

# Mapleton City Council Staff Report

Meeting Date: May 20, 2014

**Applicant:** Mapleton City  
**Location:** City-wide  
**Prepared by:** Sean Conroy, Community Development Director  
**Public Hearing Item:** Yes  
**Zone:** All

## **REQUEST**

Consideration of an ordinance amending Mapleton City Code 17.15 outlining standards for the use of xeriscape (drought tolerant) landscaping in City parkways.

## **BACKGROUND AND PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

Despite the fact that Utah is one of the most arid states in the country, its residential water use is one of the highest per capita in the country. As Mapleton's population continues to grow, more efforts are going to be required to conserve and reduce the use of water.

A parkway, otherwise known as a planter strip or park strip, is defined as the strip of land next to a road which is between the curb and the sidewalk. Mapleton City Code Chapter 17.15.120 requires that all parkways be planted with turf grass. The proposed ordinance outlines an alternative option for the use of drought tolerant plantings. The Planning Commission recommended approval of the ordinance on April 24, 2014.

## **EVALUATION**

**Parkways:** Using turf grass in parkways can be an attractive feature that enhances the appearance of the community. It can also result in the excess use of water. Due to the small size of most parkways, it is not uncommon to see sprinklers spraying onto adjacent sidewalks and roadways. Parkways are also sometimes not watered at all resulting in a poor aesthetic appearance.

Xeriscaping is a term used to describe a landscape method that utilizes drought tolerant plantings and features that require little or no irrigation (see attached photo examples). The proposed ordinance would allow, but not mandate, the use of xeriscaping in the City's parkways. The primary standards of the ordinance are outlined below followed by a brief staff response.

*“For xeriscape designs a landscape plan shall be submitted that satisfies the following:*

- 1. Plant Coverage: Thirty percent (30%) or more of the parkway surface be covered with vegetation, not including required street trees, within three (3) years of planting or when planting has reached maturity, whichever comes first. For lots with two (2) or more street frontages, this standard shall be applied separately to each adjacent parkway on each street frontage. Water conserving plants shall constitute at least eighty percent (80%) of all plants used.*
- 2. Annual Or Perennial Flowering Plants: If the entire parkway is planted with annual or perennial flowering plants, it shall be the property owner's responsibility to ensure that erosion does not deposit soil or other material on sidewalks or in the street.*
- 3. Organic Mulch: Materials such as bark, shredded plant material, and compost, may be used as water conserving mulch for plants and may also be used as the only material in portions of a parkway.*

*4. Gravel, Rocks, And Boulders: Gravel, rocks, and boulders, may be used on portions of the parkway. Large diameter rocks and boulders shall be kept a minimum of eighteen inches (18") away from existing street trees. Organic mulch or gravel shall be used near existing street trees.*

*5. Paving Materials: Paving materials, limited to poured concrete, concrete pavers, brick pavers, or natural stone pavers, may be used in small portions of a parkway.*

*6. A weed barrier shall be required to ensure minimal long term maintenance and to avoid the growth of weeds in the parkway.”*

*7. On parkways that include a slope greater than 2:1, plants and materials shall be selected that maintain slope stability.*

The proposed standards will promote water-conserving landscaping while also maintaining a quality aesthetic appearance. The planting component will ensure that an applicant cannot put rocks or gravel in a parkway and call it xeriscape.

**Front Yards:** MCC Chapter 17.50.050 requires that a minimum of 75% of the front yard be landscaped in turf grass. Requiring so much grass is inconsistent with the goal of water conservation. Staff would prefer landscape requirements that limited the amount of turf grass that could be planted in the front yard, rather than mandating that so much of the front yard be planted with grass. For example, an ordinance could require that no more than 50% of the front yard be planted with grass and the remaining area be landscaped with similar xeriscape standards to those being proposed for the parkways.

The proposed ordinance before the Council tonight does not affect residential landscaping in the front yards. However, staff would like some direction from the Council on potential future changes to front yard landscaping requirements.

#### **STAFF RECCOMENDATION**

Adopt the attached ordinance establishing xeriscape standards for parkways.

#### **ATTACHMENTS**

1. Draft Ordinance.
2. Photo Examples.

## **ORDINANCE NO. 2014-**

### **CONSIDERATION OF AN ORDINANCE AMENDING MAPLETON CITY CODE 17.15 OUTLINING STANDARDS FOR THE USE OF XERISCAPE (DROUGHT TOLERANT) LANDSCAPING IN CITY PARKWAYS.**

**WHEREAS**, Mapleton City has adopted landscape standards to promote aesthetically pleasing development; and

**WHEREAS**, the landscape ordinance requires that turf grass be used in parkways (space between the curb and the sidewalk); and

**WHEREAS**, the proposed ordinance would allow the use of drought tolerant plantings and design as an alternative to turf grass in parkways; and

**WHEREAS**, the proposed ordinance promotes water conservation as well as aesthetically pleasing development.

**NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** by the City Council of Mapleton, Utah, to amend Mapleton City Code chapter 17.15 allowing xeriscape landscaping in parkways as described in Exhibit "A".

PASSED AND ORDERED PUBLISHED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF MAPLETON,  
UTAH,

This 20<sup>th</sup> Day of May, 2014.

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Brian Wall  
Mayor

ATTEST:

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Camille Brown  
City Recorder

**Publication Date:**  
**Effective Date:**

**Exhibit "A" - Proposed Xeriscape Ordinance**

**(Changes shown in strikeout/underline and bold)**

**17.15.120: PARKWAYS:**

A. All parkways strips in new developments shall be landscaped in conformance with the provisions of this section.

B. Parkways two feet (2') or more in width shall be landscaped with turf grass or with an approved xeriscape design. ~~No rocks, gravel, bark, asphalt, thorn-bearing plant species, ground cover or shrubs shall be permitted in a parkway.~~ Parkways less than two feet (2') in width may be landscaped with impervious materials including brick pavers, concrete pavers or concrete. Asphalt shall not be permitted. For xeriscape designs a landscape plan shall be submitted that satisfies the following:

1. Plant Coverage: Thirty percent (30%) or more of the parkway surface be covered with vegetation, not including required street trees, within three (3) years of planting or when planting has reached maturity, whichever comes first. For lots with two (2) or more street frontages, this standard shall be applied separately to each adjacent parkway on each street frontage. Water conserving plants shall constitute at least eighty percent (80%) of all plants used.

2. Annual Or Perennial Flowering Plants: If the entire parkway is planted with annual or perennial flowering plants, it shall be the property owner's responsibility to ensure that erosion does not deposit soil or other material on sidewalks or in the street.

3. Organic Mulch: Materials such as bark, shredded plant material, and compost, may be used as water conserving mulch for plants and may also be used as the only material in portions of a parkway.

4. Gravel, Rocks, And Boulders: Gravel, rocks, and boulders, may be used on portions of the parkway. Large diameter rocks and boulders shall be kept a minimum of eighteen inches (18") away from existing street trees. Organic mulch or gravel shall be used near existing street trees.

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7. On parkways that include a slope greater than 2:1, plants and materials shall be selected that maintain and ensure slope stability.

**Good examples of xeriscaping as encouraged by proposed ordinance**





**Poor examples of xeriscaping as prohibited in the proposed ordinance**



(all rocks no plantings)



(all woodchips, no plantings)

