

Mapleton City Planning Commission Staff Report

Meeting Date: April 24, 2014

Item: 4

Applicant: Mapleton City

Location: City-wide

Prepared by: Sean Conroy, Community Development Director

Public Hearing Item: Yes

Zone: All

REQUEST

Consideration of recommendations to the City Council regarding 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.

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. Parkway 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 includes 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.”

The proposed standards will promote water-conserving landscaping while also maintaining a quality aesthetic appearance. The planting component will ensure that an applicant can just dump 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 appears to be 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 grass. For example, an ordinance could require that no more than 50% of the front yard be planted with grass. The proposed ordinance before the Commission tonight does not affect residential landscaping in the front yards. However, staff would like some direction from the Commission on potential future changes to front yard landscaping requirements.

STAFF RECCOMENDATION

Recommend that the City Council adopt the attached ordinance adopting xeriscape standards for parkways, and that alterations to the front yard landscaping requirements be considered in the near future.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Draft Ordinance.
2. Photo Examples.

**Attachment “1” 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 includes the following:

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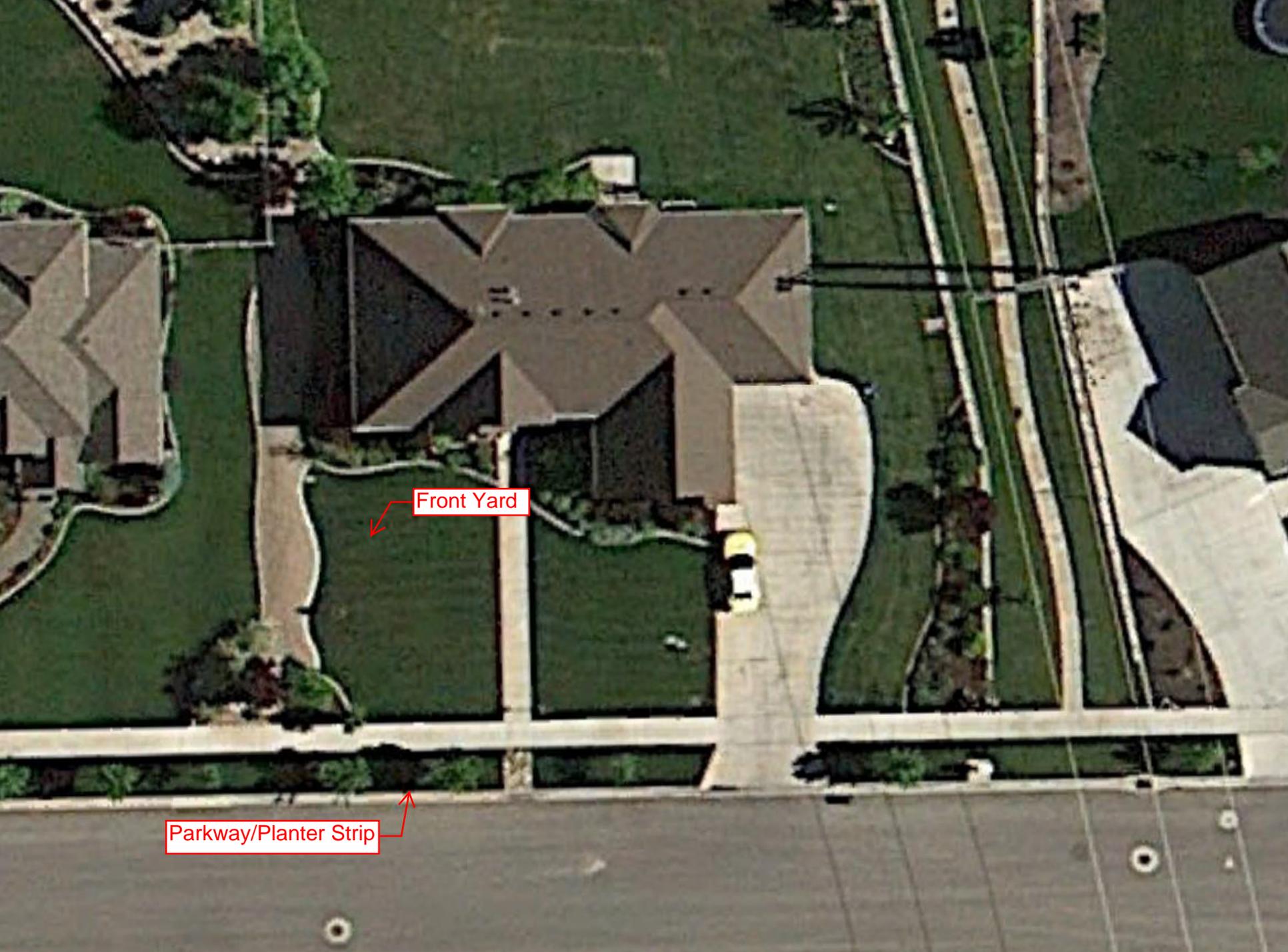
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Front Yard

Parkway/Planter Strip

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)

