
Policy Name:
Turfgrass Restrictions in Park Spaces

Effective:

Department Policy and Procedures

Approved by Parks and Recreation Advisory Board: April 12th, 2023

Approved by Executive Manager:

Contents

Policy

- 1.0 Purpose
- 2.0 Definitions
- 3.0 Authority
- 4.0 Background and Principles
- 5.0 Precedents and Examples

Policy

It is the policy of Denver Parks and Recreation (DPR) that turfgrass shall not be used as the primary landscaping groundcover in areas identified as providing limited to no functional recreation value and that drought tolerant and ecosystem restorative species are to be used instead, where applicable.

1.0 Purpose

These policies and procedures are intended to A) Assist DPR to meeting goals as outlined by the Game Plan for a Healthy City and the corresponding “*Every Drop*” guiding principle focusing on water conservation and advancing the associated implementation strategy to expand resilient and low-water landscapes. B) guide all current and future park planning and design projects C) identify suitable turfgrass conversion locations D) Evaluate need of turfgrass renovation projects.

1.1 Implementation

This policy shall be provided to all design firms, landscape architects, internal design/maintenance teams, and other like parties at the beginning of the planning and design process. This policy will be incorporated, along with other DPR standards and policies, to guide proper turf grass placement. This policy shall be consulted and reviewed for compliance during the QA/QC process.

2.0 Definitions

2.1 “**Limited to non-functional recreation value**” will include the following:

- 2.1.1** Low traffic areas along the right of way, 6 feet or less, between the roadway and park walks, sidewalks, parking areas and entrances;

2.1.1.b Low traffic areas along the right of way that have utility lines buried and are not suitable for tree plantings;

2.1.2 Parkway, medians, and landscape edges per design guidelines and standards;

2.1.3 Unprogrammed lawns without tree cover that are not used for picnicking, athletic, large scale event spaces or recreational events;

2.1.4 Areas directly adjacent to waterways, detention basins, green infrastructure and lake edges. Areas shall be non-turfgrass between the water's edge and where native with a trail or active recreation. Formalize access points will be incorporated for recreation where needed;

2.1.5 Areas where park walks, paths and roads come together, making small islands. Generally, but not always 1000 square feet or less;

2.1.6 Steep slopes in excess of 25% grade (4:1);

2.1.7 Islands located in roadways that have no formalized access or serve only as a pass through;

2.1.8 Areas that see the majority of their foot traffic come from maintenance teams.

2.2 "Turfgrass" is any combination of grass mix that is primarily cultivars of Bluegrass, Fescue, Zoysai, Rye, or Bermudagrass.

2.3 "Functional (Active) Turf" is irrigated turfgrass areas that provide recreational benefits to the community including active/programed recreation fields, athletic fields, high use ROW, golf course play, large scale event use, concert venues, playground areas, picnic areas.

2.4 "Large-Scale Event Space" any area that is used for large-scale event use or heavy traffic that is outside of "recreational benefits". Examples include Civic Center and Ruby Hill Levitt Pavilion.

3.0 Authority

Under section 2.4.4(A) of the City Charter, the management, operation and control of all facilities owned by the City and County of Denver for park and recreational purposes are under the exclusive control of DPR and its Manager. Under section 2.4.3 of the City Charter, the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board reviews and advises the Manager with respect to the policy and operation of DPR.

4.0 Background and Principles

Denver's climate and environment is currently challenged and will continue to be in the

coming years. The community and DPR must remain committed to conservation and sustainable practices to support the environmental and ecological health of the city all while seeking to adapt to the changing climate and limited resource availability.

Drought and drought tolerance continues to be a critical issue for Denver now and in the coming years. Denver's parkland is currently not adapted for droughts, with over 55 percent of urban parkland requiring irrigation. With a future that forecasts longer summertime periods of drought and 10 to 20 percent less precipitation overall, simply irrigating Denver's parks will quickly cost even more than the 11 percent of DPR's annual operating budget currently allocated to water costs.

Natural and "Uniquely Denver" landscapes in urban settings have an important social, community, and habitat value. Restoring land can help grow access to natural landscapes for residents, providing more opportunities to enjoy natural settings and wildlife within the city that are unique to this area. In addition, these restored landscapes can showcase and demonstrate best practices in water quality features and habitat restoration.

4.1 General Principles

4.1.1 Turfgrass replacement shall be done by using drought resistant plant species that are adapted to the current and projected climate in Denver.

4.1.2 Hardscaping or non-vegetated replacement of turfgrass areas will not be accepted as an alternative, unless for a recreational amenity or regularity/maintenance reason.

4.1.3 DPR will continue to implement other water saving programs through our Water Conservation Team, irrigation upgrades, alternative water sources such as raw and recycled, and new technology/innovations.

4.1.4 Irrigation zones will be hydro-zoned/designed/retrofitted to accommodate the needs of existing and planned tree plantings, develop precise water control based on landscape typologies and maximize water savings through central control.

4.1.5 This policy will be updated and revised using an adaptive management framework, retaining the original purpose as outlined above in sections 1.0 and 4.0, in order to allow for the use of new technology and cultivars.

4.1.6 Park design and retrofitting decisions require input from several stakeholders and the community. Each park will go through a rigorous analysis to ensure park use preserved while still meeting the goals of the turf policy.

5.0 Precedents and Examples



2.1.1 - Low traffic areas along the right of way, 6 feet or less, between the roadway and park walks, sidewalks, parking areas and entrances.

Example:





2.1.1.b - Low traffic areas along the right of way that have utility lines buried and are not suitable for tree plantings.

Example:





2.1.2 - Parkway, medians and landscape edges per existing design guidelines and standards.

Example:





2.1.3 - Unprogrammed lawns without tree cover that are not used for picnicking, athletic, large scale event spaces or recreational events.

Example:





2.1.4 -Areas directly adjacent to waterways, detention basins, green infrastructure and lake edges. Areas shall be non-turfgrass between the water's edge and where native with a trail or active recreation.

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2.1.5 - Areas where park walks, paths and roads come together, making small islands. Generally, but not always 1000 square feet or less.

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2.1.6 - Steep slopes in excess of 25% grade (4:1).

Example:





2.1.7 - Islands located in roadways that have no formalized access or serve only as a pass through.

Examples:





2.1.8 – Areas that see the majority of their foot traffic come from maintenance teams.

Example:

