

Sidewalk Landscaping: Frequently Asked Questions

1. Why Landscape Your Sidewalk?

Landscaped sidewalks look great, provide habitat for birds and butterflies, reduce run-off, improve the quality of our ground water, improve livability of a neighborhood and increases property values.

2. How Do I Participate?

Apply for a [Sidewalk Landscaping Permit](#) through the Department of Public Work's Bureau of Urban Forestry. To find out more about the program, get instructions and information, and download an application go to www.sfdpw.org and select "Services A-Z" tab, scroll to "Sidewalk Landscaping (Permit)".

3. What are the costs and time involved?

- a Sidewalk Landscape Permit: approx. \$160-215 (varies if individual property or group of neighboring properties collaborate) See DPW Sidewalk Landscaping Permit for updated costs.*
- b. Demolition and removal of concrete sidewalk: \$5 per square foot approx.*
- c. Plant material: \$6-10 per square foot (varies).*
- d. Paving Material for [Courtesy Strip](#) and [Accessible Path](#) adjacent Parking: \$2-10 per square foot (varies).*
- e. [Edge Treatment](#): \$15-40 approx. (varies).*
- f. Watering costs: For first year after planting, water once per week fully soaking soil for plant establishment. Water during dry season. After first year water requirements vary depending on plant selection. (Refer to SF Drought Tolerant Plant List Descriptions or consult local nurseries).*
- g. Maintenance and Upkeep: Residents are required to keep planting beds free of debris and weeds, to replace stolen or damaged plants or materials. Expect approx. 1/2 hour/ week minimum to weed and remove garbage.*

4. What are the initial steps I need to take?

Refer to the guidelines for specific requirements.

a. Determine if your sidewalk is wide enough to install sidewalk landscaping.

Measure the width of your sidewalk. Refer to [Sidewalk Landscaping Design Options](#).

In general, the following apply:

For urban area with adjacent parking, the minimum width your sidewalk needs to be to be allowed to install sidewalk landscaping is 11ft. (6 ft unobstructed sidewalk +3 ft planting + 2ft courtesy strip= 11 feet wide).

For residential areas or alleyways with parking, the minimum width to fulfill all requirements is 9ft (4 ft unobstructed sidewalk +3 ft planting + 2ft courtesy strip= 9 feet wide).

b. Determine if you as the property owner or as agent of property owner are committed to maintain landscape.

Often an agent of the property owner is interested in installing sidewalk landscaping, however the property owner will be responsible for the ongoing maintenance of the sidewalk and landscaped area and therefore must sign the application.

c. Determine if you plan to hire a landscape designer or provide drawing and plant list yourself. You can create your own drawing. The most important elements are sidewalk width, your proposed planting area dimensions, and any existing utilities or site conditions.

d. Determine if you wish to hire a contractor to do the work or do the work yourself.

You may also opt to hire a contractor to saw cut and remove the portion of concrete sidewalk slated for new sidewalk planting and do the planting yourself.

5. What information do I need to include in the drawing required with the application?

Refer to [Drawing Template](#) and instructions below.

Include the following measurements:

- A. Width of Sidewalk (measured from back of curb)
- B. Length and Width of new planting bed along Curb
- C. Length and Width of new planting bed along Building
- D. Length of Your Property along Sidewalk
- E. Width of Driveway
- F. Width of Entries (Doorways and Stairs)
- G. Width of Remaining Unobstructed Concrete Sidewalk
- H. Width of Proposed 4 ft Accessible Path from Parking Spot
- I. Width of Courtesy Strips (varies with different type of parking)
- J. Width of Clear Access to Utility

Label the following elements in your drawing: Draw in and Label Property Line (PL, Your Building and Address(House Number),Your Entries (Doorways and Stairs, Your Driveway, Driveways adjacent your property,Street name, Curb, Above-ground utilities (telephone poles, fire hydrants,etc),Below-ground utilities (Gas, PG&E Utility box lids, etc),Street Furniture and Elements(benches, mailboxes, etc),Existing Trees, Draw and Label Existing Planting Areas and Tree Wells, Proposed New Trees, Proposed New Sidewalk Landscape Bed, Type of Adjacent Curbside Parking (parallel, perpendicular or diagonal), and Proposed edging treatment if any.

6. How do I determine what plants are suited to my sidewalk landscape area?

Select plants that are suited to your climate zone in San Francisco and tolerate the microclimatic conditions of your site, such as shady, sunny, or windy. Sunset climate zone for San Francisco is zone 17. The city can be divided simply into three zones; Fog Belt, Transition and Sun Belt. Refer to the [San Francisco Climate Zone Map](#) and [Sidewalk Landscaping Drought Tolerant List](#) for a list of plants suited for San Francisco. Refer to [Selected Plant Palate Lists](#) suited to your area, organized by what supervisor district your property is located. Your Urban Forestry inspector can also answer questions and provide suggestions for plant choices.

7. When can I hire a contractor through the City?

If you receive a notice to repair your sidewalk and your sidewalk conditions allow for a sidewalk landscaping installation, you have the option to hire a contractor through the DPW Bureau of Street Use and Mapping for the work. You would select one of our pre-designed landscapes, designed for your area and exposure. Then you would complete the application, indicating which of the landscapes you would like installed and the approximate square footage you believe will work for your site. DPW staff will contact you to discuss details and provide you with a preliminary cost estimate. If you agree to proceed, DPW will send an installation agreement for you to sign and return to DPW. DPW will contact you once the exact installation date is finalized.

8. What are the quick reference guides that could be downloaded?

Refer to '[Sidewalk Landscaping: A Resident's Guide](#)' and '[Sidewalk Landscaping: Pre-Designed Landscapes](#)' and '[Sidewalk Landscaping Guidelines for Permit Application](#)'.