



Boulevard Gardening Guidelines Review

Final Comprehensive Engagement Report
March 30, 2021



Engagement Summary

The *Boulevard Gardening and Maintenance Guidelines* (Guidelines) provide information to residents on how to garden on City of Saskatoon (City)-owned boulevards in accordance with current bylaws and policies. The goals of the Boulevard Garden Guidelines Review were to 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.

Administration engaged stakeholders in a review of the Guidelines through three phases:

Phase 1: Guidelines Review and Options Identification

The engagement goals for this phase were to review the existing Guidelines with internal stakeholders and identify new program elements that enhance opportunities and mitigate barriers.

Phase 2: Refinement of Current Guidelines

This phase included reviewing the Guidelines with a wider stakeholder base, including the general public, and determining any changes that had not yet been identified.

Phase 3: Close the Loop

Draft updates and proposed changes to the Guidelines were shared with stakeholders and the public for validation and to identify any missed opportunities.

This engagement summary includes the activities and results that informed the above engagement goals. A total of 1874 participants took part in the engagement activities, including stakeholder meetings and public surveys, from September 2020 – February 2021.

Engagement goals, intended audience, activities, dates, participation rates and detailed engagement results are provided in the Boulevard Garden Guidelines Review Comprehensive Engagement Report that follows this summary, as well as the individual What We Heard Reports for each of the engagement phases which can be found on the [Engage Page](#).

Engagement results from all activities that informed each goal are summarized below.

Phase 1: Guidelines Review and Options Identification

This phase of engagement was informed using input from subject matter experts and internal stakeholders during numerous stakeholder meetings, which were designed to specifically inform this engagement goal.

Engagement results, summarized below, informed the review of the Guidelines as well as any corresponding concerns/priorities.

City Stakeholder Feedback

The Phase 1 review included a SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) with City stakeholders. These results are summarized in Appendix 2 of the Administrative Report and informed the options developed in following engagement activities.

Public Interest in the Program

Early stakeholder feedback indicated a strong interest in the Guidelines and their potential to have long-lasting, beneficial impacts for the community. Numerous opportunities for partnerships were identified in communications/marketing, sharing information/messaging, and future training opportunities.

Additional Considerations

Other topics considered included:

Communication campaign: there is an opportunity to focus on the importance of green space and food security

Indigenous considerations: meaningful partnerships must be developed to respectfully access traditional ways of knowing and teachings concerning the land and our connections to nature

What is a boulevard: there is often confusion about what a boulevard is and that frontages exist on each property.

Phase 2: Refinement of Current Guidelines

This phase of engagement was informed using input from 1651 residents and subject matter experts during the following activities:

- Stakeholder Meetings
- Public Survey

Engagement results, summarized below, provided numerous recommended changes to the Guidelines.

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 be well maintained. Many respondents stated they were unaware of the current Guidelines and better communication is needed.

Program Expansion to Other City-Owned Spaces

In response to the opportunity to expand the program identified in Phase 1, residents were asked whether they would be in favor of expanding the program to other City rights-of-way in future through a special use application process. Most 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 centre medians, 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.

Special Use Application Process

Participants supported the City expanding the program through a special use application process (73%) and supported the proposed process (74%). Comments provided by participants identified the need for the City to notify participants of any maintenance performed around their gardens, safety concerns regarding gardening near roadways, and the need to standardize future changes to the Guidelines across all boulevard garden types.

User Agreements and Application Fees

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%). Respondents called for the agreements to be easily understood, while also asking for further clarification on how the agreements will be used to ensure participants are accountable for their gardens.

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%). Respondents suggested that neighbours will inevitably have differing opinions on what constitutes as a maintained garden, which could potentially lead to additional complaints.

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. If fees needed to be administered, then the amount being between \$10 - \$25 was generally accepted. Comments provided by respondents suggested viewing application fees as deposits rather than for funding the program.

Barriers and Supports to Boulevard Gardens

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

Out of the proposed ways the City could best support boulevard gardening, respondents suggested providing free compost/wood chips, supporting volunteer programs, and providing garden incentives (i.e., in-kind support, grants, etc.) as being the most important.

Wildflowers and Native Plants

Based on comments from previous engagement activities, respondents expressed their enthusiastic support for planting native wildflowers and plants to support pollinator species and our urban biodiversity. When asked whether the City should increase wildflower and naturalized plantings in City-owned spaces, the majority of respondents indicated yes (80%). 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 also said yes (66%).

Comments surrounding wildflower and naturalized plantings in City-owned spaces included recognizing the importance of these species for beneficial pollinator insects and wildlife as well as suggesting a communication campaign be used to provide a better understanding of invasive species to residents.

Phase 3: Closing the Loop

This phase of engagement was informed using the input from 216 residents and subject matter experts during the following activities, which were designed to specifically inform this goal:

- Stakeholder Meetings
- Public Survey

Engagement results, summarized below, validated the changes to the Guidelines and provided opportunities for future program improvements.

Guideline Information

Respondents strongly supported all the proposed options for providing clearer and simplified information to the public, including a one-page reference guide for boulevard gardening (74%), a communication campaign on the guidelines (54%), and associated education programs (54%). Respondents also supported (66%) streamlining and improving the application process on the boulevard garden website.

From previous engagement activities, we heard that the Guidelines should not apply to property frontages (the City-owned land adjacent to residential properties) because this was generally viewed as an extension of residential yards. When asked whether they agreed with the City not including frontages in the Guidelines, 87% of respondents agreed.

Garden Maintenance and Enforcement

Previous respondents expressed concerns about regular City maintenance (i.e., snow removal, salting, street sweeping, etc.) having the potential to impact garden sites. When asked whether respondents supported the proposed options to minimize the impacts of regular City maintenance around garden sites, respondents strongly supported (90%) the City offering education tips and reminders about the associated risks.

Raised Beds

Out of the proposed options to mitigate the issues surrounding raised beds in boulevard gardens (e.g., snow removal equipment colliding with raised beds in winter) respondents marginally favoured (64%) allowing temporary raised beds that must be removed annually over allowing year-round raised beds that are clearly marked (56%). Overall, 63% of respondents agreed with the City allowing for raised beds in boulevard gardens.

Other City-Owned Spaces

Previous engagement activities indicated support for the City expanding the program to allow gardens on other types of City-owned spaces. Most respondents strongly supported (80%) expanding the program first to centre medians with an application process as well as the City exploring options to expand to other spaces in the future (87%).

Out of the proposed names for expansion of the program into other spaces respondents slightly preferred *Street Garden Guidelines* (34%) over *Green Street Guidelines* (31%).

User Agreements for Expanded Garden Applications

In regard to the application process, greater support (77%) was given to the application process only being needed for spaces where there is no clear person responsible (ex. centre medians). Respondents were supportive (81%) of the City requiring gardeners to sign a user agreement for centre median gardens and the City checking in with the resident during the application process about their plan to access the median safely (74%). Results for the length of centre median agreements were mixed, with 35% wanting three-year terms of renewal upon submission of site photos, and 33% wanting yearly renewal with site photos. The majority (64%) of respondents supported neighbour feedback only being required for centre median applications where the garden is not close to the applicant's residence.

Fees for Garden Applications

Out of the two proposed options suggested for centre median garden application fees, respondents supported the City not charging a fee for any garden applications and garden clean-up costs being covered from fines (58%). Respondents stressed the need to make the program accessible for low-income groups that might view the application fee as a barrier to participating.

Common Themes

The following considerations were provided throughout all engagement phases and activities:

Accessibility, low-income, and senior considerations: boulevard gardening should be made financially accessible for everyone, fees act as a significant barrier for low-income residents. Respondents generally felt that support systems and incentives should be made available to encourage uptake and increase accessibility.

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.).

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.

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

Simplify: keep the process as simple as possible and with a limited amount of bureaucracy, this will make the program more accessible to a wider group of participants.

Support: the most commented on theme, generally there is a lot of support from the public with many interested in participating in boulevard gardening within the near future.

Consideration of Results

Results from all engagement activities were considered alongside internal (City) stakeholders' feedback and best practise research to develop the recommended changes to the Guidelines. Program options that were strongly supported by all participants and by best practise research were directly incorporated into the Guidelines, including:

Address safety and accessibility: the City will make sure that garden sites don't interfere with safety or access, offer guidance on traffic safety,

Education-first enforcement: the City will provide education to gardeners about how to comply with the new guidelines, tickets will only be issued as a last resort, the new registration process will help the City identify and address abandoned gardens,

Encourage native plants: wildflowers and naturalized plantings have been moved into the main guidelines so that there is no additional process for residents, other options will be explored to support resident-plated naturalization later this year,

Incentives: Opportunities to further support Street Gardening such as incentives will be explored during program expansion. Information about how to access city compost and mulch was added to the new Guidelines,

Program expansion: options will be proposed to Council for an expansion of the program including center medians and other city-owned green space,

Program name: the name *Street Garden Guidelines* (SGG) was preferred by public participants and internal stakeholders, and

Simplify the process: the Guidelines were further simplified to improve their overall clarity and an education campaign about the program will be launched this spring.

Following a feasibility analysis and best practice research, the program recommendations that received mixed feedback were presented to internal stakeholders for final feedback. One option in particular was the \$50 application fee, which numerous respondents identified as a potential barrier for low-income participants.

Communications and education campaigns will be launched following approval of the revised Guidelines by City Council to ensure all residents are aware of the Guidelines and program expectations.

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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, and Median and Boulevard 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 Guidelines review occurred from December 2020 to March 2021. The Administration updated the Guidelines and looked at options to expand the program based on what was heard 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

1.4 Summary of Engagement Strategy

Residents and stakeholders were provided the opportunity to inform the following engagement goals:

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 validate changes and provide opportunities to identify any red flags.
- Validate key findings and test with wider stakeholder base.

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

Table 1: Summary of Engagement Strategy

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

A summary of engagement activities selected, activity and event dates, intended audience, and number of participants engaged for each engagement goal is provided in the table below.

Table 2: Summary of Engagement Activities

Goal	Intended Audience	Engagement Activity	Date(s)	Participants
Phase 1	Decolonizing Food Access	Stakeholder Meeting	September 14, 2020	7
	Internal Meetings	Stakeholder Meeting	September to December 2020	
	Subtotal			7
Phase 2	All stakeholders and public	Public Survey	December 17 to January 31, 2021	1645
	Healthy Yard Partners	Stakeholder Meeting	January 5, 2021	6
	Subtotal			1651
Phase 3	All stakeholders and public	Public Survey	February 18 to February 28, 2021	210
	Healthy Yard Partners	Stakeholder Meeting	February 9, 2021	6
	Subtotal			216
Total Participation September 2020 to February 2021				1874

Engagement activities, intended audience, marketing techniques, analysis methods and results are described in this report followed by a summary of evaluation feedback and data limitations.

1.5 Stakeholder Groups

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

1.5.1 Internal Stakeholders

- Bylaw Compliance
- City Solicitors
- Communications and Marketing
- Community Development
- Sustainability (Community Leadership and Program Development)
- Community Standards
- Water and Waste Operations
- Indigenous Initiatives
- Neighbourhood Planning
- Parks – Urban Forestry and Maintenance
- Roadways and Operations
- Saskatoon Light and Power
- Social Development
- Transportation
- Saskatoon Light and Power

1.5.2 Subject Matter Experts

- Existing boulevard gardeners
- Healthy Yards Partners:
 - CHEP Good Food and Community Garden Leaders

- Native Plant Society of Saskatchewan
- Saskatchewan Waste Reduction Council's Compost Coaches
- Saskatoon Food Bank and Learning Center's Garden Patch
- Saskatoon Food Council
- Conservation Advocates:
 - Meewasin Valley Authority
 - Saskatchewan Environmental Society
 - Wild About Saskatoon
- University of Saskatchewan:
 - College of Agriculture and Bioresources
 - Master Gardeners

1.5.3 Key Stakeholder Groups

- Equity, Low Income and Newcomer Residents/Organizations
 - Newcomers Information Centre
 - Open Doors Society
 - Saskatoon Poverty Reduction Partnership – First Voice Group
- Indigenous Groups/Organizations
 - City of Saskatoon – Indigenous Technical Advisory Group
 - Indigenous food security advocates
 - Decolonizing Food Access and Land Use Group
 - Saskatoon Health Authority
 - University of Saskatchewan College of Indigenous Studies
- Specific Community Groups/Organizations:
 - Accessibility advocates
 - Safety advocates
 - Senior citizens

1.5.4 Active and Potential Program Users

- Businesses and organizations
 - Business Improvement Districts (BIDs)
- Community Associations
- Residents (renters and homeowners)
- Schools

2 Engagement Activities

2.1 Stakeholder Meetings

Consultations were held with Subject Matter Experts, from September 2020 to February 2021, to identify options to be included and validate changes to the Guidelines.

2.1.1 Intended Audience

The stakeholder groups included the following:

- Healthy Yards Partners:
 - CHEP Good Food and Community Garden Leaders
 - Native Plant Society of Saskatchewan
 - Saskatchewan Waste Reduction Council's Compost Coaches
 - Saskatoon Food Bank and Learning Center's Garden Patch
 - Saskatoon Food Council
- Decolonizing Food Access and Land Use Group

2.1.2 Marketing Techniques

Representatives were contacted directly, therefore no marketing techniques were used for this engagement activity.

2.1.3 Analysis

The data received during this activity was provided in the form of information pertaining to options for consideration by the project team. As such, no additional analysis of the data was required.

2.1.4 What We Heard

Stakeholders expressed a strong interest in the Guidelines and their potential to have long-lasting, beneficial impacts for the community. Numerous opportunities for partnerships were identified in communications/marketing, sharing information/messaging, and future training opportunities.

Other topics considered included:

Communication campaign: will need to address those residents who do not understand the importance of green spaces and food security, communications must include visible examples of what ideal boulevard gardens look like, include ambassadors that promote the program.

Indigenous considerations: meaningful partnerships must be developed in order to respectfully access traditional ways of knowing and teachings, there are currently numerous barriers to accessing traditional foods and medicines within our green spaces, numerous opportunities exist to engage with traditional knowledge practitioners and Elders in the future.

Low-income opportunities: the program provides opportunities to improve food security for those that are marginalized, the application process and fee could become a barrier.

Marketing: marketing is critical to the success of the program and should be performed through various methods including cross-promotional opportunities, community organizations and social media.

Neighbours: requesting permission from neighbours within the application process could deter participants from applying if they have pre-existing issues with their neighbours, creates the potential for opposition between neighbours, there is a degree of territoriality for boulevards in front of people's homes.

Renter considerations: barriers exist for renters who occasionally move to different locations and need to consult with their landlords/building managers to determine if a space is eligible, some landlords would not want to deal with the added hassle, some sort of assurances should be in place for landlords and renters.

What is a boulevard: many residents do not fully understand what a boulevard is; frontages exist on each property, yet every homeowner should not need to apply.

2.2 Refining - Public Survey

The Administration conducted an online survey for stakeholders and the public from December 17th, 2020 to January 31st, 2021. The survey comprised a total of 37 closed-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.

2.2.1 Intended Audience

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

2.2.2 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 – January 31, 2021, 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 and Mail-out
 - a. Personalized emails and letters were sent to current boulevard gardeners, organizations such as community associations, and community members asking them to share the information with their members.

2.2.3 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, and
- 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.

2.2.4 What We Heard

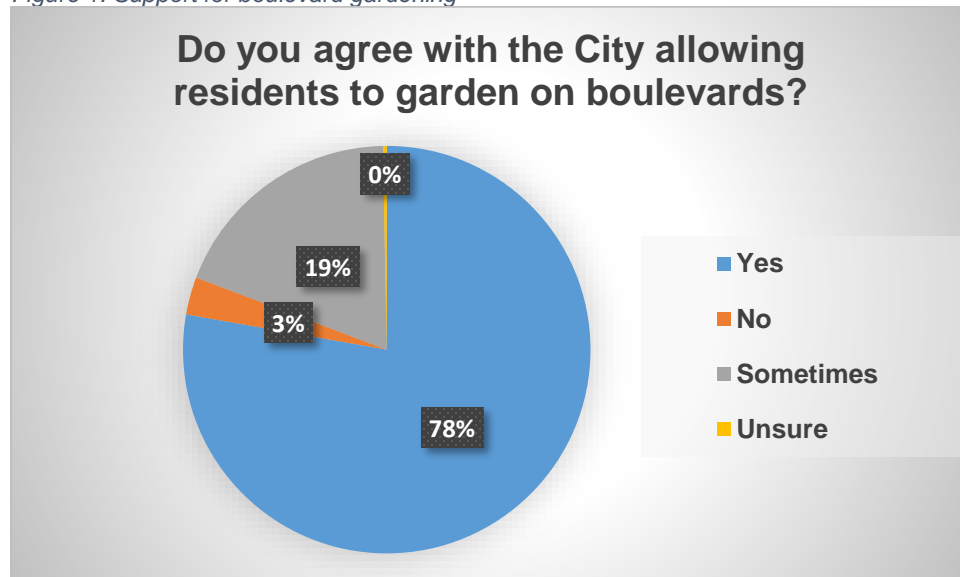
Demographics

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%).

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

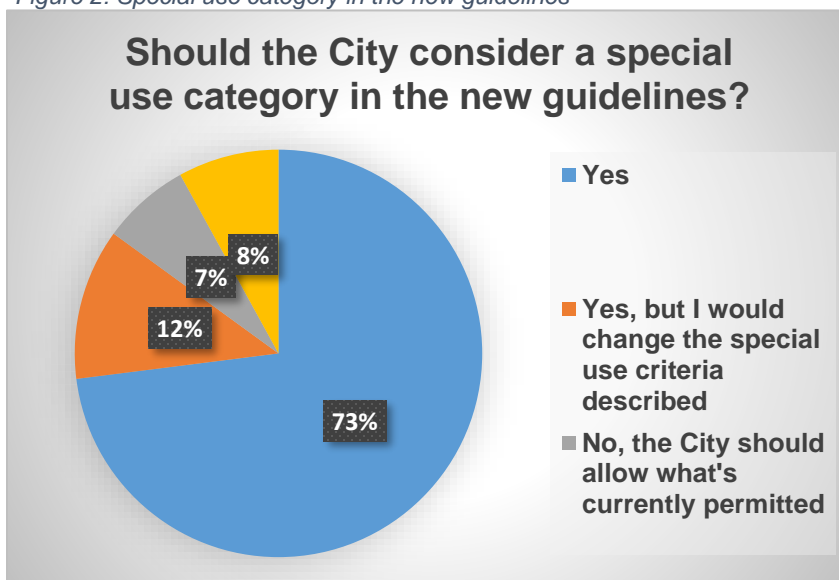


Special Use Category

Residents were asked whether they would be in favor of expanding the program to other City rights-of-way in future through a special use application process that would include a letter of agreement between the gardener and City. 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:

Figure 2: Special use category in the new guidelines



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 Agreements

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.

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, and
- Lack knowledge of native and beneficial plant species.

Supporting Boulevard Gardening

Respondents were asked to identify their top 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 and feasible (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.

2.3 Closing the Loop - Public Survey

The Administration conducted an online public survey from February 18th, 2021 to February 28th, 2021. The public survey comprised a total of 20 closed- and open-ended questions to identify their support for the changes made to the Guidelines.

2.3.1 Intended Audience

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

2.3.2 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. Posts on social media linked to the survey and were targeted to Saskatoon. No boosting was used, but posts were made on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram “stories”.
3. Email
 - a. Personalized emails were sent to organizations and community members asking them to share the information with their members.

2.3.3 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 comments provided for individual program changes, and
- Analysis of suggestions that might improve or reduce program uptake

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

2.3.4 What We Heard

Demographics

A total of 210 respondents participated in the Public Survey. The largest group of participants were those that were not current boulevard gardeners (47%), followed by individuals planning to be boulevard gardeners (36%) and those that were (15%).

Most neighbourhoods within the City were represented, with representation being the highest in the following areas: Nutana, City Park, Haultain, and Varsity View.

Guideline Information

Respondents strongly supported all the proposed options for better providing information to the public, including a one-page reference guide for boulevard gardening (74%), a communication campaign on the guidelines (54%), and associated education programs (54%). Respondents also supported (66%) streamlining and improving the application process on the boulevard garden website.

Where the Guidelines Apply

When asked whether the respondents agreed with the Guidelines only applying to separate boulevards and not frontages (the City-owned land touching the properties), 87% agreed.

Comments provided by respondents suggested that even though frontages will not require an application they should still follow the same standards as other boulevard gardens in regard to maintenance and upkeep. Respondents also identified that it is hard for residents to know where the frontage ends on their properties; therefore, there needs to be more education on this topic including what can and cannot be done on frontages.

Garden Maintenance and Enforcement

When asked whether respondents supported the proposed options to minimize the impacts of regular City maintenance (i.e., snow removal, salting, street sweeping, etc.) around garden sites, respondents strongly supported (90%) the City offering education tips and reminders about the associated risks. Although not as strongly supported, respondents also favoured (66%) allowing gardens on sites that are less impacted by snow removal.

Wildflowers and Native Plants

Respondents were asked whether they supported planting native plants and wildflowers not requiring an extra application process, to which 84% stated yes. 84% also supported the City exploring options to increase support for citizens to plant native plants in the future.

Raised Beds

Respondents were provided with numerous options to mitigate the issues surrounding raised beds in boulevard gardens and asked to state their support for each. Out of the proposed options, respondents marginally favoured (64%) allowing temporary raised beds that must be removed annually over allowing year-round raised beds that are clearly marked (56%).

Overall, 63% of respondents agreed with the City allowing for raised beds in boulevard gardens. This was supported further in the comments where most were supportive of raised beds if owners were responsible for maintaining them, design standards were developed and clearly communicated/enforced, and they did not become visual obstructions.

In regards to the impacts on City maintenance (i.e., snow removal, street sweeping, etc.) and administration of the program, respondents suggested sharing the locations of raised beds with City maintenance crews in the future and reducing the administrative burden for enforcement/applications as best as possible.

Other City-Owned Spaces

Previous engagement activities showed support for expanding the program to other types of City-owned spaces; therefore, expanding the program first to centre medians with an application process was proposed. Most respondents strongly supported (80%) this option as well as the City exploring options to expand to other spaces in the future (87%).

In regard to the application process, greater support (77%) was given to the application process only being needed for spaces where there is no clear owner (ex. centre medians).

Out of the proposed names for expansion of the program into other spaces, the following were ranked in order of their support:

1. Street Garden Guidelines (34%)
2. Green Street Guidelines (31%)
3. Boulevard and Centre Median Garden Guidelines (27%)
4. Street Side Garden Guidelines (12%)
5. Hellstrip Garden Guidelines (8%)

User Agreements for Expanded Garden Applications

Respondents were supportive (81%) of the City requiring gardeners to sign a user agreement for centre median gardens and the City checking in with the resident during the application process about their plan to access the median safely (74%). They were also strongly supportive (90%) of the City creating a simple website form and user agreement to identify who is responsible for the garden.

The majority (64%) of respondents supported neighbour feedback only being required for centre median applications where the garden is not close to the applicant's residence. Comments provided by respondents were mixed with some stating the lack of approval will inevitably lead to future complaints and gardens being vandalised; however, tensions between neighbours could lead to gardens never being approved in many cases.

Results for the length of centre median agreements were mixed, with 35% wanting three-year terms of renewal through site photos, 33% wanting yearly renewal with site photos, and 21% wanting indefinite agreements used until the agreement is canceled or transferred to another gardener.

Fee for Garden Applications

Out of the two proposed options aimed at application fees for centre median gardens, respondents supported the City not charging a fee for any garden applications and garden clean-up costs being covered from fines (58%). Respondents stressed the need to make the program accessible for low-income groups that might view the application fee as a barrier to participating. Suggestions included waiving the fees or creating a community sponsorship program.

Final Thoughts

When asked whether the proposed changes described in the survey addressed any concerns they had with the current Guidelines, a slightly majority of respondents stated yes (51%). Comments on why the Guidelines did not address their concerns included uncertainty surrounding the associated

fees, the ability for individuals not living in the neighbourhood to still apply for a garden, considerations for renters, and logistics surrounding waste and watering.

Overarching comments included the following themes:

Aesthetics: there are many different opinions on what looks acceptable or appealing, the Guidelines will need to specify what an unkept/unmaintained boulevard garden looks like

Enforcement: numerous respondents questioned how enforcement will occur for unkept gardens, accountability and the associated responsibilities need to be clearly defined to applicants.

Low-income and senior considerations: respondents generally felt that support systems and incentives should be made available to encourage uptake and increase accessibility.

Native plants: are highly supported by the public with many interested in increasing the local biodiversity in Saskatoon, some respondents clarified that although native plants are generally viewed as being beneficial they can also be an issue depending on their growth and ability to overtake other plants.

Simple: keep the process as simple as possible and with a limited amount of bureaucracy, this will make the program more accessible to a wider group of participants.

Support: the most commented on theme, generally there is a lot of support from the public with many interested in participating in boulevard gardening within the near future.

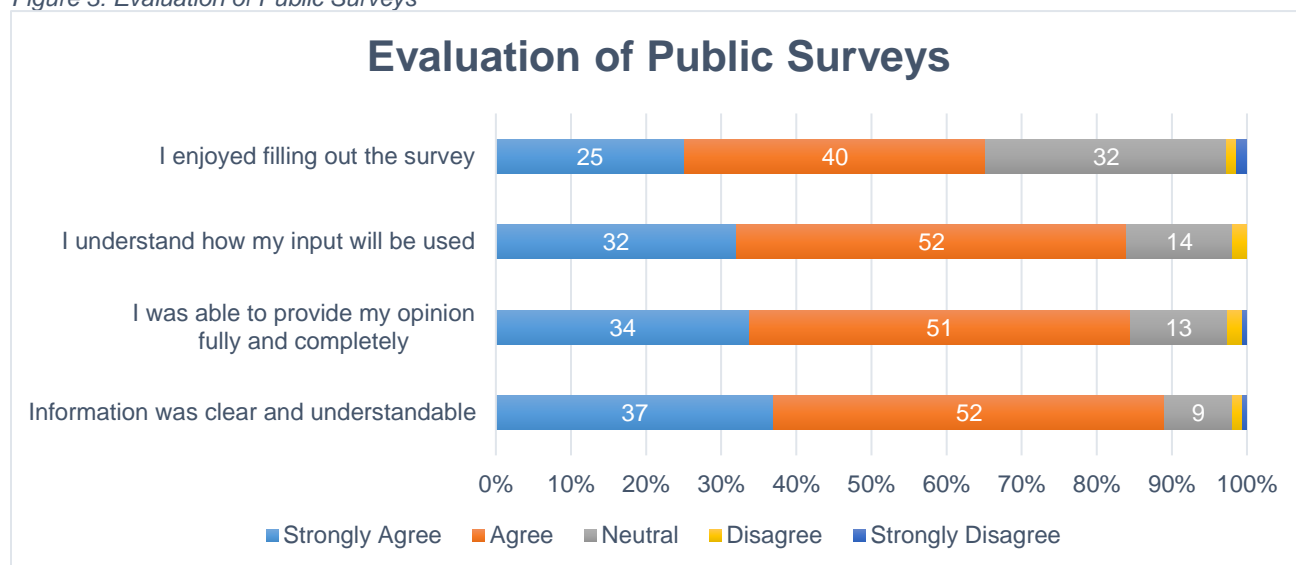
3 Evaluation

Evaluation is discussed in terms of feedback received during engagement activities and through informal comments, data limitations and opportunities for improvement.

3.1 Feedback

Participant evaluation through the Public surveys indicated support for both the level of engagement conducted and the opportunities provided. 87% of participants agreed or strongly agreed with the information that was provided being clear and understandable, with 85% feeling they were able to provide their opinions fully throughout the process.

Figure 3: Evaluation of Public Surveys



Comments provided by participants were supportive of the process. Respondents found the additional information and photos to be useful in clarifying how boulevard gardens were defined. Overall, the public was supportive of the engagement activities used throughout the project and supported the openness and transparency performed throughout.

“Great to see the next step in this process! I appreciate how responsive you are being to feedback, and giving community members a chance to weigh in.”

“Thank you for updating this survey. I appreciate the extra work and thought you've put into this process.”

“I'm pleased with the openness of the program to further development and expansion.”

“Awesome survey. IT asked the right questions. Appreciate being asked my opinions. And the topic is extremely relevant. There is nothing more important than shifting towards sustaining nature and learning to live more WITH nature than against it!”

Some survey participants noted flaws in the survey design related to lack of clear language. Participants noted that the terminology used, such as property frontages and boulevard gardens, needed to be more clearly defined. This also indicates the need to improve messaging and definitions for what boulevard gardens are during future communication campaigns.

"I found some terms and comments confusing. How can a center median garden be beside a house? I don't know the difference between 'frontage', boulevard and area between sidewalk and roadway."

Other respondents identified the limitation online surveys provide for those that have no or limited access to computer technologies. However, some respondents recognized that engagement methods were limited due to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

"It's unfortunate that many residents that aren't social media connected won't be able to participate in these surveys. It should be noted that the public engagement was limited to members of the public with social media access."

Informal feedback was received through stakeholder meetings where participants indicated that they appreciated the continued engagement throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Participants expressed that the surveys were clear, concise, and not exhausting to complete. Some individuals expressed an interest in the project team exploring other engagement activities; however, most recognized this as being difficult to perform given the conditions at the time.

3.2 Data Limitations

Due to the public health orders related to the COVID-19 pandemic, all engagement activities were restricted to virtual stakeholder meetings and online public surveys. To mitigate challenges related to conducting inclusive engagement, the project team provided the public with multiple options for providing input (e.g., online, mail, and/or telephone) and were adaptable in regard to potential engagement methods. Mail-outs were also used to encourage further participation by current registered boulevard garden users. However, without the limitations presented by the pandemic, in-person engagement activities would have also been employed throughout the review process.

The goal of engagement for this project was to identify a range of perspectives, needs and concerns across sectors to help inform refinement of the Guidelines. We recognize that the sample size within the 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, renters, 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.

3.3 Opportunities for Improvement

Based on participant feedback, the following opportunities for improvement will be considered for future engagement events:

- Engagement strategies and activities that incorporate COVID-19 precautions should be developed to optimize engagement during this period.
- Steps should be taken to explore virtual options for workshops, which are an important tool for engaging communities.
- Considerations for engaging with low-income, Indigenous and equity groups need to be incorporated into future engagement opportunities.
- Clearly defining boulevard gardens and terms such as property frontages is critical for future engagement.

4 Next Steps

Following approval by City Council and education and communication campaign will be used to ensure the Guidelines are marketed to residents effectively. 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

