

City of Madison Policy for Adopt a Median Program
Approved by the Board of Public Works on 1/29/2025

The purpose of this policy is to establish guidelines for the Adopt a Median Program and outline the responsibilities for both the City and the group adopting the median. Interested volunteers can find available existing medians and apply to adopt online by going to the Adopt a Median website below. Converting existing turf medians into an adopt a median planting bed will be considered on a case-by-case basis. If approved, the planting bed volunteers are responsible for turf removal and disposal.

<https://www.cityofmadison.com/engineering/stormwater/programs-initiatives/adopt-a-median>

Program criteria for planting newly constructed traffic circles and medians:

- Eligible traffic calming features must meet certain size criteria. The plantable median width must be a minimum of 6’.
- Eligible traffic calming features must be in streets with a target traffic volume of 2,000 vehicles per day or less AND a posted speed limit of 25 mph or less, with operated speeds near or below posted speed limit.
- Traffic calming features with sewer access structures, castings, lighting, signals, or other types of infrastructure that may require maintenance access are not eligible to be planted.
- Median volunteers will be required to fill out the adopt a median program application and waiver by a due date (due date will be approximately 1 month into construction). The date and how to apply will be in the project fact sheet.
- In the absence of volunteers, new traffic calming features will be constructed with colored stamped concrete instead of a planting area.

As part of the Program, the applicant agrees to the following:

- The applicant will sign the required volunteer/waiver forms prior to working in the median garden.
- The applicant shall only install perennial plants that meet the criteria as listed on the Adopt a Median the website.
- The applicant will maintain the garden for a minimum of two (2) growing seasons.
- The applicant will contact City Engineering if they are no longer willing or able to maintain the median garden.

As part of the Program, Engineering will provide the following resources:

- Personal protective equipment as requested (traffic cones and safety vests).
- Reimbursement up to \$2.50 per square foot of garden up to a maximum of \$400.00 for the initial planting per median adopted.
- In subsequent years, Engineering shall provide up to \$250.00 per year, per adopted median to replace plants due to mortality and to purchase new mulch as needed.

NOTE: Plants located in spaces of traffic circles or medians that continue to be damaged by snowplows or tires of larger vehicles will not be reimbursed more than once.

Maintenance of the Adopt a Median Program:

- Engineering will place “Adopt Me” signs with Program and contact information in medians that need adopters.
- Prior to April 1 of every year, City Engineering will send an email notification to all groups/volunteers that have signed a median adoption agreement to confirm they will be continuing and to provide new information.
- In the event that Engineering receives notices that a group no longer wishes to manage a median:
 - Engineering will make it available in the online Adopt a Median map
 - Engineering will post an “Adopt Me” sign in the median
 - If no one has adopted the garden within 1 calendar year, Engineering will notify the Alder that the garden is to be converted under the plan for un-adopted medians below.
 - If the Alderperson secures a median adopter, the adopter will fill out the online application and waiver.

All Adopt a Median Program gardens will be inspected by City Engineering annually in mid-summer.

If the annual inspection reveals a lack of maintenance, City Engineering will trim the plants, if necessary, and will contact the group/volunteer that signed the median adoption agreement. If the group/volunteer does not reply within 2 weeks or replies that they are unwilling or unable to maintain the garden:

- Engineering will make it available in the online Adopt a Median map and notify the Alder that it is available to adopt.
- Engineering will post an “Adopt Me” sign in the median.
- Engineering will re-inspect the un-adopted median near the end of the growing season and again the following year to cut back plants as necessary to prevent vision hazards.
- If the planted median is un-adopted for longer than 1 calendar year, it will be converted under the plan for un-adopted medians below.

Plan for un-adopted medians after 1 calendar year:

For all median gardens that have been available online and have an “Adopt Me” sign and are still not adopted within 1 calendar year, City Engineering will notify the Alder and the garden will be removed and converted to one of the following options before the next growing season (June 1):

- **Turf**, if the planting bed is currently surrounded by existing mowed turf.
- **Turf**, if the planting bed meets mowing size criteria (example minimum of 6’ wide) and located within 0.25 miles of an existing feature mowed by Streets Division.
- **Low maintenance planting (optional and a case-by-case basis)**, for example densely planted daylilies, prairie dropseed, spirea. This option requires Parks Division approval. The plants would be installed and established by Engineering using landscape fabric to

minimize weeds, then long-term maintenance would be transferred to Parks. This option is only eligible for additional Parks review if planted medians are located within 0.25 miles of another planted median that is maintained by Parks.

- **Colored stamped concrete**, if the planting bed does not meet the new eligibility size and location criteria (for example is less than 6' wide or on a street with higher traffic volumes), is not surrounded by mowed turf, and not located within 0.25 miles of existing Parks or Streets maintained features.