which were both supported and not due to the potential for medians to not be aesthetically pleasing, the potential harm to trees and the safety concerns regarding gardening within roadways. Reasons for supporting gardening in medians included using every available space for food security and creating aesthetically pleasing gardens in currently vacant spaces. Other respondents expressed their concern for planting edible plants within areas of intense traffic due to the potential bioconcentration and toxicity of soils. Medians are also regularly driven over by service, emergency or public vehicles which could add to gardens being ruined.

*“I would say yes to back lanes but a huge no to medians. The city needs to be responsible to rid medians of unsightly weeds and keep them mowed.”*

*“I think the medians should remain with the city. Otherwise streets may end up looking very disorganized and unkempt.”*

### **Maintaining Gardens**

Respondents ranked the proposed options for how the City can ensure gardens are well maintained and not abandoned as follows:

1. Provide public education about the bylaws prior to issuing fines (65%)
2. The gardener signs a user agreement with the City (65%)
3. The gardener is required to submit an annual site photo to show compliance (43%)
4. Maintain the current system of bylaw enforcement (39%)

Additional suggestions for maintaining gardens included:

- Ban repeating offenders or those that do not respond to warnings for up to three years
- City has the ability to retake the space if standards are not followed
- City reverts the space back to its original state
- Community Associations assign and monitor gardens within their neighbourhoods
- Community gardens/associations/groups are offered the neglected spaces
- Complaint-driven system
- Correctional services could assist in maintaining neglected gardens
- Create a competition for best boulevard garden
- Create a social community around gardens to allow people to assist each other
- Ensure new homeowners are aware of any gardens associated with previous owners/their property
- Establish a volunteer program that allows youth, seniors, and volunteers to take care of neglected gardens
- Establish minimum expectations for gardens to combat different views on aesthetics
- Focus on benefits and incentives rather than consequences
- Hire garden monitors (summer student positions) that review complaints and fields questions, like compost coaches
- Neighbours or co-signers to the application should then take ownership
- Offer the space to other gardeners through a notification system – allow for collaboration
- Participants who abandon their gardens should have to pay for its maintenance
- Post City-created signs at each garden with a contact number/email for complaints

- Provide and promote mulch to suppress weeds even if gardens are abandoned
- Provide notice (i.e., two weeks, 30 days, etc.) prior to any actions that are taken
- Public education programs that includes how to return abandoned spaces to original state
- Require 2-3 signatories per user agreement to provide secondary support
- Showcase proper gardens through social media posts and community newsletters
- Student-led stewardship (ex. Snow Angel program) within neighbourhoods
- Water rebates/incentives for participants
- Work with gardeners to maintain the space and send additional information

Comments provided by respondents surrounding maintaining gardens included the following themes:

*Create a community:* creating a community presence via social media (ex. YXEUrbanBoulevard Gardening) keeps people accountable and connects them to experienced gardeners that could provide information

*Equal treatment:* some City spaces were identified as not being aesthetically pleasing to the public, therefore the same standards should be applied to City spaces as public gardens

*Disbelief:* numerous respondents expressed disbelief that participants who took the effort to apply for a garden would not use/maintain it, considering the secondary costs (i.e., soil, compost, fertilizer, etc.) it seems unlikely that the space would be neglected

*Fines:* could cast a negative view on the program, it is difficult to punish individuals that have the intention of beautifying our City, deters low-income participants from participating, seems like a cost-recovery program for the City

*Framing as positive:* frame the argument as an opportunity to contribute to the public good and building a better City

*Education:* is fundamental to the success of the guidelines and their regular maintenance, include information (i.e., hours involved in weekly maintenance, water requirements, etc.) in an application package

*Enforcement:* how will photos be verified for the correct address, timing of photos is important since gardens change visually throughout the season, variability in the quality of photos, bylaw inspector would not have the level of plant knowledge to identify invasive species like a weed inspector would

*Providing support at a cost:* offer support for gardeners with soil, water access, composting, and scrap lumber for building raised beds with associated fees

### **Application Fee**

Most respondents were not supportive of an application fee for special uses (49%); however, some agreed with the application fee (15%) or agreed but felt the fee should be waived for low-income residents (26%), while others were unsure (10%).

The top comments regarding administering application fees included the following themes:

1. *Low-income considerations:* fees act as a significant barrier for low-income residents, provide a payment plan for those unable to pay upfront, allow fees to be refunded at the end of the season for well maintained gardens, fees could be administered on a sliding scale based on

income, how would you determine low-income status since providing proof of income is in itself a barrier

*“The whole idea is to benefit people who can't afford housing with yards to garden in. I boulevard garden, plus my front yard & community garden. Paying a fee just makes it inaccessible to those who need it.”*

*“A fee might create barriers for people who would otherwise want to maintain a garden. Waiving it for low income residents might be fair, though it might also be hard to determine who should be eligible and some people may slip through the cracks.”*

2. **Fines over fees:** cost recovery should be gained from ticketing unmaintained gardens rather than those that follow the guidelines, residents should be charged (ex. clean-up fee) for any cleanup required rather than an initial fee
3. **Food security:** growing food should be made to be more accessible in order to promote food security, defeats the purpose of cultivating one's own food

*“My gut instinct says that those who wish to have a garden space on city property are doing so because of a desire to beautify the space and/or grow fresh and nutritious food for their household. As such, I don't believe residents should be charged an application fee.”*

Additional comments provided by the respondents included:

**Accountability:** fees along with a signed user agreement ensure proper maintenance by participants

**Amount:** if a fee is to be charged then a one-time fee of \$50 or less (\$10-\$25) would be preferred

**City benefits:** the City and communities will benefit from not having to maintain these areas as the public beautifies them, the program should not disincentivize future participants

*“An application fee could limit people able to participate and the benefits to our ecosystem/community can likely reduce burden on city workers maintaining said city property.”*

**Costs should be covered by the City:** costs should be covered by the yearly savings for not maintaining the area, community garden fees are low and the program provides more benefits (ex. water, compost, etc.)

**Environmental benefits:** the City should encourage residents to reduce their environmental footprint rather than view this as an opportunity to introduce fees

**Equal treatment:** if fees are applied then all applications should have to pay them not just special use gardens

**Fees as deposits:** fees should be held and returned following removal of the garden or the selling of a home, fees could be returned to participants if there are no complaints and the gardens are maintained, fees are used only if the City needs to assume responsibility to cleanup the garden, a prorated fee could be waived monthly or deducted from property taxes with proof of maintenance (i.e., photos)

**Fiscal responsibility:** most fees are viewed as a money-making opportunity by the City and therefore would be viewed negatively, if fees are needed then they should be for cost-recovery only

**Frustration:** many respondents were adamant that a fee associated with the program would deter residents from participating,

**Incentives:** gardeners participating for multiple years should either have the fees waived or reduced, school and community groups should get reduced fees,

**Secondary costs:** if fees are needed then keep them low since people will have upfront and associated costs with building and maintaining the garden in the first place (i.e., soil, water, wood, etc.)

### **Input From Neighbours**

When asked whether the City should require residents to get input from their neighbours before gardening on City-owned spaces most respondents said no (47%), followed by yes except for boulevards and property frontages (25%) and for all City-owned spaces (14%). The remaining were unsure (14%).

Top comments regarding residents needing to get input from their neighbours included the following themes:

1. **Relationships:** relationships between neighbours can be complicated and the City may want to avoid inviting unnecessary tensions, there will always be someone in opposition, unless they are actively involved in the garden then they should not be contacted, some neighbours can be spiteful or resistant to change, how many neighbours should be asked, what happens if a neighbour says no  
  
*“You can't be sure all neighbors will respond, what happens when there's not enough for a consensus? The applicants garden is put on hold? What if people say no because they're in a war with a neighbor? You can't accept requests for refusal without an investigation or it'll be unfair.”*  
  
*“It would be a kindness to ask or inform your neighbours prior but their approval of it shouldn't be required. If you're taking the time setting up a garden then I would assume it would be clear that it's your responsibility.”*
2. **Differing opinions:** neighbours will inevitably have differing opinions on what a maintained garden is, differences in aesthetics between perennial flowers and native species
3. **Education:** information campaigns should be administered to let communities know about potential gardening in front of their properties, encouraging this program to be community-based instead of individual-based could prevent further issues, provide handouts and information to be printed and distributed by the participant to educate neighbours
4. **Renters:** there are added complexities in rental units due to landlords potentially not allowing tenants to have gardens near their properties, with so many neighbours in one housing complex it would be extremely difficult to reach a consensus

Additional comments included the following themes:

**Allergies:** those with allergies to specific plants should be notified and have input if those plants are used



*Anonymous:* allow neighbours to provide feedback without the participant needing to approach the neighbour

*“I think if it is a common area such as a green space a letter should go out to inform neighbours of the gardeners intent and neighbours should have a set amount of time to object if they choose to.”*

*Community versus individual plots:* input is important for community gardens and spaces but not needed for individual plots

*Complaint-based:* instead of requiring neighbours input create a system that allows complaints to be received by the City, helps to report invasive species if they are used

*Corresponding:* it can be difficult to contact neighbours when they work or have an active lifestyle

*Demand:* how will the program deal with multiple requests for one plot from different neighbours

*Encouraged not mandatory:* requiring people to come together with applications can be difficult but those that voluntarily do so could be fast tracked or have their fees waived due to the extra support

*Input over agreement:* neighbours providing their input could be positive but signing an agreement should not be required due to the legal impacts

*Location:* input should be acquired when the garden is not part of the owner’s property (i.e., frontage and back alley), medians and special use permits could have neighbourhood feedback, garden plots in shared/community spaces could also have neighbour input

*Mediation:* mediation will be required in some cases to solve issues, communities or neighbourhoods could have a gardening champion that advises and makes decisions that impact the community, community associations could be involved


*Property values:* a boulevard garden could impact the local property values of neighbouring homes, therefore neighbours should have some sort of say in this process

*Too complicated:* this is another administrative burden that could be avoided

*Voting:* if the surrounding community is to be involved then a consensus should be gained through majority voting

### **Barriers to Boulevard Gardening**

Out of the suggested barriers that would prevent respondents from gardening on their boulevard, the following were ranked by respondents:

- 
1. I’m worried about garden damage or theft (45%)
  2. I’m concerned about the maintenance (23%)
  3. The process is confusing (17%)
  4. I’m a renter and I’m unsure if my landlord would be supportive (15%)
  5. My neighbours aren’t supportive (10%)
  6. I prefer grass planted by the City (9%)
  7. Gardening isn’t affordable (8%)
  8. I don’t know how to garden (8%)

Numerous other barriers were provided, including (\* indicates the commonly mentioned barriers):

- Accessibility considerations
- Access to water and irrigation
- Administrative process for applying \*
- Aesthetics and public approval \*
- Animals (ex. dogs, rabbits, cats, mice, etc.)
- City impacts to potential garden sites (ex. snowplows, salting, maintenance, etc.) \*
- Compost availability
- Confusion as to what a boulevard garden is – the top barrier commented on \*
- Construction companies and developers lacking awareness
- Contamination of soils and plants by vehicles
- Enforcement
- Health concerns
- Herbicides, pesticides, and insecticides
- Lack incentives and rebates for greater uptake
- Lack knowledge of native and beneficial plant species \*
- Lack of support from the City
- Landlords and condo associations preventing spaces to be used
- Natural and native plants look like weeds
- Neighbours and complaints
- Pollution, used needles and littering
- Potential fees associated with the program
- Prefer grass
- Rental limitations (ex. limited access to water)
- Religious reasons
- Require a raised bed
- Rules and restrictions
- Time constraints
- Too much work
- Traffic concerns, distracted drivers, and potential damage to parked cars
- Trampling by foot and cycling traffic
- Trees blocking sunlight
- Unaware of bylaws and restrictions
- Unaware of the guidelines
- Uninterested
- Vandalism and theft of food

### ***Supporting Boulevard Gardening***

Respondents were asked to identify three of seven proposed ways the City could best support boulevard gardening. The results included:



1. Provide free compost and wood chips (66%)
2. Support a volunteer program where residents maintain gardens in their neighbourhood (52%)
3. Provide garden incentives such as grants or in-kind support (48%)
4. Provide a map of areas where boulevard gardening works well (46%)
5. Develop educational materials (45%)
6. Provide garden design support (42%)
7. Help residents fill out the application form (23%)

Suggestions for additional support programs included:

- Conservatory and greenhouse examples of healthy gardens and native plants
- Create friendly competition through best boulevard contests
- Deliver compost and mulch to new gardens
- Educate City staff (i.e., graders, sweepers, mowers, etc.) about the program
- Establish a volunteer program to implement/maintain boulevard gardens and stewardship
- Identify water and utility lines that will need to be accessed near future gardens
- Improve on the current application form and process
- Increase access to local seed banks and allow gardeners to donate
- Involve community associations, youth groups, community groups, and schools
- Involve local organizations that support food security
  - CHEP Good Food and the askîy program
  - Native Plant Society of Saskatchewan
  - Perennial Society
  - Permaculture Society
  - Saskatchewan Horticultural Society
  - Saskatchewan Invasive Species Council
  - Saskatoon Food Bank and Community Garden
  - University of Saskatchewan Master Gardener Program
- Low-income support programs
- Newspapers/news for marketing
- Offer classes/workshops to educate people about boulevard gardening and the guidelines
- Offer soil tests or access to them
- Offer starter kits for new/low-income gardeners that include basic gardening tools and seeds
- Promotion and marketing campaigns designed for all audiences via social media
- Provide lists of common and native plants as well as local suppliers
- Provide maps of allowable garden spaces
- Provide plans on how to build a raised planter
- Provide signs that indicate the space as a garden to improve public awareness
- Reduced fees for green bins
- Showcase successful gardens in the community
- Simplify entire process

- Videos helping residents go through the process of applying and how to garden
- Watering subsidies

### **Wildflowers and Native Plants**

When asked whether the City should increase their wildflower and naturalized plantings in City-owned spaces the vast majority of respondents indicated yes in everywhere that is appropriate in terms of cost and other criteria (80%), followed by yes but only in sites where residents have requested them (9%). The remaining respondents were either not supportive (6%) or unsure (5%).

*“Wildflowers and natural plants add extreme benefit to the health of our ecosystem, they require significantly less water and maintenance than grass as they can survive off the natural rainfalls. They are also extremely beneficial for bee populations and i suggest putting a structure near the wildflowers where bees can safely hive.”*

*“Over the last few years I’ve loved seeing more native plants and flowers (even dandelions!) around the city. It’s so much better for local wildlife and insects and so much nicer to explore the city. I can’t wait to see more!”*  
*“The city could also put more emphasis on edible landscaping as well by planting more fruit trees and bushes and letting people know where they are.”*

Top comments surrounding wildflower and naturalized plantings in City-owned spaces included the following themes:

1. **Pollinator species:** native species are extremely beneficial for pollinator species (ex. bees and insects) and wildlife which need all the help they can get
2. **Aesthetics:** some respondents suggested that native plants can often look like weeds and are not aesthetically pleasing, has the potential to look unsightly for those looking for aesthetically pleasing plantings

*“Plant more native grasses, definitely. But some of them can look scruffy & unkempt no matter how well they’re tended. I would not like to see them in boulevard gardens at all. And I hate wildflowers. They’re a straggly, leggy mess. Let’s not try and domesticate wildflowers. Plant those where they’d grow naturally. Not in boulevard gardens of any kind. Let’s make sure “other criteria” include esthetics.”*

3. **Food security:** fruit-bearing plants such as saskatoons and choke cherries promote greater food security, many respondents supported planting more saskatoon berry bushes

*“I love this idea. I think that edible gardens should be considered on city owned property. Fruit bearing plants that come back every year (strawberries, saskatoon berries, uofs cherries, plums, rhubarb, raspberries etc) should be considered. There’s are one time planted, easily maintained and can contribute to a households food needs.”*

4. **Less grass:** avoid monoculture grass and promote biodiversity within healthy yards

*“Most city owned spaces don’t need grass - a high-maintenance monoculture grass that doesn’t support pollinators and other small fauna. Some spaces, such as recreational spaces, are well suited to grass, and I am glad the city maintains it in those spaces.”*

*“PLEASE switch from planting LAWN all over the city (that’s the old way), to planting the more natural way. Less man hours to maintain, less herbicides needed, less cost! People in general are beginning to appreciate the more natural flora and fauna these days. We need to replace some food for pollinators and wildlife that we have mowed down to build our buildings, homes and streets. That’s the LEAST we should*

*do. I have been thinking for a long time now that i wish saskatoon would switch to more natural approach to the plantings in the city.”*

Additional comments provided by respondents included the following themes:

**Allergies:** allergies from specific plants should be considered prior to planting

**Caution:** prepackaged seeds can often contain non-native species and should not be used

**Confusion:** as to what is a native plant (ex. dandelions) and how they have adapted to our landscape

**Costs:** establishing native plants can be costly, taxes should not increase to fund plantings, planting native species lowers maintenance requirements saves the City resources

**Invasive species:** work with local conservation authorities to screen for invasive species and plants that spread (ex. creeping bellflower)

**Knowledge:** requires special knowledge to identify plants and seasonal forms, education needed

**Naturalized spaces:** use wildflowers and grasses in green spaces to promote greater biodiversity

*“The naturalized parks in the City are one of Saskatoon's best assets. I am fortunate to live near one, and as a biologist, I am absolutely delighted to see the number of native insects (including bees and other pollinators) and other native wildlife (including herbivores, like muskrats and thirteen lined ground squirrels, and a colossal range of bird species) become attracted to these areas.”*

**Secondary benefits:** native plants contribute to less erosion, greater water retention, better drought tolerance, and filter soils

**Seeds:** there is apprehension towards using native species due to their potential to spread seeds via the wind into people’s yards

When asked if they would like the City to provide the community with design, planting, and maintenance support for wildflowers on City-owned spaces the majority of respondents said yes (66%) followed by unsure (15%) and no (9%).

Suggestions for how the City could support the community further included the following:

- Create an interactive website that houses all information and educational materials
- Delivery services for compost, mulch, and watering
- Education and information on invasive species
- Engage through online campaigns, social media platforms and any other means
- Establish a volunteer program with students, seniors and any that are interested
- Hire student ambassadors to educate people on what and what not to do
- Run classes and workshops through libraries and partner with community organizations
- Provide information on indigenous species and their common uses
- Provide suggested plant lists and how to care for them (ex. spacing, cover, watering, etc.)
- Rebate and incentive programs
- Support local seed exchanges, growers, plug providers and repositories

### **Final Comments**

Respondents provided their final thoughts on boulevard gardens, which were summarized in the following themes:

**Accessibility:** boulevard gardening should be made to be accessible, allowances for getting in and out of vehicles and across gardens should also be made

**Aesthetics versus native plants:** many respondents support gardens looking aesthetically pleasing and planting native plants which do not always go hand and hand, neatly groomed gardens are not the natural state of the native prairie that Saskatoon was built on, this could generate complaints

*“I think this is a real challenge to objectively enforce, because ideas of what a ‘well maintained’ garden looks like will vary so much from person to person. You’ll also be opened to same ‘neighbour vs neighbour’ in-fighting around what is reasonable or not. Some will likely find anything outside of grass offensive - others will support bright and colourful gardens! It’s going to vary so much, also in accordance to the personality of a block/neighbourhood. But what I do know is that successful boulevard garden programs (if you look at a city like Portland) are not overly bureaucratic, and allow for enough freedom for residential streets to become beautiful, naturalized landscapes.”*

**Awareness:** many respondents were unaware of the existence of the current guidelines, an awareness campaign is needed during the launch of the revised guidelines

**City spaces:** there was variability in the comments regarding City-owned spaces, some respondents felt City spaces should be maintained by the City since they are paid for by the taxpayers while others felt that boulevards are not well understood since many residents already view these spaces as their own

*“I think there are too many expectations put on residents of the communities to pay for and spend their time working on projects for city owned property. Most people hardly have time to maintain their own property while working full time and caring for a family. This should be a project to beautify our city, implemented, paid for and maintained by the city.”*

*“Please understand that for most residents the boulevard isn’t really understood to be City land. They are already cutting the grass, picking up other people’s trash/litter, watering it etc. They don’t understand it to be a separate different landmass.”*

**Consistency:** remain consistent in the guidelines and their enforcement

**Costs:** the program should not increase taxes and should reduce administrative costs

**Diversity:** the program should embrace diversity in the community and connect with the vulnerable people, new Canadians, and Indigenous organizations/residents to increase uptake for the program

**Education:** education is important for the success of the guidelines and their support in the community, numerous educational opportunities exist but they must focus on stating the importance of boulevard gardens and the fact that this is a community-led initiative with City support

*“I think this is a great idea....actually could be super beneficial in this pandemic year for kids and teenagers to learn about/ take care of a garden! They could submit pictures to their teachers for grading (while they have to study at home) Promotes outside activity and social distancing....city could also encourage youth by making a contest for grades/schools? This would make it fun for kids to learn.”*

*“Accompany this with plenty of free, accessible workshops on pollinator gardens, low water gardens, easy veggie gardening, soil amendment, etc. to help people succeed. Partner with seed companies to offer low income people affordable options. Host plant or seed trades in neighborhoods.”*

**Enforcement:** how will the City enforce the guidelines when maintenance is not performed and gardens are neglected

**Existing gardens:** provide a reasonable process for approving and grandfathering the hundreds of existing boulevard gardens currently in the City

**Expert administrators:** the City needs employees educated in horticulture and native species to manage the guidelines and enforcement, both practical and knowledgeable

**Fees:** should be eliminated or greatly limited in order to promote uptake

**Food security:** growing food is a right of every human on our planet and we should strive to create more ethical opportunities and less barriers to do so

*“Would be great to see an emphasis on food gardening in all city spaces, fruit trees, veggies, herbs all beautiful and open opportunities to collaboration on food security issues and solutions within the city.”*

**Incentives:** create opportunities for greater uptake with incentive and rebate programs

**Invasive species and weeds:** need to be addressed and combatted

**Low-income considerations:** the guidelines should support the inclusion and participation of low-income residents at all costs, whether through incentive/rebate programs or better educational opportunities on food security

**Must maintain:** maintenance is critical for the success of the guidelines, as soon as gardens become unsightly then complaints will cast a negative light on the guidelines

*“Just that it’s so important to improve the unsightly boulevards and medians that are currently all over the city but especially in newer neighborhoods. If Boulevard gardens can help accomplish this - hurray. But and this is a big but...they must be maintained.”*

**Partnerships:** consider connecting with other like-minded community groups (ex. horticultural and permaculture groups) in this initiative to remove barriers for participation, maintain spaces that have been neglected and expand on already developed materials

*“Perhaps the Horticultural Dept at the U of S could create a class to involve the agricultural students in such ideas. Perhaps they could use university greenhouses to plant starter plants and offer their knowledge to the community for help with successful plots. The city does already have their free compost and mulch available for pickup. We have the resources. Our great College of Agriculture could be involved.”*

**Promoting biodiversity:** boulevard gardens support local pollinator species, wildlife, and overall greater biodiversity which in turn support a healthier urban ecosystem within Saskatoon

**Raised planters:** this was a contested issue with a variety of different opinions represented within the comments, some suggest they should be allowed especially for accessibility considerations, but their size and height should be restricted, only real way to garden while countering the potential for soil contamination, others in opposition suggested they are difficult to remove and are hazardous to foot/cycling traffic

**Rental considerations:** must work with landlords and condo associations to educate them on the benefits of the guidelines and support renters wanting to participate

**Safety:** an important concern for many, reduce the height of plants and raised planters to prevent traffic visibility issues

**Secondary benefits:** there are numerous secondary benefits to boulevard gardens and increasing green space that must be showcased such as vegetation trapping runoff and reducing flooding risks, reducing sediment runoff into our stormwater catchments, vegetation providing temperature regulation for the neighbourhood, increasing local biodiversity, etc.

**Simplify:** simplify the guidelines, application process and administrative procedures as much as possible, do not over-regulate

*“The guidelines seem fairly straightforward now; if it is too complicated there will be less engagement and uptake. Keeping it simple will encourage more people to do it!”*

**Support:** there was an overwhelming support from the majority of respondents for the guidelines and the potential for boulevard gardening in the City

**Unaware of guidelines:** many respondents were unaware of the current Guidelines and expressed their interest in participating

*“I don’t think there’s enough awareness that boulevard gardening is allowed. I worry that our communities that would benefit the most from this do not have the financial means or education to participate. How do we get neighborhoods on board? I can see a disgruntled neighbor ruining/stalling this project for a lot of people.”*

**Volunteers:** community volunteers are essential to the success of this program

*“The city should establish a list of volunteer groups willing to educate and support perspective gardeners, and groups willing to take over any Boulevard gardens that are abandoned.”*

**Watering:** one of the top barriers commented for both the associated costs as well as the inability to run water systems to boulevard gardens, many respondents requested watering services provided by the City

**Wording:** program administrators should be cautious when using wording that might offend certain groups, such as “user” which implies that the participant takes but does not give back to the land

*“In this case you need to consider that residents across Saskatoon spend time and money to maintain the grass/land on the boulevard in front of their home although they don't own it- the City does. People cut the grass, water, pick up litter and some plant, weed and garden on it. This is a lot of work and it is important that residents do this for many reasons. If people are willing to beautify the boulevard in front of their home with flowers and/or veggies, they are not 'users'. They are City Volunteer Gardeners.”*

Overall, respondents greatly supported the revisions to the guidelines and expressed their excitement in participating in the program in the future.

*“I love this idea, I think it is an amazing initiative to provide more green spaces, allow residents to have a small taste of what gardening can do without a full commitment to a large scale garden, and especially after Covid can act to create bonds within the community and give those that would like to partake in these activities the chance to. I also think the city should allow these spaces to produce edible products either for any community member to have or simply for the Boulevard holder.”*



*“Encouraging residents to spend time outdoors is important. Gardening is beneficial to your mental state and can help bring communities together. Naturalized plants and wildflowers also benefit the environment - reduced storm water runoff and increased biodiversity.”*

*“Boulevard gardens provide a great benefit to the community and breaks up the monotony of a lot of streets. It's fun to see the spirit of a neighbourhood and also beautifies streets at a low cost to the city.”*

*“I am in a community garden and it is amazing the produce that can be harvested from a previously unused piece of city property. Given some guidance, assistance and support to learn how to plant, maintain and harvest a garden - big or small I think the city, in partnership with community groups and knowledgeable gardeners could play a major part in decreasing food shortages for many people. I think there should be a concerted effort to teach individuals/groups how to garden.”*

When asked whether the proposed changes described in the survey addressed any concerns they had with the current Guidelines 38% said yes, followed by unsure (26%), somewhat (19%) and no (17%).

Numerous questions regarding the remaining concerns were asked by respondents, including:

- What happens if my neighbour does not approve of my garden during the application or complaint process?
- What is a native plant?
- Who will enforce the guidelines and where will the costs come from to enforce?
- How will the owners be held accountable for not maintaining their gardens?
- Who will take over and maintain neglected gardens?
- Will perennial plants be allowed or just annuals?
- What is and isn't allowed?
- How will the program accommodate and incentivise uptake in low-income residents?
- How will it be determined who gets to garden if multiple individuals apply for the same garden space?
- How can renters in condos participate?
- Will this impact traffic due to the safety considerations involved in letting people garden along the street?
- What will be in place for this year?
- How can these spaces be watered regularly?
- Will property values be impacted by adjacent garden boulevards?
- What constitutes as a garden returned to its original state?
- How will the City deal with complaints and what will the impacts for participants be?
- Will gardens be repaired if utilities need to be accessed?
- How will issues with vandalism be addressed?
- How many city resources are required for staff to process applications and then go visit the garden to ensure compliance?
- What is the process for non-compliance after an application has been approved?

### 3.3 Data Limitations

Due to the public health orders related to the COVID-19 pandemic, all engagement activities were restricted to Individual Stakeholder Meetings and surveys with the public. The goal of this phase was to identify a range of perspectives, needs and concerns across sectors to help inform

refinement of the options. The sample size within the Individual Stakeholder Meetings potentially limits the validity of the results in terms of providing a full representation of the population under consideration; however, the results provide the best available indication of how stakeholders perceive the program elements of the Boulevard Garden Guidelines.

Additional considerations for low-income, Indigenous and equity groups will need to be incorporated into future engagement opportunities. Online engagement has its limitations in not being as inclusive to those individuals with limited to no internet access, including low-income groups. Multiple avenues were available to the public for providing input to help mitigate potential issues of inclusivity due to the inability to conduct in-person activities; however, engagement practises and procedures were limited due to the COVID-19 pandemic, especially in conducting physical meetings with individual stakeholders.

## 4 Next Steps

The next steps for development of Boulevard Garden Guidelines are described below:

- Guidelines review and options identification
  - Review pre-existing program guidelines with internal stakeholders and boulevard garden users
  - Identify new program elements that enhance opportunities and mitigate barriers.
- Refinement of current guidelines
  - Review guidelines with a wider stakeholder base
  - Validate key findings and identify final concerns
- Close the Loop
  - Share relevant components of the Boulevard Garden Guidelines with stakeholders to close the loop and provide opportunities to identify any concerns.
  - Validate key findings and test with wider stakeholder base.
- Education and Communication
  - Work with key stakeholders to ensure all education and communication materials are tailored to their associated groups

We Are Here