

## Verge Policy – Management Guidelines

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### Objective

The City of Subiaco recognises the environmental and aesthetic contribution verges make to the continuing development and presentation of streetscapes, by preserving and enhancing the character of the City.

The objective of this guideline is to highlight the obligations and responsibilities of the City and the community in relation to the maintenance and development of verges using the following principles:

- establishes and promotes high quality streetscapes as a reflection of the City's local character, while fostering a sense of community pride
- install and maintain soft landscaping which contributes to the aesthetic presentation of the streetscape
- apply sound environmental consideration to verge development through utilising low water demand plantings of species indigenous to the local area
- ensures that verges do not present sightline hazards for vehicular or pedestrian movements
- ensures that the verge is accessible for pedestrians, utilities and other users.
- encourages the use of local waterwise native plant species, and waterwise garden design to protect and enhance local biodiversity
- complements the City's Street and Reserve Tree Policy as a means of contributing to the aesthetic and environmental qualities of its urban forest
- minimises risk of harm to the community and liability for the City.

### Scope

This guideline applies to any person or organisation undertaking maintenance and or modification to the street verge adjacent to their property.

The street verge is part of the road reserve and, as such, is under the care, control and management of the City of Subiaco.

### Guideline application

The underlying principle of the City's approach to managing street verges is to encourage residents to:

- install and maintain soft landscaping which contributes to the aesthetic presentation of the streetscape
- apply sound environmental consideration to verge development through utilising low water demand plantings of species indigenous to the local area
- minimise the use of impervious surfaces to encourage infiltration of ground water where it falls
- meet the community's requirements for safety and protect the City's obligations for duty of care.

The City manages approximately 114 kilometres of road reserve and recognises the importance of verge spaces contributing to the urban forest and in creating functional and attractive streets within an urban environment.

To ensure consistent management of City verges, the following areas are detailed.

### Verge development

Residents wishing to develop the verge with landscaping are encouraged and supported to do so. If the following requirements are met, no approval is required to install:

- organic mulch
- low growing non-hazardous waterwise plants
- vegetable gardens
- a natural lawn at a grade consistent with existing kerbs and footpaths.

In order for verge development proposals to be assessed, the property owner is required to submit an outline of their proposed landscaping plan with a diagram showing the overall design, irrigation, installation of any hard surfaces, the materials to be used and any proposed street tree ensuring the following criteria are addressed:

- landscaping must not create barriers within the verge
- a pedestrian access 2m wide (existing footpath) must be maintained at all times
- where the proposal includes provision of a footpath through the verge between the existing footpath and the kerb line, the path is to be 1.5m wide, constructed of a suitably trafficable material and laid flush with the existing footpath, kerb and native soil level
- where a bus stop exists within a verge, the proposed development must provide a minimum 1.5m clearance around the bus stop and between the bus stop and the foot path
- hedges or similar borders of plants are acceptable if planted to maintain, a minimum clearance of 500mm from any existing and/or proposed footpath, and/or crossover and a minimum clearance of 1000mm from the kerb line
- reticulation, where proposed, does not present a hazard to either pedestrians or traffic
- appropriate measures are undertaken and maintained to minimise erosion and dust
- the use of loose inorganic materials, for example, gravels, stones, rocks or bricks will not be supported
- the use of any hard landscaping elements to retain soil around street trees or adjacent to any proposed or existing footpaths, crossovers, and/or kerbs will not be supported.

Once an application has been received, the City will then:

- inspect the location
- notify the owner in writing of the outcome.

On completion of any approved works the adjacent property owner must notify the City who will inspect the works. Works not carried out in accordance with the relevant approvals will require any non-compliance issues to be rectified within a specified time period.

For more information on the Waterwise Verge Restoration Program refer to the City's website.

### Verge paving

Verge paving is not supported by the City and is only permitted in limited circumstances; the installation of verge paving requires approval from the City.

Verge paving will only be considered if two vehicles cannot be accommodated within the adjacent residential property (including the crossover) or within the existing on street parking. Property owners can apply to strip pave a portion of the verge directly adjacent to their property to accommodate a maximum of two vehicles. Strip paving is two 500mm wide lengths of paving extending from kerb to footpath spaced to allow a single vehicle to park. The width between the two strips of paving is variable due to different vehicle sizes.

In order for verge paving proposals to be assessed the property owner is required to submit an outline of their proposed paving plan with a diagram that illustrates the proposed location, alignment, and the materials to be used.

Where the installation of strip paving to the verge is likely to compromise the longevity of an existing street tree, or restrict the installation of a new verge tree if the verge does not currently have a verge tree, the application will not be supported.

In order for applications to be approved the following criteria will need to be addressed:

- where paving is proposed for parking, each portion of strip paving shall be 500mm wide
- applicable only where in conjunction with new soft landscaping elements with low water demand
- a minimum 2m paving clearance from any street tree is to be maintained, or 3m if the installation depth is greater than 100mm
- where paving is proposed to provide a footpath between the property boundary and the kerb line, the path is to be 1.5m wide
- proposed parking configuration will not cause obstruction of the footpath or carriageway
- proposed parking configuration will not create sightline hazards
- where conventional clay or concrete paving is proposed, the area permitted to be paved will be no more than 30 per cent of the verge area (excluding any existing footpath)
- the property owner is to acknowledge in writing that any approved verge paving installed within the verge will be maintained by the property owner at grade consistent with the surrounding soil level at all times

- the property owner is also to acknowledge in writing that there is no responsibility on the part of the City or utility service provider to reinstate verge paving removed to provide for routine maintenance of services or projects approved by Council.

The City will then:

- assess the application ensuring relevant criteria are met
- inspect the location
- notify the owner in writing of the outcome.

On completion of any approved works the adjacent property owner must notify the City who will inspect the works. Works not carried out in accordance with the relevant approvals will require any non-compliance issues to be rectified within a specified time period.

Commercial areas are treated separately from residential verges as paving is permitted to 100 per cent of the verge in commercial areas.

#### **Verge maintenance**

Residents and commercial property owners are encouraged to maintain the verge adjacent to their property, for their own benefit, the benefit of their neighbours and the benefit of the wider community.

The mature height of vegetation will be maintained below 500mm. However, mid-storey plants, particularly those that are indigenous to the area such as grass trees (Xanthorrhoea species) and banksias (Banksia species) are permissible so long as sight lines are maintained.

In areas of high visibility where a property owner or resident are not inclined to maintain the verge adjacent to their property, the City will provide limited assistance to ensure public safety and to maintain a level of amenity commensurate with the expectations of the community.

The City will complete the following maintenance services annually:

- mow (once only) unkempt road verges in residential areas, which on the 1 December, display weed growth, which exceeds a height of 500mm across the entire verge
- mow all unkempt road verges adjacent to residential properties that are borders to the City on a programmed basis to a maximum 2 times per year.

Verges that are not typically maintained by residents which have weed or vegetation growth less than 500mm in height and/or that do not pose a safety hazard, are left unmaintained. This standard is in keeping with the level of maintenance carried out by all other councils within the western suburbs.

#### **Temporary barricades**

Temporary barricades for the purpose of establishing verge landscaping are acceptable provided that the materials used do not create a hazard and are identified with an abundance of markers to ensure the safety of pedestrians. Barriers must not be erected across pedestrian access ways, or in a manner which creates a sight line or hazard.

#### **Verge and property development**

To minimise the risk of tree damage or death a minimum construction clearance of 2m is required from the visible root collar of an existing street tree. Where excavation to a depth greater than 100mm is proposed the clearance should be greater than 3m from the visible root collar of an existing street tree. City approval is required for verge development where street trees may be impacted by the works.

#### **Waterwise Verge Restoration Program**

The objective of providing verge assistance is to encourage and support property owners to develop and maintain waterwise verges (refer to the Verge Policy).

#### **Waterwise landscaping**

The City encourages residents to install waterwise gardens on the verge adjacent to their property.

#### **Biodiversity value**

Consistent with environmental sustainability, this guideline aims to preserve and promote 'green' verges throughout the City. Green verges are an important component of the City's streetscapes, which forms green corridors that link to parks, reserves and natural bushland areas. Revegetated verges act as ecological stepping stones and assist native animals and birds move throughout the urban landscape.

#### **Artificial turf**

Artificial or synthetic turf is not an approved material and its installation is not permitted due to the number of issues associated with its use.

**Irrigation systems**

Where property owners wish to install a permanent irrigation system on the verge the water supply is to be from within the adjacent private property boundary. All pipework is to be installed below ground and under footpaths. Any irrigation system must comply with Water Corporation's regulations and be maintained at a grade consistent with the surrounding ground/mulch level when not in use.

Approval is required to install irrigation on the verge.

**Verge parking**

Parking on verges is permitted however parking adjacent street trees causes significant compaction to tree root systems. Normal street parking rules apply to the street area adjacent to the verge.

**Water infiltration**

On site infiltration of storm water is desirable as a means of contributing to the replenishment of groundwater. Storm water run-off from large sections of hard surfacing can cause localised flooding and adversely impact on the City's storm water system.

**Urban forest**

The majority of the City's urban forest is situated within verges and care and consideration for the existing trees and their root systems must be taken (refer to the Street and Reserve Trees Policy and Guideline).

**Garden edging**

Garden edging may be installed to create a barrier between verge surfaces. Edging must be a maximum depth and width of 100mm. Any installed edging must be maintained at grade with the surrounding landscape levels so it does not create a trip hazard.

**Acknowledgment**

The City will acknowledge residents efforts to develop a sustainable verge landscape with a Sustainable Verge Award each spring. The award will target verge landscapes which contribute to the City's green objectives in two categories being residential and commercial/schools.

The award is judged on the following criteria:

- biodiversity
- waterwise strategies
- design
- maintenance.

Nomination forms are available at the Administration Centre and on the City's website, and can be submitted all year round.

**Public awareness**

Public awareness programs to highlight the responsibilities of residents and the City on the issues of planting and maintenance of the verges will be undertaken including:

- articles placed in a local newspaper and/or *Talk about Subiaco* newsletter
- social media posts
- the City's website.

**Non-compliance**

Where verge treatments are not consistent with this guideline or the verge policy and are identified as safety hazards, the City will request the property owner carry out remedial works. Where the owner of the property is unable or unwilling to complete remedial works, the City will complete works.

Existing verge treatments, which are not consistent with this guideline are required to be rectified within 14 days of notification unless it presents an immediate hazard, in which case, the City will rectify the hazard within 24 hours of notification. These include:

- boats and/or trailers tethered to City assets such as street trees or light poles
- plants that have thorns, spear like leaves or plants that are known to be toxic
- landscaping that impedes sightlines or pedestrian access

Other verge treatments, which are not consistent with this guideline will require rectification within 60 days of notification. These include:

- paving installed without approval which cannot be retrospectively approved
- planter boxes that do not meet Industry Standards, that are higher than 150mm, or are within 500mm of an existing footpath/crossover and/or within 1000mm of the kerb line
- borders installed that are not flush with the fall of the verge between fixed assets such as the kerb and footpath and/or that present a safety hazard
- structures to retain soil on the verge.

A verge treatment which was installed prior to this guideline revision and was compliant at the time of installation, does not require rectification, however the City is willing to work with property owners should they wish to remove verge paving.

**Definitions**

**Green verges** refers to verges which form green corridors that link to parks, reserves and natural bushland areas

**Hard landscaping** refers to retaining structures or edging, borders, but not paving

**Paving** refers to the installation of paving materials for footpaths or hardstand areas

**Road reserve** means the portion of land adjacent to their property boundaries, specifically gazetted for the provision of public right of way

**Soft landscaping** refers to grass and plants

**Street tree** is a tree that is located within the road reserve

**Street verge** is the portion of road reserve between the property boundary and kerb line

**Waterwise verge restoration program** includes the provision of free mulch, soil improver and plants on a first-come first-served basis

**Verge treatment** refers to the landscaping of the portion of street verge not occupied by a footpath or crossover. It typically involves the planting of grass, ground covers or low shrubs and the installation of mulch and irrigation

**Waterwise** refers to the creation of appropriate gardens in climate regions where rainfall or water supply is limited

**Related sources**

- *Activities in Thoroughfares and Public Places Local Law 2014*
- *Local Government (Uniform Local Provisions) Regulations 1996 (r5, 6, 7 and 17)*
- *Local Government Act 1995 (s3.3 7 - 3.39)*
- *Local Government Property Local Law 2014*
- *Environmental Plan 2019-2023*
- *Strategic Community Plan 2017-2019*
- *Street and Reserve Trees Policy*
- *Sustainability and Resilience Strategy 2016-2021*
- Water Corporation’s “Step by Step Guide to Creating a Waterwise Verge”

Guideline Details	
Responsible Directorate	Technical services
Responsible Branch	Operations and Environment Services
Responsible Officer	Manager Operations and Environment
Affiliated Branches	Planning Services/ Health and Compliance/ Transport and Infrastructure Development
ELT Adoption	July 2020
Reviewed/Modified	February 2021

This information is available in alternative formats upon request.