



Legislation Text

File #: 09-0816, **Version:** 1

Recommendation to request City Attorney to revise Section 21.42.060 of the Long Beach Municipal Code regarding public parkways. (Citywide)

Across the United States, cities such as Seattle, Washington; Portland, Oregon; and Ogden, Utah are encouraging residents to remove thirsty turf from the areas commonly known as "parking strips" or "parkways," and to replace it with plants that have lower water use requirements. Locally, the news media coverage of the need for water conservation, as well as the public's awareness and desire to be more "green" as they make improvements to their property, has led many property owners to reconsider the traditional landscaping of the parkway in favor of drought tolerant plants that require less water and fertilizer.

Unfortunately, the current municipal code specifies that the only plant materials allowed in the public parkways of residential neighborhoods are "groundcover, flowers and street trees." Only city streets of 80-foot width or greater, our commercial corridors, may omit landscaped parkways. Grass or turf has been the common groundcover, and one paved carriage walk across the parkway per residential property has been allowed.

In order to allow for alternative landscaping of the parkway, the following changes to Chapter 21.42.060 of the Municipal Code are being recommended:

- To reduce water usage, low-water demand and drought-tolerant parkway landscaping plant materials shall be permitted, including groundcovers of up to 8 inches in height that accept light foot traffic, and accent plantings or shrubbery of up to 24 inches in height. High-water demand plant materials that require one or more inches of irrigation water per week shall be prohibited.
- To maintain access between the sidewalk and parked cars on the curb, an 18inch wide strip or path that accepts foot traffic shall be maintained along and parallel to the curb adjacent to parking spaces and public transit stops. Walkable paths shall be maintained across the parkway between these curbside paths and the sidewalk at least every 20 feet.
- To reduce water run-off, permeable, inorganic softscape materials such as decomposed granite are recommended for all parkway areas to be utilized for pedestrian access. UngROUTED modular paving units set on sand or products such as Grasscrete shall also be permitted. The installation of cast-in-place concrete or other non-porous paving materials permanently set upon concrete shall be prohibited. Spaces surrounding accent plantings or individual shrubs may also be surfaced with decomposed granite, modular paving units or various mulches, as long as 50 percent of the parkway is planted with live plant material meeting the above requirements.
- All parkway landscaping shall be maintained by the property owner in good condition, free of

refuse, noxious weeds, hazardous materials and plants bearing thorns, stickers or other injurious parts. Plant and mulch materials shall not be allowed to overgrow or spill over the edge of the sidewalk or curb. Automatic irrigation systems, if installed, shall be maintained so as to conserve water, and shall not cause water to runoff into the sidewalk or street or pond within the parkway.

- To insure pedestrian and vehicular safety, all parkway landscaping shall be maintained to not interfere with needed vehicular or pedestrian traffic lines of sight. Such standards shall be defined by the City Engineer.
- Consistent with the goals listed above, the City of Long Beach shall not be responsible for any loss or damage to paving materials in the parkway, such as cast-in-place concrete or paving units set on concrete, associated with street, curb or sidewalk repairs, or any other municipal repair or maintenance function.

This matter was reviewed by Deputy City Attorney Linda Trang on July 20, 2009, and by Budget and Performance Management Bureau Manager David Wodynski on June 25, 2009.

SUSTAINABILITY

This action will result in allowing property owners to improve their parkways in a sustainable and drought-tolerant manner. Such improvements will result in water conservation, reduction in storm water run-off and pollutants, and an overall enhanced appearance.

City Council action on this item is not time critical.

There is no fiscal impact to the City.

Approve recommendation.

MICHAEL P. CONWAY
DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS

NAME
TITLE

APPROVED:

PATRICK H. WEST
CITY MANAGER