

Street Garden Program Expansion

Project Definition

Saskatoon's Boulevard Garden program is expanding to include revitalization of centre medians and other rights-of-way. Resident gardening activities would be encouraged, including use of wildflowers and native plants and accessible gardening through an expanded Street Garden program.

This project includes research, engagement with the community, exploration of community partnerships, and analyzing the feasibility for program options building on work that has already been completed as part of the Boulevard Garden Guideline update completed earlier in 2021. This preparatory work leads to the implementation of demonstration gardens on rights-of-way that showcase best practices for gardening in these spaces. Communications, education, and incentives are included in this scope of work to encourage the community to broadly consider and utilize available rights-of-way and participate in street gardening.

This project will achieve multiple outcomes and co-benefits, including:

1. **Improving or reinventing outdoor spaces.** Green spaces in residential areas such as boulevards and medians are often degraded, have poor growing and soil conditions, and may be contaminated from hydrocarbons and road salts. Encouraging gardening activities in these spaces will revitalize them and provide a more welcoming streetscape to residential areas.
2. **Revitalizing main streets or downtown cores.** Possibilities to expand the program to rights-of-way in Business Improvement Districts, including the Downtown, will be pursued.
3. **Reducing environmental impacts.** The spaces proposed are often degraded by hydrocarbons and road salts. Rejuvenating the spaces through gardening activities and soil restoration will have some remediation benefits, in addition to buffering the effects of these contaminants from surrounding residential areas.
4. **Increasing accessibility to public spaces.** Boulevards and medians are adjacent to residential houses but are often currently underutilized due to degradation issues. Reimagining these spaces as community hubs with green infrastructure and food production will create a more welcoming streetscape and build community among neighbours. Design considerations will also include accessibility standards to ensure that all community members can access these spaces.
5. **Helping communities rebound from the effects of the pandemic.** This project will address a need that was highlighted during the COVID-19 pandemic for additional food production opportunities in public green space, as community garden sites are often over-allocated. Overall interest in local food production increased significantly during the COVID-19 pandemic; this project will provide additional garden opportunities to meet this demand.

6. **Demonstrating measurable direct or indirect socio-economic benefits.** The project will be designed with equity and accessibility considerations including best practices found in the City's equity toolkit.
7. **Encourage the participation of underrepresented groups.** The feasibility study will work directly with underrepresented community groups to assess barriers to accessing the program and identify ways to overcome those barriers.

Scope and Budget (Program Ask and How City Portion is Funded)

The City contribution is funded from the recommendation for 2022 funding from the Sustainability Reserve.

Item	Scope	Budget – Ask	Budget – City Contribution
Feasibility Study	Will explore the feasibility of expanding the program to additional locations such as alleys and rights-of-way. Will complete community engagement to identify whether specific groups such as wheelchair users and renters face barriers to accessing the program and will develop recommendations to remove these barriers.		\$51,500
Education and Awareness Campaign	An expanded communication and education program to promote citizens participating in Street Gardening, including specific outreach with community associations, workshops, planting and design guides, and other education support.	\$20,000	
Demonstration Gardens	Demonstration gardens on rights-of-way that showcase best practices for gardening in these spaces.	\$100,000	
Citizen Supports and Incentives	Supports and incentives may include compost and mulch delivery, seeds and plant materials, a garden tool library, and garden design support from City staff. Supports may also include incentives for landlords and condo associations to permit their residents to garden on adjacent rights-of-way.	\$ 30,000	
TOTAL		\$150,000	\$51,500

Evaluation Criteria Alignment

This project demonstrates alignment with the funding application as follows:

Project Rationale Meets one of the Project Priorities (choose one or more)

Revitalize Downtown Core and Main Streets

- Yes. Possibilities to expand the program to rights-of-way in Business Improvement Districts will be pursued through the feasibility study.

Reinvent Outdoor Spaces

- Yes. This project will reinvent the spaces adjacent to residential areas, and may include centre medians, boulevards, alleys, and other rights-of-way with community input into the redesign of the spaces, and participation in the implementation.

Create Green Infrastructure

- Yes. Food production is considered part of the City's green infrastructure inventory through the Green Infrastructure Strategy. This project will increase the use of edible and native species grown and managed in the Green Network.
- The project also implements Actions in the Green Infrastructure Strategy such as "Action 3.3: Work with and support partners to incorporate food and fruit production or traditional food systems into high priority urban areas."

Increase the Accessibility of Community Spaces

- Yes. The feasibility study will identify barriers that underrepresented groups may face in accessing or participating in the program and identify ways to eliminate or reduce these barriers. For example, opportunities to include wheelchair accessible raised beds will be investigated.

Outcomes

Briefly describe the socio-economic benefits associated with this project.

- The project is anticipated to lead to a higher quality of life, provide opportunities for residents to access and enjoy green spaces close to their homes, encourage wellness through gardening and passive recreation, and reduce the heat island effect.
- Gardening opportunities are expanded – especially to those who may not own a home with a boulevard. Renters and those living in multi-family dwellings would have new opportunities for gardening and green space enjoyment.
- Community work to enhance and enjoy these areas may would contribute to asset management efforts and contribute to "eyes on the street" monitoring of public areas for safety.

Does the project promote environmental benefits?

- Yes. The spaces proposed are often degraded by hydrocarbons and road salts. Rejuvenating the spaces through gardening activities and soil restoration will have some remediation benefits, in addition to buffering the effects of these contaminants from surrounding residential areas.

Does the project allow more people to use the space?

- Yes. Revitalizing these spaces in partnership with the community will make these spaces more welcoming and accessible. A co-benefit of this project will be introducing site uses that encourage positive community building activities.

Project Readiness

Provides a responsible budget including clear costing, procurement decisions and equity considerations.

Item	Description	Cost
Salaries for feasibility study and program expansion	Staff time to complete the feasibility study and launch the program.	\$ 51,500
Supplies and materials for demonstration garden(s)	Plant material, soil, and other materials needed to support new garden sites and create demonstration gardens. Equipment needed to complete this work is also included.	\$100,000
Communications and engagement	Will include community-led communication of results including education materials developed in multiple languages or provided through storytelling. Honorariums for Elders and Knowledge Keepers is included in this budget.	\$ 20,000
Citizen support and incentives	Supports and incentives may include compost and mulch delivery, seeds and plant materials, a garden tool library, and garden design support from City staff. Supports may also include incentives for landlords and condo associations to permit their residents to garden on adjacent rights-of-way.	\$ 30,000
TOTAL		\$201,500

Procurement Decisions:

- Demonstration garden installation may be contracted to community partners in alignment with the City's Purchasing Policy.

Equity Considerations:

- The equity toolkit and Triple Bottom Line assessment will be used during design of the project.
- Honorariums for Elders, Knowledge Keepers, and marginalized community members to provide meaningful and authentic engagement opportunities will be provided and have been budgeted for.
- Project outcomes will consider additional equity considerations such as communicating results in multiple languages, and opportunities for storytelling and education activities that are developed by and for the community.

Demonstrates the Project Can Be Completed in Realistic Timelines:

- Q4 2021 – Initiate feasibility study and begin community engagement.
- Q1 2022 – Finalize feasibility study, compile results and recommendations, begin planning demonstration gardens and garden incentives/supports.

- Q2 2022 – Initiate garden incentives and supports, complete demonstration garden
- Q3 2022 – Finalize garden supports for this growing season; begin compiling lessons learned.
- Q4 2022 – Finalize lessons learned; develop recommendations for future programming.
- Q1 2023 – Project wrap up

Project Timeline (proposed start date and end date)

- October 1, 2021 to March 31, 2023.

Can the project be completed by March 31, 2023?

- Yes. The components of this project included in this funding request can be designed to wrap up by March 31, 2023. Best practices and recommendations will inform future projects at the City however.

Has there been any community or stakeholder engagement on the project?

- Yes. The update to the Guidelines was developed through community engagement, including over 1,600 survey respondents and an engagement strategy that sought input from lower-income, seniors, Indigenous, and newcomer groups. Overall, 97% of respondents supported the current program, and 86% were in favor of an expanded program.