

Neighborhood Services

Beautification Grant Program Funding Guidebook 2019



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Neighborhood Beautification Grant History



In 2015 City Council approved \$60,000 (\$10,000 for each Ward) from the general fund for the Aurora Neighborhood Beautification Grant Program. The program was designed to encourage neighborhood initiative in taking action to improve the appearance of Aurora neighborhoods while strengthening the social fabric and organizational networks of community residents.

The intent of the program includes:

- Improve the physical condition of a neighborhood
- Enhance neighborhood pride and identity
- Promote self-reliance
- Increase communication and community building among neighbors

Community building involves working together with others for a common benefit or improvement. That means any beautification project must include the active involvement of at least three residents from three separate households in the neighborhood. The three residents must register as “Program Coordinators”. The more residents that participate, however, the more success a project is likely to have. Business owners are encouraged to work together with residents to supplement and support neighborhood projects.

Neighborhood organizations and residents (where a neighborhood organization may not exist) may initiate the application process. Neighborhood liaisons will also communicate with Code Enforcement officers and city leaders to identify neighborhoods that could benefit from beautification efforts and encourage residents from that area to apply for the grant.

If a neighborhood is interested in pursuing a Neighborhood Beautification Grant they are encouraged to contact their neighborhood liaison, 303-739-7280 or https://www.auroragov.org/residents/neighborhood_liaisons.

Definitions

Project Coordinators: At least 2 other residents in addition to the primary project coordinator who are helping to lead the project. They must be residents of the neighborhood where the project is being done.

Primary Project Coordinator: This person will be the primary contact for the project and serve as the leader of the project team. They must be residents of the neighborhood where the project is being done.

HOA: A neighborhood group with mandatory dues and a legal entity.

Neighborhood Organization: An organization of neighbors who voluntarily work together and may contribute funds.

Program Guidelines

Grant Timeline

1. Attend a Neighborhood Beautification Grant Information Meeting
Applicants are encouraged to attend an informational meeting to learn more about the Neighborhood Beautification Grant program. This presentation will be offered on:
 - January 16th at 6 PM in the Aurora Municipal Center in the City Council Chambers - 15151 E. Alameda Parkway
 - January 22nd at 6 PM at Moorhead Recreation Center - 2390 Havana Street
 - January 23rd at 6 PM in the Tallyn’s Reach Library Community Room – 23911 E. Arapahoe Road
2. **BEFORE March 1st**- Meet with your Neighborhood Liaison to discuss your grant project. Applicants who meet with their Liaison often have better and more complete applications. Liaisons will provide you referrals to other departments for things like a revocable license, traffic management plans, or permission to do anything on City property or in a right of way. Your Neighborhood Liaison is determined by your City Council Ward. If you do not know which ward you are in visit <https://ags.auroragov.org/propinfo/propinfo.html> and enter in your physical address to find out.
 - Ward 1 and 2: Meg Allen - mkallen@auroragov.org or (303) 739-7258.
 - Ward 3 and 4: Susan Barkman – sbarkman@auroragov.org or (303) 739-7402
 - Ward 5 and 6: Scott Campbell - scampbel@auroragov.org or (303) 739-7441

3. **March** – Discuss your project with department referrals. Keep in mind they are working with many groups, so it is better not to delay contacting them for information.
4. **March 29th** – Deadline to turn in your application by 4:30pm. You can turn them in by dropping off a hard copy at the Neighborhood Services front desk on the 4th floor of the Aurora Municipal Center at 15151 E. Alameda Parkway or you can email a copy to your Neighborhood Liaison.
5. **April and early May** - The selection committee will meet and review applications to determine which applications should be funded.
6. **Early May** - All groups will be notified by mail to the Primary Project Coordinator.
7. **May to October** – Projects with approved funding will work with their Neighborhood Liaison to proceed through their city processes with all funds be spent.
8. **October 31st** – **All projects must be completed.**

Grant Funding

Aurora’s Beautification Grant is funded through the annual budget process with \$10,000 available per ward each year for a total of \$60,000. Neighborhood groups may apply for up to \$5,000 per project for community-based improvements such as neighborhood ID signage, landscaping enhancements, community gardens, neighborhood clean ups, little libraries, and more!

Some projects may be required to go through a city of Aurora process which has a fee attached to it. As a part of the Beautification Grant, these fees are waived for applications that are awarded funding, however any permit, license or plan amendments are still required. If you move forward without Beautification Grant funding these fees are not waived and the permit, license or plan amendment is still required.

General Guidelines

- Projects must be located within the city of Aurora and cannot be on private property for the primary benefit of the property owner.
- Must have at least 3 residents who LIVE in the neighborhood to serve as project coordinators.
- All project must include permission from the property owner, HOA board, or entity that is responsible for the maintenance of the project location.
- Projects must have high visibility to the surrounding streets, neighborhoods and adjacent owners.
- Proposed landscaping must have irrigation and each project must adhere to applicable City codes and ordinances.
- Before and after pictures of the site must be shown to verify the completion of the project.
- Voluntary groups or a group of 3 or more neighbors wanting to complete a project with ongoing maintenance such as a neighborhood ID sign or art

installation is required to turn in signatures of approval for 51% of homes in the neighborhood. This steep requirement helps alleviate potential conflict, and provides a basis of support for long term maintenance.

Prohibited Projects

The following things cannot be funded:

- Projects from Religious and/or Political Organizations
- Projects involving landscaping with no irrigation
- Projects that do not comply with city codes
- Projects on individual private residential property
- Projects not visible to the public or have no community impact
- No food or drink items will be funded as a part of any project.

Application Information

All applications must include a detailed description of the group applying, the neighborhood that the group represents, and the exact location of the improvement to be made. This includes information on an organizing committee with strong ties to the community and ready avenues for community outreach. A successful grant application will also include the following:

- A comprehensive sketch of the project
- A project timeline
- Before photos
- Permissions to execute your plan (HOA signatures, land owners, CDOT for major roadways, Xcel Energy, Century Link for utility lines, etc.
- A well-researched budget
- Explanation of how the project will positively impact the neighborhood
- A thorough maintenance plan
- List of names and addresses of those committing to work on your project

Grant project will be reviewed by a committee of city staff who may or may not have seen the application prior to submittal. In order to be successful, your application should be as complete as possible, have answered all questions listed in the application and include as much information and supporting materials as you can.

Award Criteria	Point Value
1. Project Details	20
2. Site Information	15
3. Timeline	10

4. Project Budget	20
5. Neighborhood Impact	10
6. Maintenance Plan	10
7. Documentation	15
Total Possible Points	100

Award Notices

Following our review process, applicants will receive written notice of the final determination of their application. This will be sent in the mail to the PRIMARY PROJECT COORDINATOR. Applicants must apply, and be awarded, *before* any improvements related to the project can be made.

Payment of Grant Funds

Grant funds may be paid directly to service or material providers, or may be reimbursed to the group if paid out of pocket. Adequate proof of payment (cancelled checks, money order receipts, bank check receipts, credit card statements/receipts, etc.) will be required for all purchases. For reimbursement purposes, we are unable to accept invoices paid in cash.

If your group opts to pay upfront and receive reimbursement from the city, we will not be able to reimburse any sales tax that you have paid. If the city pays the service or material provider directly, as a tax exempt organization there is no sales tax paid.

Common Project Types

There are many projects out there and as long as it meets the intent and guidelines of the program it is eligible for funding. The following project types are things that have been done many times in the past and over the year, staff has learned about some of the common challenges that groups encounter.

Neighborhood ID Signs

Neighborhood ID signs help provide a sense of community identity and pride. They create clear visual boundaries in the neighborhood and offer a chance for communities to express their unique character. As a popular grant request, there are some common challenges and things to think about.

- Neighborhood Consent - In HOAs there is a board that is typically charged with making decisions that affect the whole community which in our experience has led to fewer challenges with neighborhood agreement. In voluntary neighborhood groups or neighborhoods with no active group, neighborhood id signs can cause controversy because neighbors may not agree with the location, or design of the sign.
- Property Ownership – HOAs have an advantage here, because HOA boards are typically responsible for managing the common spaces of the HOA and therefore have the ability to put in a sign on common property. Voluntary neighborhood groups or neighborhoods without an active neighborhood board most often do not have common property to put the sign so they are often installed in city of Aurora right of way, or on private property such as a fence. If you are looking to install it on the corner fence, you must have the property owner’s permission. Often the property owner becomes the responsible party for the long term maintenance of the sign.

Based on your individual plan there might be impacts to traffic, sidewalks, and right of ways. Check in with your Neighborhood Liaison to see what impacts your project might have and which city departments you will need to check in with for permits, plan reviews, traffic control plans, and revocable licenses.

Community Gardens

A Community garden is a shared green space created and cultivated by volunteers to grow vegetables, fruits and herbs. It is also a great way to build community, get to know your neighbors, and share fruits of your labor, recipes, and tips for growing a strong garden. They improve the quality of life for those involved by encouraging self-reliance and responsibility, building skills, reducing food insecurity, creating income opportunities, providing exercise, promoting relaxation and offering a chance to connect with nature.

Community gardens are a great amenity for neighborhoods, but there are some challenges that you should think about before applying for funds with a community garden.

- Depending on the site size and design complexity, the cost of building a community garden can range anywhere from \$500 to \$50,000, plus yearly maintenance costs. Community gardens have been awarded before and are usually the recipients of other grants in addition to the Beautification Grant. At the time you apply for the city of Aurora’s beautification funds, you do not have to have commitments from other funding sources, but you should be applying for other grants as well. If other funds are not available the project may need to be scaled back. If the applicant cannot use the funds, they will be reallocated to another group.
- Property ownership can be a challenge as community gardens can be in a variety of places. Many community gardens are on school property, HOA property, Parks and Open Space land.

- To identify the ideal spot for a community garden, select a site that has good visibility, centrally located, close proximity to the garden's users (which ensures its sustainability and discourages vandalism and theft), at least six hours of direct sunlight, contaminant-free soil, and accessible water.
- Community gardens require a lot of ongoing work, and it is important to establish who will be in charge of managing both immediately and in the future.

Additional Informational Resources

Denver Urban Gardens - <https://dug.org/>

Community Garden Handbook -

https://www.auroragov.org/UserFiles/Servers/Server_1881137/File/Residents/Neighborhood%20Liaisons/Community%20Gardens/Dig%20in%20Aurora%20Brochure.pdf

Water conservation tips for community gardeners -

[https://www.auroragov.org/UserFiles/Servers/Server_1881137/File/Residents/Water/Water%20Conservation/Community%20Garden/Community%20garden%20tips%20\(1\).pdf](https://www.auroragov.org/UserFiles/Servers/Server_1881137/File/Residents/Water/Water%20Conservation/Community%20Garden/Community%20garden%20tips%20(1).pdf)

Landscape Enhancements

Landscape enhancements allow a neighborhood to spruce up the landscaping that is around their neighborhood which gives a more visually appealing view of the particular neighborhood. It also can help with other neighbors' pride in the neighborhood and others' ideas of the neighborhood. Previously funded projects have included mulch, flowers, plant material, tree trimming, landscaping around a neighborhood ID sign, landscaping around a detention pond, rock, and boulders.

Depending on your specific project, there are a number of common challenges that may prevent a project from being funded. Some things to think about:

- Property ownership plays a large role in doing landscaping improvements. Please remember that grant funds cannot be used for enhancement of private property. In HOAs any commonly owned property is eligible. Property ownership is important because it helps determine the long-term maintenance.
- Applicants do not have to serve on the HOA board, but should include a letter of support from the HOA or minutes from the meeting in which a vote was held to support the application.
- Easements and right-of-ways exist all across the city of Aurora, if your plan puts something in either an easement or a right of way you will need permission. The city of Aurora's Real Property Division can help you determine if there are easements, or right of ways in the area of your project and guide you through the process of getting permission. If you are awarded

funding the fee for getting a revocable license is waived, however it is still REQUIRED. If your project is not funded but you move forward in the future with other funds you are still required to have a revocable license.

- Any new landscaping must be irrigated by an automatic sprinkler as required by code. While neighbors taking turns to water new landscaping might seem like a viable path to ensure adequate watering, the routine often doesn't prove to be a lasting solution. Over time, neighbors move and life happens leaving nobody to water the plants. (City of Aurora Landscape Ordinance, Sec. 146-1426, 1430, 1431 (C))
- Plant selection is really important as you might be trying to match existing landscaping, lowering water use, or starting over. The Water Conservation Division of Aurora Water has a lot of great resources for you as you think about your goals. Visit <https://www.auroragov.org/residents/water/landscaping> for resources that help you find classes for do it yourself design, plant selection and examples of water wise gardens.
- Major changes to landscaping, or community amenities may require an update to the HOA's site plan that is on file with the city.
- Projects at or near corners must not infringe on the sight triangle which allows drivers and pedestrians to move safely through the intersection.
- Additionally, some things like large boulders, plants with spikes or needles (cactus, yucca) may not be placed along sidewalks so that pedestrians and cyclists do not become injured.
- If you plan to work near a street or your project might require a lane closure. You will need to coordinate with our Traffic Division to determine what type of lane closures you will need. You will also be responsible for securing the necessary barricades and the cost can be included in your grant application.

Neighborhood Clean Ups

Whether you are hoping to clean up the yard or clean out the basement, neighborhood clean ups are a great way to reduce the extra volume of trash and debris in a neighborhood. A neighborhood wide cleanup day that brings either trash trucks or several roll-off dumpsters to a convenient spot in the neighborhood where neighbors can bring their large items, branches, and other extra trash. Here are some helpful hints for things to think about:

- Location, location, location! Find a space that will allow cars to move through, adequate space for waiting in line, and space for a few dumpsters can be a little tricky. In the past many groups have reserved a neighborhood school parking lot. You cannot use any city street or parking lanes.
- It takes a lot of volunteer time to distribute flyers, stage the area, helping to get things into the dumpsters, and moving cars through the site. Think about who in your neighborhood can really help with this and how to make it fun for volunteers.

- The school district may require you to have your own insurance for the event, and you may need to find a policy that will meet their requirements and your needs just in case anyone gets hurt.

Little Free Libraries

Little free libraries are a great way to build community and share books in the neighborhood. Many groups have been able to install them around parks, on schools routes and throughout the community. Before you begin you can check out the little free library map at <https://littlefreelibrary.org/ourmap/> to see if there are registered little libraries in your neighborhood. In addition, there may already be some little libraries that are unregistered.

- Property ownership one of the biggest challenges. Ultimately the owner of the property will be responsible for maintaining the library. The application should include the property owner and written permission from the property owner.
- Location, you cannot place little libraries in the right of way or too close to a sidewalk so please check the location carefully.
- Any library needs books, so think about how you will supply your little library with books.

Staff Contacts

Meg Allen, Neighborhood Liaison – mkallen@auroragov.org or (303) 739-7258

Susan Barkman, Neighborhood Liaison - sbarkman@auroragov.org or (303) 739-7402

Scott Campbell, Neighborhood Liaison – Scampbel@auroragov.org or (303) 739-7441

Zach Versluis, Water Conservation Specialist - zversluis@auroragov.org or (720) 859-4366

Libby Nordeen, Traffic Engineering Technical Coordinator - lnordeen@auroragov.org or (303) 739-7317

Natasha Wade, Real Property Agent - nwade@auroragov.org or (303) 739-7267

Tracy Young, Manager of Parks Recreation and Open Space Design and Construction Tyoung@auroragov.org or (303) 739-7166

Dan Osoba, Planner – dosoba@auroragov.org or (303) 739-7121 or

Soledad Anda Gordillo, Planner - manda@auroragov.org

Staff Assistance



Real Property

Real Property works with residents to review the site for any easements or relevant property information. If the project is in a right of way or easement, staff will work with the applicant to process a revocable license application if the project receives funding.

Traffic

- When planning for your project costs you may be required to provide a traffic control plan for the purpose of safety and/or loading that may be near a roadway for instance:
 - The closure of an adjacent lane of traffic
 - Sidewalk closure
 - Bike lane closure
 - Parking lane closure
- In these cases a traffic control plan, with the vendor suggestions on your handout, will be required. This plan will show what facilities will be temporarily closed and the devices that are needed to close them. Here is the link to the appropriate permit to submit:
https://www.auroragov.org/UserFiles/Servers/Server_1881137/File/Business%20Services/Development%20Center/Permits/Public%20Improvement%20Permits/008358.pdf
- Operational hours of traffic control do have restrictions depending on the classification of the roadway. For instance:
 - Arterial and collector roadways, which are the main routes within the city, allow lane closures from the hours of 8:30am to 3:30pm weekdays to avoid peak time traffic. Weekend work hours for arterial/collectors are 8am to 5pm.
 - Local/residential roadways allow lane closures from the hours of 8am to 5pm 7 days a week.
- When planning for your project you will also want to look at sight distance requirements near intersections.
- If your project is located within 30' of an intersection or driveway the height restriction for objects or plant materials is generally 36" in height.
- Boulders or other immovable objects such as walls or signs may have additional safety requirements and are site specific and evaluated separately.
- If you are planning use volunteers for your project that may be working near the roadway we ask that they wear reflective safety vests. We also ask that volunteers please not enter into a closed lane of traffic with or without traffic

control and that all minors under the age of 18 must have a responsible adult with them.

Water Conservation

Aurora Water Conservation has several resources to assist those interested in converting high water-use turf grass to a water-wise landscape.

- Water Conservation Classes
- Rebates
- Aurora Water-wise Garden
- Free Design Consultations
- Library of books

Planning

The city of Aurora Planning staff can assist you in determining if your proposed project will require any amendments to site plans and meet city planning guidelines.

This is only a list of common departments for projects to be referred to. Please meet with your Neighborhood Liaison to determine what specific referrals you will need to work with.