

STAFF REPORT WORK SESSION

AGENDA DATE: April 13, 2023

DEPARTMENT: Community Sustainability

TITLE:

Landscape and Artificial Turf Staff Report

SUMMARY:

The City Commission paused Code Compliance actions on all violations relating to groundcover including artificial turf for 90 days beginning January 11, 2023, to hold a work session meeting to discuss the ordinances regarding artificial turf and the installation of groundcover in yards with mulch or rock. The reference materials for this item include a link to the City's "Landscape and Trees" webpage, draft language that was pulled (not adopted) from Ordinance 2020-15 on artificial turf, and a summary of the potential impacts of rock yards.

The City's Landscape Regulations (Sec. 23.6-1. – Landscape regulations), which utilizes a point system by development type, can be accessed via the City's "Landscape and Trees" webpage at: <https://lakeworthbeachfl.gov/landscaping-and-trees/>. The links on the page provide helpful information for residents and property owners, including a link to the University of Florida IFAS Florida Friendly Landscaping Program's webpage.

BACKGROUND AND JUSTIFICATION:

Artificial Turf:

Attachment A includes the draft artificial turf code provisions that were pulled (not adopted) from Ordinance 2020-15 as background material. These draft regulations included limits on the location, application, and amount of artificial turf. As artificial turf is not a landscape material, the draft language treated it as a semi-permeable material similar to gravel, permeable pavers, or permeable asphalt. The language also provided quality standards for visual appearance and safety as artificial turf comes in a wide variety of grades. Also included in Attachment A is the 2020 staff presentation on the pros and cons of artificial turf and a summary of the proposed code language at that time.

Landscaping Areas in Yards:

The City's Landscape Regulations (Section 23.6-1.) requires the implementation of Florida-Friendly Landscaping Principles, which are 9 science-based principles for sustainable landscapes. These principles were developed by the University of Florida's IFAS and are the foundation of the University's Florida Friendly Landscaping Program. The City's Landscape Regulations employ a point system in addition to minimum requirements for screening and shade trees for the two different categories of development: "New and existing single-family and duplex properties" and "New and existing multiple-family, commercial and industrial development." As consistent with the City's water conservation objectives in the Conservation Element and Florida Friendly Landscaping principles, the code does not require or encourage sod/grass/turf. The code also provides installation specifications so that living ground covers and native grasses used in lieu of turf or sod will have "a finished appearance and reasonably complete coverage within six (6) months based on the expected mature spread."

In addition to the requirements in Section 23.6-1, there is a provision in all of the City's residential zoning districts and the Mixed Use – East zoning district that "the lesser of nine hundred (900) square feet or seventy-five (75) percent of the front yard area shall remain pervious and be landscaped." The landscape

code and district requirements were intended to maintain and expand the green/tropical visual corridor along the City roadways, and to maximize shade for pedestrians.

While rock yards or rock as mulch are installed in the region, they are not considered Florida-Friendly by the University of Florida, and are discouraged for the reasons provided in Attachment B. Rock as mulch is only recommended by the program in limited applications. However, due to requests by residents in recent years to utilize more rock in their landscape areas, rock was permitted as a mulch substitute. Regardless of the type of mulch selected, a “landscape area shall contain a maximum of fifty (50) percent mulch or rock in planting beds” (Section 23-1-12). Substantial expansion of rock yards or expanses of rock in landscape areas would likely impact the visual corridor over time and have environmental impacts (Attachment B) as approximately 67% of the City’s land area is in a residential zoning district..

DIRECTION:

Bring forward/not bring forward an ordinance allowing artificial turf with limitations as directed by the City Commission

Bring forward/not bring forward an ordinance modifying current yard landscaping requirements as specified by the City Commission

ATTACHMENT(S):

Attachment A – 2020 Previously Proposed (NOT ADOPTED) Artificial Turf Regulations & 2020 Staff PowerPoint Slides on Artificial Turf

Attachment B – Rock Yards & Mulch