

***ITEM 2** Provo City Development Services requests Ordinance Text Amendments to Chapter 15.20.120 Parkways. Citywide Application. Hannah Salzl (801) 852-6423
hsalzl@provo.org PLOTA20230206

Applicant: Development Services

Staff Coordinator: Hannah Salzl

Relevant History: On February 28, 2024, the Planning Commission recommended approval of an amendment limiting artificial turf in front and side yards to 60%, the same limit as all other non-vegetative surfaces.

Neighborhood Issues: There has not yet been a neighborhood meeting on this item and staff has not received any feedback on the request at the time of this report.

Summary of Key Issues:

- An amendment to 15.20.060 Design Standards was approved by the Planning Commission and will be heard by the Council in conjunction with this proposed amendment.
- Subsection 15.20.060(6)(a) currently permits artificial turf as long as it meets certain aesthetic and installation standards.
- Artificial turf is not a sustainable alternative to natural grass and should not be permitted to replace vegetative coverage.

Staff Recommendation: That the Planning Commission recommend approval of the proposed text amendments to the Provo City Council.

ALTERNATIVE ACTIONS

1. **Continue** to a future date to obtain additional information or to further consider information presented. *The next available meeting date is April 10, 2024 at 6:00 P.M.*
2. **Recommend Denial** of the requested Ordinance Text Amendment. *This action would not be consistent with the recommendations of the Staff Report. The Planning Commission should state new findings.*

OVERVIEW

Staff proposes limiting artificial turf in parkways (or parkstrips) four or more feet wide and prohibiting outdoor carpet in landscaping.

In parkways four feet and wider, non-vegetative elements are limited to 60% of the unbuilt surface area. The proposed amendment would set the same limit for artificial turf and would also require artificial turf to meet the installation specifications already in code in 15.20.060 Design Standards. This is consistent with the proposed amendment limiting artificial turf to 60% in front and side yards like other non-vegetative ground cover, for which the Planning Commission recommended approval on February 28, 2024 (PLOTA20230206).

In parkways less than four feet wide, staff does not propose a limit to artificial turf coverage. This is consistent with previous staff determinations that areas narrower than four feet are not ideal for large trees and substantive vegetative cover. City code already allows brick pavers, decorative stone, poured concrete, and other similar non-vegetative elements in narrow parkways.

In addition to the brief Findings of Fact in this report, a full analysis of the ecological and hydrological effects of artificial turf, as far as data is available, can be found in the staff report for PLOTA20230206.

Additionally, should a resident feel that artificial turf is the best option for their entire parkway because they have a disability that makes caring for a yard more challenging, they can apply through the City's existing reasonable accommodation process. Zoning Enforcement staff are already trained to teach residents about the process if it seems appropriate for their circumstances.

FINDINGS OF FACT

1. While artificial turf can use less water than some types of natural turf grass, it is not a water-free solution.
2. Artificial turf can become much hotter than natural turf grass and can radiate that heat, increasing ambient temperatures.
3. Fragments of artificial turf can contaminate stormwater runoff and contribute to microplastics in natural environments.
4. The General Plan reads, "To avoid becoming a concrete and asphalt-paved community, the city should continue to require developments to meet landscaping standards. Best practices for incorporating water-wise landscape or xeric landscaping design should be used where possible" (pg 27). The environmental effect of artificial turf is similar to paving over a space.
5. General Plan goal Resource Management 1.b calls for the City to "Promote the use of water conservative practices, including landscaping."

6. General Plan goal Resource Management 1.g. calls for the City to “Increase the urban tree canopy.” The increased ambient heat from artificial turf creates a more stressful environment for nearby living vegetation.

STAFF ANALYSIS

Staff support the recommendation to limit turf grass in parkways.

Provo City Code Section 14.02.020(2) sets forth the following guidelines for consideration of ordinance text amendments.

Before recommending an amendment to this Title, the Planning Commission shall determine whether such amendment is in the interest of the public, and is consistent with the goals and policies of the Provo City General Plan. The following guidelines shall be used to determine consistency with the General Plan:

- (a) Public purpose for the amendment in question.

Staff response: The amendment would support the City’s goals to promote landscaping that is not environmentally damaging.

- (b) Confirmation that the public purpose is best served by the amendment in question.

Staff response: Staff believes that the proposed amendments serve the public.

- (c) Compatibility of the proposed amendment with General Plan policies, goals, and objectives.

Staff response: The proposed amendments are consistent with the General Plan.

Resource Management 1b. Promote the use of water conservative practices, including landscaping.

Resource Management 1g. Increase the urban tree canopy.

Landscaping codes attempt to balance the need to reduce water waste with the need to increase the city’s urban tree canopy, a water-intensive but critical investment. The proposed parkway amendment balances these two needs. Not restricting artificial turf in narrow parkstrips can help reduce water spent on areas that are not ideal for street trees. Limiting artificial turf coverage in wide parkstrips, which are ideal for large trees, can help reduce ambient ground temperatures and thus reduce water loss in trees planted there.

- (d) Consistency of the proposed amendment with the General Plan’s “timing and sequencing” provisions on changes of use, insofar as they are articulated.

Staff response: There are no timing and sequencing issues related to this proposal.

- (e) Potential of the proposed amendment to hinder or obstruct attainment

of the General Plan's articulated policies.

Staff response: This proposal does not hinder or obstruct attainment of the General Plan's articulated policies.

(f) Adverse impacts on adjacent land owners.

Staff response: Staff do not foresee any adverse impacts on adjacent landowners.

(g) Verification of correctness in the original zoning or General Plan for the area in question.

Staff response: This proposal does not affect the zoning of any areas. It addresses landscaping standards citywide.

(h) In cases where a conflict arises between the General Plan Map and General Plan Policies, precedence shall be given to the Plan Policies.

Staff response: There is not a conflict.

CONCLUSIONS

Staff in the Development Services, Power, Public Works, and Parks Departments support reducing the amount of artificial turf in order to promote more sustainable landscaping, protect runoff systems, and reduce ambient temperatures. Staff recommend approval of the amendment.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Proposed Language 15.20.120 (Parkways)

ATTACHMENT 1 – PROPOSED LANGUAGE 15.20.120 (Parkways)

15.20.120 Parkways.

(1) *Parkway Landscaping.*

(a) Parkways less than four (4) feet in width shall be landscaped with materials including bark, decorative stone, brick pavers, concrete pavers, permeable pavers, poured concrete, **artificial turf** or vegetative ground cover. **Outdoor carpet shall not be used in landscaping.**

(b) Parkways four (4) feet or more in width shall be landscaped. Living vegetation including turf grass, **or** vegetative materials, ~~or artificial turf grass~~ shall cover a minimum of forty percent (40%) of the unbuilt surface area within three (3) years of planting. Tree canopy, **artificial turf** and weeds may not count toward this percentage. **Artificial turf shall not exceed sixty percent (60%) of the unbuilt surface area and shall comply with the installation requirements in 15.20.060(6)(d).** **Outdoor carpet shall not be used in landscaping.**