



City of Berkeley – Public Works

2020 Traffic Circle Vegetation Policy and Maintenance Plan

Based on Resolution 69,164-N.S. and the Annotated Agenda of the Special Meeting of the Berkeley City Council on 11/12/2019¹, and replaces the 2012 Traffic Circle Planting Policy

The purpose of this new policy is to identify the appropriate type of vegetation and its maintenance for traffic circles that provide traffic calming, beautification, environmental, and other benefits while maintaining pedestrian safety. The goal of this policy is to develop guidelines ensuring that traffic circle vegetation and trees are maintained to conform to safety standards to promote visibility and enhance neighborhood safety. This policy will be reviewed every five (5) years.

Ongoing Vegetation Maintenance:

Vegetation shall be maintained to not exceed a maximum height of 24 inches from the top of the traffic circle planter curb.

Vegetation Maintenance includes:

- Weeding
- Debris and trash removal
- Pruning to maintain 24" height

New Vegetation Plantings:

Traffic Circle plantings should be durable, diverse, and attractive. New plantings must be drought-tolerant and fully grown be 24 inches or less above the traffic circle curb. Good examples are plants from California and other Mediterranean climates around the world. Plantings should conform to Bay-Friendly Landscape Guidelines² and support pollinators. Plantings with spines or thorns (e.g. cacti), vegetables, or fruits are not permitted. Hoses are considered a trip hazard and a road hazard, and are not permitted for irrigation of traffic circles. No use of pesticides or herbicides will be allowed for maintenance.

Traffic circles should be planted with consideration of sightlines and vegetation size and shape at maturity. In addition, a simple Planting Guide for native and pollinator friendly plants was created by the Traffic Circle Task Force. Plants that are on the Planting Guide do not require submittal of a plant list for approval. New proposed Planting List must be submitted to adoptaspot@cityofberkeley.info for review and approval when significant revegetation of an existing traffic circle is proposed.

¹ The adopted resolution was based on community input gathered before and as part of the Traffic Circle Policy Task Force who met regularly from June 2019 through November 2019 and included subcommittees on Vegetation, Operation and Maintenance, and Policy Alignment.

² Bay-Friendly Landscape Guidelines from ReScape can be found here: <https://rescapeca.org/resources/for-community-leaders-landscape-professionals/landscape-standards/>

Traffic circles with Green Infrastructure³ will be planted and maintained by the City of Berkeley or their designated representatives to ensure compliance with engineered planting plans to support water quality. Future green infrastructure installations will be communicated to the neighboring community with opportunities for community input.

Vegetation Maintenance and Planting activities will be performed according to the Traffic Circle Vegetation Policy and Maintenance Agreement and Resolution 69,194-N.S. from the City of Berkeley. Traffic Circles are in the public right of way and may require traffic control for volunteer safety. Maintenance and planting activities can be performed as part of scheduled volunteer events and on an as needed basis. Additionally, in some Traffic Circles, there is City and other Utility infrastructure including maintenance holes. To avoid any incidental damage to plantings, the 1.5 feet around the maintenance hole should be free of vegetation and crews will need a clear path to walk to the maintenance hole. In addition, prior to planting, volunteers will need to contact 811 to avoid disturbing underground utilities - <https://www.usanorth811.org/>.

Ongoing Existing Tree Maintenance:

All tree work will be performed by City Staff or their contractors. Trees with trunks wider than 20 inches will be evaluated for structural safety every three (3) years. Mature tree canopies will be trimmed to provide a minimum height of 7 feet above the top of the traffic circle planter curb. Tree Limbs that extend beyond the curb will be trimmed to provide a minimum height of 14 feet above the road surface.

Traffic Circles with single tree trunks that are less than 20 inches in width, as measured at the point 4 feet above the ground, do not require any additional traffic calming devices at this time. Single tree trunks wider than 20 inches may be permitted with additional traffic calming measures.

Low branches on young trees and/or flower stalks extending above the 24 inch maximum height above the traffic circle curb shall be permitted as long as the total visual obstruction above 24 inches is no more than 20 inches across the circle. If a tree must be removed from a circle and can be transplanted it shall be transplanted. In any event, the City's policy shall be to place a more location-appropriate tree in the circle where a tree has been removed, if possible.

City of Berkeley will inspect Traffic Circles every six (6) months for compliance with this policy, and will inspect community complaints regarding Traffic Circles within two (2) business days of receipt of complaint.

New Trees:

Planting of new trees will be considered for traffic circles that do not have utility conflicts. In addition, any proposed locations must adhere to the [Tree Planting Location Standards](#). These standards shall be refined over time to be more specific for traffic circle locations. A [Tree Planting Application](#) must be completed and submitted to adoptaspot@cityofberkeley.info for initial review before it is forwarded on to Forestry for final review.

³ Green Infrastructure maintenance and planting guidelines are identified in the City's Green Infrastructure Plan as required by the City's Municipal Regional Stormwater Permit. https://www.cityofberkeley.info/Clerk/City_Council/2019/06_June/Documents/2019-06-18_WS_Item_01_City_of_Berkeley_Green_Infrastructure_pdf.aspx

Volunteer Maintenance and Requirements:

Landscaped neighborhood traffic circles in Berkeley add beauty, support the environment, and help slow down traffic to make Berkeley a safer place to live. The City wants to continue to engage existing and new community volunteers to maintain traffic circles. All existing volunteers will be required to sign a Volunteer Agreement and Release from Liability within 30 days from publication of this plan and submit to adoptaspot@cityofberkeley.info . All new volunteers will also be required to sign the volunteer agreement and release before performing any maintenance activities at a traffic circle.

Traffic Circle volunteers will be responsible for caring for the traffic circle vegetation including weeding, pruning and other routine maintenance; being cautious and visible to traffic while in or near the traffic circle; comply with requirements outlined in this document; ensure traffic circle vegetation adheres to sightline requirements; and adopt a traffic circle for at least six months.

Traffic Circles without volunteers will be planted and maintained by the City until volunteers are in place following the Planting Guide.

City will notify volunteers via mail and a courtesy email if corrective action is needed. Volunteers will have seven (7) days⁴ from the date on the mailed notification letter from the City to bring the Traffic Circle into compliance. For any questions, the volunteer should email adoptaspot@cityofberkeley.info . If not corrected, City Staff or their designee will take corrective action to bring the vegetation into compliance, which may include pruning or removal of vegetation that violates this policy.

In keeping with Title 20 of the Berkeley Municipal Code, no signs are permitted in a Traffic Circle with the exception of City authorized traffic control devices signs. Traffic Circle volunteers may move temporary signage to the parking strips adjacent to the Traffic Circle.

Traffic Circles primary function is for traffic calming, and they are not to be used as parks or for any form of recreation.

⁴ <https://www.codepublishing.com/CA/Berkeley/html/Berkeley12/Berkeley1244/Berkeley1244070.html>

Adopt a Spot Traffic Circle Volunteers will:

- Call 911 in the event of an emergency or 510-981-5900 for non-emergencies.
- Work only between sunrise and sunset.
- Wear appropriate protective clothing that could include: work gloves, eye protection, sturdy closed toed shoes, and long pants to prevent injury from sharp objects, insect stings, and sunburn.
- Wear a reflective vest required for working in the public right-of-way. The City will provide one to volunteers if requested.
- Will not plant vegetation that is not on the recommended list without prior authorization from the City.
- Will not wear ear buds or headphones while performing maintenance activities.
- Will not use power tools.
- Will not pick up sharp objects with bare hands.
- Will not touch medical or hazardous waste (including hypodermic needles, automotive fluids, unknown fluids and materials). Report hazardous waste in the public right of way to the City of Berkeley Public Works at 510-981-6620.
- Separate collected materials into recycling, green waste, and garbage cart.
- Dispose of recycling in your residential blue recycling cart or agreed upon cart.
- Dispose of small amounts of trash in your residential grey garbage cart or agreed upon cart.
- Larger amounts of trash placed in orange plastic City-issued bags will be picked up by Public Works if requested. Bags will be supplied upon request.
- Dispose of small amounts of green waste, such as leaves and trimmings, in your residential green cart or agreed upon cart. Larger amounts of green waste placed in City-issued paper bags will be picked up by Public Works. Bags will be supplied upon request.
- Will provide adult supervision at all times to any volunteer under the age of 18.
- Individuals who have not signed a volunteer agreement are prohibited from the Traffic Circle.

Note: The City reserves the right to immediately withdraw support for any volunteer if, at the sole discretion of the City, the volunteer's conduct while participating in volunteer activities on City property or right-of-way is determined to be inconsistent with this Policy or violates any local, state or federal law.