

Boulevard Beautification Guide

Boulevards are the green space between the road and your property line or sidewalk. Yours could be perfect for a garden. Boulevard beautification involves adding new plants and materials to make your boulevard contributing to pollinators and biodiversity. Some people might want less frequent grass cutting and lower maintenance. Others might want to install more sustainable alternatives or simply make their boulevard more beautiful.

The information below is intended for people who are interested in transforming their boulevards into beautiful spaces. It outlines ideas on how to plan your project, including what's permitted, and things to consider when designing the layout.

Benefits:

- Lowering boulevard maintenance
- Creating a positive impact for pollinators in the city.
- Creating a more sustainable boulevard through rain gardens or storm water management practices
- Improving the overall look and feel of the boulevard or streetscape
- An opportunity for residents to work together, have fun, and contribute to their neighbourhood

Cost: Costs will vary significantly depending on the size of the boulevard and your idea for the project. It could range from zero dollars with our free seed packages to several thousand dollars.

How long does it take: Overall, the entire project could take one weekend, several weeks or months to complete depending on the size of the design.

What approval do I need: The city of Nanaimo would like to know your location.

What happens if road maintenance or construction is needed? It's recommended to connect with city staff in the early stages of your project planning to find out if road maintenance or reconstruction is scheduled for your street (to ensure we don't rip up the boulevard right after you finish your project!). The city has the right to remove any landscaping placed on the boulevard at any time and without notice. The city is not responsible for damages to boulevard landscaping due to road maintenance activities. In the case of road reconstruction, utility work required within the boulevard area, or snow removal efforts along the sidewalk, the city will restore the boulevard with soil and seed, or sod. If you would like an alternative, you would be responsible for the cost and installation.

What are the requirements when working around trees? Boulevard trees are part of Nanaimo's urban forest and provide important benefits to the community. They are planted and maintained by the city.

- Take care to protect all parts of the tree (roots, trunk and branches) when working around boulevard trees.

- Digging is not allowed within 1 meter of any boulevard tree.
- Do not roto-till your boulevard, as this could cause serious harm to tree roots. Only use hand tools for digging. Depending on the size and species of the boulevard tree, there may be extensive roots that limit what can be planted.
- Do not nail or tie signs, trellises or other fixtures to a boulevard tree.
- Choose small plant specimens that can be planted in individual small holes. Carefully dug holes will avoid damage to the tree's shallow root system. If you encounter a root while digging, try a different spot. Planting is not permitted within 1 meter of any boulevard tree.
- Keep new soil, compost or mulch away from the trunk of existing trees. Moisture held against the bark can cause it to rot, threatening the health of the tree.
- Do not place more than 10 cm of additional compost, soil or mulch on the boulevard. Excess material can damage roots and harm the tree. Proper mulching is beneficial to the tree and garden.
- When planting in the boulevard, keep in mind that work crews will need to access the tree to perform regular maintenance. When work needs to take place on your boulevard, your plants may be lost or damaged and will not be replaced by the city.

Creating a layout:

When creating a layout for your plantings, be mindful of some requirements that are in place to ensure safety and accessibility:

- An area within 45cm (17.72") of the sidewalk must remain level with the sidewalk and not create a trip hazard.
- The area of the boulevard beside the street must be kept clear in order to avoid damaging street equipment, and should not interfere with the opening and closing of vehicle doors, if street parking is permitted.
- Keep in mind the underground and above ground utilities that might be present on your property and the clearance required. These could include:
 - Telecom service wires underground, which are generally only 150 – 300 mm deep
 - Hydro poles, light standards and pole support wires
 - Gas vent pipes
 - Fire hydrants, which must have a 1.5 metre clearance
 - Hydro pull box vault, which could be just below the topsoil, and telecom pull box vault

Selecting your plants: When selecting plants and materials consider:

- Drought-tolerant
- Maximum height of 1 meter.
- Be aware of what is not permitted, including:
 - Noxious weeds or invasive species lists provided by the city of Nanaimo.
www.nanaimo.ca/green-initiatives/protecting-our-natural-spaces/invasive-species
 - Sprinkler systems or another apparatus
 - Any objects that are sharp, protruding or dangerous

Other considerations:

- Trees cannot be planted on city property, unless planted by the City or Region.
- Only tree mulch, grass, or rocks are permitted within 1 meter of the tree trunk (and must not be dug into the ground!).
- A tree border is permitted but must be set on top of the soil.
- Grass and weeds on the boulevard must be maintained below 20 cm (8").
- Sight lines to intersections, driveways, sidewalks cannot be restricted.
- Mulch is permitted, but must be maintained and cannot spill onto sidewalk or road.
- Contact city staff if you're unsure if a specific plant or material is approved or well-suit

Green spaces entice neighbours outdoors on a regular basis, where they **build friendships and community ties**. Studies show that neighbourhood beautification can **reduce crime rates**: In a study of inner-city neighbourhoods in the U.S., greener residences had lower crime rates, Inner-city families with trees and greenery in their immediate outdoor surroundings have **safer domestic environments**. Neighbourhoods with well-cared for landscapes contribute to reduced feelings of fear and violence. Community beautification **raises community and individual pride**, and often brings a community closer together for common activities, with noticeable crime reduction effects. In one example, Pond Street in New Haven, Connecticut, suffered from the presence of illegal drug sales, trash, loiterers, and noise complaints from residents. The Block Watch resolved to take back some of its territory by planting flowers along curbsides and in a blighted lot on the corner. With 100 percent participation of their group, they turned the neighborhood into a beautiful garden. Other cleanups and beautification seemed to flow naturally. The beautification idea has now spread. Besides the visual benefits of beautification, crime has receded. Here is a link with more details on the last points: https://www.dchealthmatters.org/promiseppractice/index/view?pid=80&fbclid=IwAR0kyaX8hxdTI85XCPnLzi0Zk823FaMMi76agipPvwz3IP4fl9NE6h_n_FM

Thank you to <https://www.nanaimofoundation.com/neighbourhood-small-grants/> for our grant to start this project.

-- The Boulevard Beautification Committee of the Nanaimo Old City Association