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City of Los Angeles Residential Parkway Landscaping Guidelines

This document is intended to provide constituents with guidelines regarding the installation of landscape improvements within the part of the Public (street) Right-of-Way commonly referred to as a parkway. For the purposes of this document, the term “parkway” is defined as the area of the street between the back of curb and the sidewalk that is typically planted or landscaped. Similarly, for the purposes of this document, the term “landscape improvements” includes groundcovers, shrubs and other non-vegetative landscape materials but does not include street trees.

- I. Preferred Parkway Planting Material(s):** Preferred parkway planting materials (other than street trees) include drought-tolerant turf substitute groundcovers or drought-tolerant turf (grass). Drought-tolerant turf-substitute groundcovers and/or drought-tolerant turf are preferred parkway planting materials because they:
- provide open and free passage between the street and sidewalk for pedestrians;
 - provide a commonly accepted, uniform walking surface;
 - have the ability to tolerate foot traffic; and
 - maintain an open line of sight between the street and abutting property.

Representative list of preferred drought-tolerant turf substitute groundcovers and drought-tolerant turf are provided on the reference documents attached to this guideline. The list of Preferred Parkway Plant Materials is not finite and subject to future revisions as appropriate.

- II. General Permit Requirements to Landscape Any City Street:** In general, a permit is required prior to the installation or modification of landscaping within the Public right-of-way. In accordance with Section 62.169 (a) of the Los Angeles Municipal Code, “No person shall plant, remove, destroy, cut, prune, or deface or in any manner injure any tree, shrub, or plant in any street in the City, without first obtaining a permit to do so from the Board” [of Public Works].

- III. Exemption From General Permit Requirements Granted to Landscape Residential Parkways:** Residential parkways are exempt from the General Permit Requirements noted in Section II above, therefore a permit is not required to install or modify parkway landscaping in front of residential properties. In accordance with Section 62.169 (b) of the Los Angeles Municipal Code, “No permit is required by the owner of property fronting the



parkway portion of the street in an area zoned for residential use in order for the owner to remove existing shrubs and plants...and replace the shrubs and plants with landscaping, including edible plant materials....” provided the owner complies with these guidelines. The permit exemption granted within Section 62.169 (b) only applies to (a) properties that are zoned RE, R-1, R-2, and R-3 (refer to the Department of City Planning’s ZIMAS web page at <http://zimas.lacity.org/> to determine a property’s zoning designation) and (b) the installation of plant materials. Trees and other non-vegetative materials are not included in this permit exemption. Permits are required to plant, prune, or remove any tree in any street in the City, including the installation of any other non-vegetative material, such as pavement, decomposed granite, raised planter beds, planter pots, street furniture, etcetera, within parkways.

IV. Standard or Nonstandard Parkway Improvements – “A”, “B” and/or Revocable Permit Required: Permits are required for all other landscape or hardscape improvements within parkways besides the exemption granted to residential parkways noted above. Such materials may be installed within the parkway as long as the occupant or property owner of the adjoining property obtains the appropriate permit(s) issued by the Department of Public Works. Permits for standard or nonstandard parkway landscape improvements may be obtained by visiting the Department of Public Works, Bureau of Engineering permit counters at any of the following locations:

- 1) **Central District Office** – 201 N. Figueroa St., 3rd Floor, LA 90012
Phone: (213) 482-7030
- 2) **Harbor District Office** – 638 S. Beacon St. Suite 402, San Pedro 90731
Phone: (310) 732-4677
- 3) **Valley District Office** – 6262 Van Nuys Blvd, Rm 251, Van Nuys 91401
Phone: (818) 374-5090
- 4) **West LA District Office** – 1828 Sawtelle Blvd., 3rd Fl., West LA 90025
Phone: (310) 575-8384

As a part of the permit process, the following will be required:

- Drawings, sketches, plans, or other satisfactory written material that indicates the types of parkway landscape materials to be used and its respective quantities; and
- Descriptions of how and where each type of parkway landscape material will be applied.

Department of Public Works permit counter staff can preview all standard and nonstandard parkway landscape improvement proposals and determine the appropriate approval(s), permit(s) and fee(s) that might be required. A brief summary of the permits used to cover parkway landscape improvements include the following:

A-Permit – An A-Permit is required and used when the proposed improvements are smaller in overall scope, straightforward, do not require extensive plan reviews or field inspections, and typically covers the installation of both standard and nonstandard parkway improvements. A-Permit fees vary starting at approximately \$400.00 and can range as high as \$2,000 or more; a typical A-Permit costs \$645.00.

B-Permit – A B-Permit may be required for parkway landscape improvements

depending on the complexity, type, and size of the proposed construction, modification, or installation. Projects that are required to obtain B-Permits typically involve: several design disciplines; submittal of professionally prepared plans; extensive plan reviews; multiple inspections during construction; and a final inspection for acceptance. B-Permit fees are based upon actual plan review and inspection costs. Costs vary and are substantially higher than A-Permits.

Revocable (R-) Permit - Many nonstandard parkway landscape improvements, such as decorative paving, non-vegetative groundcover, continuously pressurized irrigation lines/systems, or active stormwater capture systems, will require a Revocable Permit (R-Permit) in addition to either an A- or B-Permit. Additional requirements of the R-Permit include a waiver of damages (recorded with the County of Los Angeles), proof of liability insurance (provided annually to the City Administrative Officer), and approval of all colors and materials proposed to be installed. The minimum cost of an R-Permit is approximately \$540.00. Additional fees may be required depending on the complexity of the design and size of the proposed installation.

V. Alternative Nonstandard Parkway Landscape Improvements

A. Nonstandard Plant Materials: Parkway plant materials consisting of anything other than the Preferred Parkway Planting Materials (see Section I above) are considered nonstandard and will require the issuance of a Revocable Permit (R-Permit) in combination with either an A- or B-Permit, except when installed in front of residentially zoned properties as described in Section III above. Regardless of whether or not a permit is required, all nonstandard plant materials installed within parkway areas must meet the following criteria:

- 1) Plant materials must be drought-tolerant or drought-resistant. Edible plant materials may be exempted from this requirement.
- 2) Plant materials must be lower than 36" in height at full maturity.
- 3) Plant materials must not form a continuous hedge or screen at full maturity.
- 4) Plant materials installed within the 45' visibility triangle at street intersections must not exceed 24" in height at full maturity (see Los Angeles Municipal Code - Chapter 6, Article 2, Sec. 62.200).
- 5) Plant materials installed within five feet (5') of a driveway or walkway must not exceed 24" in height at full maturity (for visibility purposes).
- 6) Plant materials must not be installed within 12" of utility vaults, meter boxes, fire hydrants, utility/street light/traffic signal/sign poles and may not obscure the visibility of or impeded access to such infrastructure.
- 7) Plant materials must not be installed within 24" of street trees (measured from the base of the tree trunk).
- 8) Trellises or other plant-support structures must not exceed 36" in height, and they shall not be constructed in a manner that forms a continuous solid screen, hedge, or otherwise restrict visibility. No hanging ropes, cords, strings, guy-wires or protruding nursery stakes or sticks are allowed within parkways. Large stakes and guying equipment for trees installed in accordance with Standard Plan S-663 (latest approved edition) are exempt from this prohibition.
- 9) Plant materials must not be poisonous, noxious, or invasive. Exceptions to this requirement may be made by Department of Public Works landscape

- architectural staff on a case by case basis.
- 10) Plant materials must not have exposed, rigid spines or thorns. Exceptions to this requirement may be made by Department of Public Works landscape architectural staff on a case by case basis.
 - 11) Low growing, groundcover types of plant materials are highly recommended and encouraged when non-standard plantings are installed in parkway areas; shrubs and other plant materials that form solid, raised masses are discouraged and not recommended for use in parkways.
 - 12) When used in combination with mulch or other non-vegetative groundcover, nonstandard plant materials must cover at least 80% of the parkway area after the plants have reached full maturity.

B. Non-Vegetative Groundcover or Paving materials: Non-vegetative groundcovers or paving materials may be installed in the parkway with the issuance of an A- or B-Permit. A Revocable Permit (R-Permit) is required in addition to either an A- or B-Permit for nonstandard materials. Non-vegetative groundcover or paving materials include items, such as bark chips, mulch used as a long-term stand-alone groundcover, decomposed granite, synthetic (artificial) turf, pavers, or cement concrete (both standard, colored, or stamped concrete). Non-vegetative groundcover or paving materials installed within parkway areas must meet the following criteria:

- 1) Nonstandard paving materials must comply with all of the requirements and criteria as shown in the Department of Public Works, Standard Plan S-601 (latest edition) and Brown Book, as applicable. Where a conflict exists, the more stringent shall apply.
- 2) Both standard and nonstandard paving materials must be placed so that the finished surface is in plane with adjoining sidewalk and curb surfaces.
- 3) Non-vegetative groundcovers such as bark, mulch, or decomposed granite that are typically loosely placed and used without any other groundcover material, shall not be used in parkway areas unless they are a landscape component/mulching of plant materials in the proportions identified above. They are not permitted in parkway areas with a slope greater than 5% in any direction (~5/8" of fall per each foot horizontally). Non-vegetative groundcover materials consisting of loosely placed gravel, crushed rock, decorative rock or stone shall not be used or permitted for installation in parkway areas, unless used as a component of an active stormwater capture system.
- 4) Cobblestone or any other alternative groundcover material that does not provide a uniform, reasonably walkable surface is discouraged and will normally not be permitted for installation in parkway areas. When and if permitted, cobblestone or similar non-vegetative groundcover materials must be set within a cement concrete matrix in a manner that will permanently affix the materials to the parkway area.
- 5) Synthetic (artificial) Turf Products pre-approved for City-wide residential use as listed on the City of Los Angeles, Bureau of Engineering "Approved Products Tracking System" at the following link <http://boe.lacity.org/apm/> do not require a revocable permit.

C. Convenience Strip: Whenever nonstandard plant material, non-vegetative

groundcover, or any combination of materials that do not provide a uniform, reasonably walkable surface are installed within the parkway area, then a minimum 18" wide (excluding curb dimension) alighting convenience strip is required adjacent and parallel to the back of curb along the entire length of the improved parkway to allow ingress and egress for occupants of vehicles parallel parked along the curb. Diagonal or perpendicular parking will require wider convenience strips. The convenience strip may be either standard or nonstandard paving materials. In residential zones, the convenience strip may consist of a uniform planting of drought-tolerant turf substitutes or drought-tolerant turf species shown within the Department's Preferred Parkway Plant Materials list. Convenience strips constructed of drought-tolerant turf substitutes or drought-tolerant turf will also require a longitudinal header to physically separate the convenience strip from the adjoining nonstandard landscaping. In all cases, the convenience strip must form a commonly accepted walking surface and its finished surface and/or grade must be flush with the top of curb. Convenience strips will typically require the issuance of a construction permit (A or B); convenience strips constructed of nonstandard paving or non-vegetative groundcovers also require the issuance of a Revocable Permit. Convenience strips are not required for landscaped parkways adjacent to any "no parking" zone.

- D. House Walk:** If the uninterrupted length of the parkway is landscaped with nonstandard materials and is in excess of twenty five feet (25') in length a "house walk" or lateral paved walkway across the improved parkway from the street to the sidewalk is required. The minimum width of a house walk is 48" and the finished surface of the house walk must be in plane with both the adjoining top of curb and sidewalk. Additional house walks are required every twenty five feet (25') thereafter depending upon the overall uninterrupted length of the parkway. House walks across landscaped parkways require the issuance of a construction permit (A or B). House walks constructed of decorative or enhanced paving additionally require the issuance of a Revocable Permit.
- E. Parkway Irrigation Systems:** A permit is not required for irrigation systems installed in residential parkway areas provided there are no continuously pressurized (main) lines or valves of any sort installed within the public right-of-way. Conversely, a permit will be required when/if irrigation valves or continuously pressurized irrigation lines are installed within the public right-of-way. When and where new irrigation systems are employed or existing irrigation systems are refurbished, the City highly encourages the use of sub-surface/drip irrigation or other low-flow water distribution system to minimize wasteful over-spray and over-watering. When and where spray head systems are used within the parkway, all spray heads shall be of the pop-up type, fully retractable to be flush with the adjacent surface when not in use, and placed no closer than 24" to any hard-paved, adjacent surface.
- F. Parkway Stormwater Treatment/Capture Systems:** The City encourages the use of parkway areas to treat and/or capture stormwater run-off from the sidewalk and adjoining roadway when and where possible and appropriate. Stormwater treatment systems typically treat/clean stormwater biologically prior to its continuance into the storm drain systems. Stormwater capture systems typically retain stormwater so it may infiltrate into the sub-grade, thereby reducing or minimizing stormwater run-off. Often,

such systems are designed to both treat and capture stormwater. Active, purpose driven stormwater treatment/capture systems will require permits issued by the Department of Public Works, and each installation will be reviewed and approved on a case-by-case basis. Parkway areas will generally be used/reserved to capture and/or treat stormwater run-off from the street right-of-way as opposed to stormwater run-off generated from an abutting property. Certain types of drought-tolerant or native plant materials may not be appropriate for stormwater capture systems, especially in areas intentionally subjected to periodic flooding. In such cases, requirements for drought-tolerant or drought resistant plant materials may be relaxed by Department landscape architectural staff to maximize the effectiveness of any stormwater capture system. When applicable, secure the necessary Standard Urban Stormwater Mitigation Plan (SUSMP) clearances and permits. See Standard Plan S-480 series for additional requirements and options.

VI. Maintenance of Parkway Installations: All parkway installations must be maintained in good repair and on grade by the owner and shall be subject to Chapter VI, Article 2, Section 62.104 and Chapter V, Article 6, Section 56.08 of the Los Angeles Municipal Code.

- A.** Parkway plant materials must be kept in a neat, trimmed manner away from adjacent paved surfaces at all times and shall not obstruct or infringe upon sidewalk areas, driveways, walkways, or curb areas. Parkway plant materials must be replaced or replenished as required; planted parkways shall be kept free of unwanted weeds and debris.
- B.** Edible plant materials:
- i) Shall be trimmed back to be kept clear of adjoining sidewalks, walkways, house walks, driveways, convenience strips, curbs or the roadway.
 - ii) Shall not cause the sidewalk, walkways, housewalks, driveways, convenience strips, curbs or the roadway to be closed during planting or harvesting operations.
 - iii) Shall be promptly harvested and removed from the parkway when mature or ripe.
 - iv) Fallen fruit or produce shall be promptly removed from all adjoining paved surfaces or walkways, and all residual matter shall be cleaned from adjoining paved surfaces to avoid slip and fall or trip and fall accidents and prevent the adjoining pavement from becoming irreparably stained.
 - v) Stems, greens, or other parts of seasonal or annual edible plants not harvested for consumption shall be promptly removed and replaced, or tilled into the parkway top-soil.
 - vi) Parkway areas that are temporarily fallowed between crops or growing seasons must be leveled so that the top-soil is in plane with the adjoining top of curb and sidewalk, covered with mulch or similar material to minimize soil erosion, or otherwise maintained in a neat and clean condition until the area is to be replanted. Weeds, undesirable vegetation, or other debris shall be promptly removed from fallowed parkway areas.

- vii) Proper preventative measures must be taken to prevent vector (pest) infestations that might occur as a result of installing edible plant materials. When noticed, vectors shall be promptly removed from the parkway and/or exterminated.
- viii) Parkway areas no longer planted with edible plant materials for a period exceeding 6 months shall be restored and replanted with any of the preferred parkway plant materials.
- ix) Parkway alternative groundcover materials and nonstandard pavers must be maintained in good repair and on grade flush with the adjacent sidewalk and/or curb to minimize slipping and tripping hazards. Materials such as mulch or decomposed granite shall be maintained so that materials are kept off of the adjoining sidewalks, walkways, house walks, driveways, convenience strips, curbs or the roadway. Mulch, decomposed granite, or other permitted alternative groundcover materials shall be replenished as required to maintain a finished grade that is in plane with the adjoining top of curb or sidewalk.

- C. Synthetic (artificial) turf must be maintained, cleaned, re-brushed, and replenished with new approved infill per the manufacturer's recommendations. Any damaged, loose, or raised synthetic turf, anchoring pin, and/or landscaping nail shall be promptly repaired. Synthetic turf shall be regularly inspected, disinfected, and remain free of litter, animal droppings or urine, foul odors, bacterial stain, weeds, debris, and standing water.
- D. Parkway irrigation systems including spray heads, drip lines, risers, and lateral lines shall be maintained in good repair and kept free of leaks or other anomalies that prevent the system from operating at peak efficiency.
- E. Parkway stormwater capture systems shall be maintained to ensure the systems work properly and effectively. This includes the removal of debris and sediment that might collect within the system, as well as the periodic replacement or refurbishment of soils, filter media, moisture barriers, pipes, plant materials and other elements that collectively make-up the stormwater capture system.

VII.Enforcement: When parkway areas are found to be out of compliance with the various codes and ordinances, and/or the parkway improvements are not properly permitted, the City will employ a progressive enforcement process to ensure the improvements are either properly permitted or returned to a condition that complies with said codes and ordinances. The enforcement process initially begins with verbal and/or written notifications to the abutting property owner or occupant in an attempt to voluntarily achieve proper compliance. Further enforcement activities may include citations, fines, and public hearings before the Board of Public Works; enforcement actions may also include mechanical liens against the title of the property. In cases where the parkway improvements are deemed a nuisance or safety hazard to the public, the City reserves the right to remove the offending improvements and restore the parkway area using City forces. The abutting property owner is responsible for the reimbursement of all costs incurred by the City to properly restore parkway areas fronting his/her property.