1.5 PARKWAY LANDSCAPING GUIDELINES

Parkways, the area between the outside edge of the sidewalk and the inside edge of the curb, are a component of the public right-of-way. These City approved guidelines allow property owners to create attractive, useful frontages adjacent to their property. Parkway landscapes are generally overseen by the City’s Office of Sustainability and the Environment, the Public Landscape Division and the Public Works Department.

Parkway landscaping shall take into consideration personal safety, vehicle safety, efficient access for pedestrians and vehicles, and resource conservation. Adjacent property owners are required to maintain parkways in good order according to the Santa Monica Municipal Code and other City policies. In addition, sprinkler irrigation in the parkway is a significant source of urban runoff and contributor to Santa Monica Bay pollution.

These guidelines on landscaping within parkways also take into consideration competing interests that impact the public right-of-way. The City is responsible for all activities that impact the public right-of-way such as overhead or underground utilities, street trees, street lighting, bus stops and parking meters. The City may request for due reason, the removal of pedestrian obstructions, traffic dangers, as well as landscaping or irrigation that damages street trees, degrades roads and curbs or impedes storm drainage systems.

Applicability
These guidelines apply to all parkways of the City of Santa Monica where any kind of retrofitting, modifications or improvement of landscaping and/or irrigation takes place.

All landscaping in a parkway must conform to state and local laws regarding the parkway. Modifications to the parkway must not violate any of these laws.

Basic Recommended Approach
Parkways can be landscaped using a mixture of permeable paving and climate-appropriate plants that provides vehicle operators safe access to and from off-street parking and pedestrians safe use of the sidewalk as well as access to and from vehicles parked at the curb. Parkway landscapes should require little or no irrigation and produce no runoff.

Safety
Parkway landscaping must not create visual obstructions for pedestrians or drivers of vehicles. Plants within five (5') feet of a driveway or apron shall not exceed two (2') feet in height when fully mature.

Step-Out Strips
A step-out strip is a uniform, firm walking surface from the curb edge inward and is provided for passengers to enter and exit vehicles parked at the curb. Step-out strips shall be at least 18 inches (18") in width and at least thirty six inches (36") long and line up with the existing adjacent parking spaces. Step-out strips may extend the full length of the parkway. The step-out strip material must provide a firm, uniform walking surface in all weather conditions.

The layout of step-out strips must be constructed in a manner that avoids all damage to the trunk flare or roots of street trees. Step-out strips are not permitted adjacent to red curbs or where roots of existing street trees make construction of a step-out strip with the required dimensions impossible or impractical.

Additional step-out strips may be provided adjacent to driveway aprons as desired.
Step-out strips may be constructed of permeable paving, decomposed granite (DG), pavement, or plant material. Impermeable hardscape materials are not recommended for step-out strips. Any form of DG, if used, shall be constructed according to specifications in the Appendix of this Master Plan. Pavers shall be set in compacted sand, topsoil, or DG.

**Access Ways (Carriage Walks)**

If desired, the landscape design of a parkway may include an access way for the purpose of pedestrian access to vehicles parked at the curb. If included, access ways shall be at least three feet in width and at most five feet in width, and provide a firm, uniform walking surface in all weather conditions from the curb to the sidewalk.

Access ways shall be constructed of at least 50-80% permeable hardscape material, and may be constructed of permeable paving, DG, pavement or plant material. Any impermeable hardscape material, if used, shall be set in a non-contiguous pattern. Any form of DG, if used, shall be constructed according to the specifications in the Appendix of this Master Plan. Pavers shall be set in compacted sand, topsoil or DG.

The layout of access ways must be constructed in a manner that avoids all damage to the trunk flare or roots of street trees.

The irregular root systems found above the soil surface in some parkways are crucial to tree stability and provide limited areas for step-out strips. An access way would not be allowed in a parkway with this kind of configuration.

**Areas of Limited Access**

All portions of the parkway other than step-out-strips and access ways are considered Areas of Limited Access (ALA). Landscaping in ALAs may be composed of plant material, mulch or other features except where installation of such features would damage or negatively impact the roots of existing street trees.
Impermeable hardscape, such as concrete, is strongly discouraged in the parkway as it only contributes to urban runoff.

Banners, signs, playground equipment, benches, statuary, or water features are not allowed in the ALA.

Grading and Drainage
There shall be no grade difference between the finish grade of the parkway and adjacent hardscape surfaces such as the curb top, sidewalk or driveway apron. Grade changes on step-out strips and access ways shall meet ADA requirements.

If impermeable surfaces are used within parkways, they shall be constructed to drain to permeable areas.

Plant Material
All landscaping in parkways is subject to Santa Monica Municipal Code (SMMC).

ALAs can include trees and plants. Trees in Santa Monica’s parkways are under the supervision of the Public Landscape Division. Before adding or modifying trees in the parkway, contact the Community Forester.

Native and/or Mediterranean plants with mulch requiring little or no irrigation are preferred.

Plant material shall not exceed 34 inches (34”) in height at maturity to create open visibility to the street for vehicles and pedestrians.

Parkway landscaping must not create visual obstructions for pedestrians or drivers of vehicles. Plants must not grow taller than twenty four inches (24”) anywhere within five feet (5’) of a driveway, alley, or apron.

Plant material shall not present a danger to public egress. Plants with sharp, pointy protrusions such as needles or thorns are not allowed. Vines and other plant material that grow onto a street tree or presents a tripping hazard are not allowed.

Planting must be designed in a manner that does not endanger the health or stability of existing street trees. Particular attention must be paid to landscaping within the Critical Root Zone (CRZ) of the tree.

When removing plant material like turf grass from a parkway, there shall be no damage to the street tree roots. Replace the turf grass with mulch, DG or replant the area immediately so the tree roots are not exposed to undo harm. Trees that need ample or regular water can be adversely affected by a sudden lack of water.

No street tree roots larger than two inches (2”) shall be pruned under any circumstances.

Do not plant shrubs and flowers or any other plant material within 24 inches of the base of a tree trunk.

Parkways must be kept free of weeds and are subject to SMMC Chapter 7.44.

Do not plant shrubs and flowers around the base of trees. They rob newly planted trees of nutrients and moisture. Plants that surround the trunk flare of mature trees create conditions for crown rot which can ultimately lead to the decline and failure of the tree.
Suggested Plant Material for Parkways
Use of the plants on this list is not required. Irrigation restrictions and/or the street trees in your parkway may influence your plant choices.

- ‘UC Verde’ Buffalo Grass (Buchloe dactyloides)
- Evergreen Current (Ribes viburnifolium)
- California Sedge Grass (Carex spp.)
- African Daisy (Arctotis acaulis)
- Silver Carpet (Dymondia margaretae)
- Seaside Daisy (Erigeron glaucus)
- Yarrow (Achillea millefolium)
- Jade Plant (Crassula ovata)
- Thyme (Thymus praecox)
- Hen and Chicks (Echeveria imbricata)
- Woolly Grevillea (Grevillea lanigera ‘Coastal Gem’)
- Stonecrop (Sedum spp.)
- Bearberry (Arctostaphylos ‘Pacific Mist’)
- California Lilac (Ceanothus spp.)
- Creeping Sage (Salvia ‘Bee’s Bliss’)
- California Fescue (Festuca californica)

Examples of Plants that are Prohibited for Parkway Plantings
- Prickly Pear Cactus (Opuntia spp.)
- Barrel Cactus (Echinocactus spp.)
- Agave Century Plant (Agave spp.)
- Aloe (Aloe spp.)
- Ivy (Hedera spp.)
- Roses (Rosa spp.)
- Ice Plant (Lampranthus spp.)
- Barberry (Berberis spp.)

It is prohibited to plant and mulch within a twenty four (24”) inch diameter from the base of the tree.

Mulch Material
A two to four inch (2 -4”) layer of organic mulch is recommended in planting beds and under trees. More than four inches may inhibit the growth of plants and street trees. To avoid harm to street trees, do not place mulch within twenty four (24”) of tree trunks.

Gravel or stone mulches, with the exception of decomposed granite, can cause damage to the road surface during street cleaning and are strongly discouraged. If using stone mulches, make sure the stone is not less than six inches (6”) wide or greater than eight inches (8”) inches wide. Boulders or any other rock material greater than eight inches (8”) in vertical clearance from the finished grade shall not be installed.

A minimum two inch (2”) layer of mulch shall be applied on all exposed soil surfaces, except in areas within twenty four (24”) inches from the base of the tree trunk or areas covered by groundcovers.

Mulch shall not run off into the street.

The installation of new artificial turf or the replacement of existing artificial turf with new artificial turf in any portion of the parkway is strongly discouraged.

Irrigation Systems for Parkways
Design irrigation systems in parkways according to all local, state, and federal laws and regulations.

Permanently installed irrigation of plant material in parkways is not required nor encouraged. Low-volume, non-spray irrigation systems or hand-watering is preferred where irrigation is needed.

Irrigation systems must be designed and installed in such a manner that a precipitation rate of 0.75 inches/hour is not exceeded in any portion of the landscape. Drip irrigation or low flow rotary nozzles can meet this requirement.
No spray irrigation device of any type may be installed within twenty four (24") of any impermeable surface or street trees.

Installing new irrigation systems with overhead irrigation sprinklers is strongly discouraged in parkways. Existing systems with spray irrigation heads may be retrofitted with acceptable low flow rotary nozzles or drip irrigation.

Installation of any new irrigation system in the parkway shall be on a separate valve or circuit and shall include a gate valve or shut off valve that is installed below grade in the parkway in an irrigation valve box.

Newly planted trees or existing trees with ample or regular water needs may require supplemental irrigation. Hand watering is preferred.

Irrigation systems in parkways must be designed and constructed in a manner that will eliminate all overspray and surface runoff onto any impermeable surface, public or private, under any condition, regardless of wind conditions.

All irrigation equipment in parkways including heads, valves, piping, tubing and control wire must be installed in accordance with the Santa Monica Municipal Code.

When installing an irrigation system, it is important not to damage the roots of any existing street trees. In some cases the roots of a street tree may occupy all or a large portion of the parkway making installation of an irrigation system impractical.

Drip irrigation that emits two (2) gallons or less per hour must be used for plants that are 1 gallon in size or larger.

The planned coverage area of spray irrigation systems in parkways shall not include any area within twenty four (24") of any impermeable surface or trees.

**Strategies for Compliance with the 24 Inch Setback**

A buffer strip of permeable, non-living groundcover such as decomposed granite is required between the plant material and the hardscape. Sprinkler heads must be inside the edge of the planting bed by at least 24 inches (see Figure A14). Because of the possibility of wind and improper adjustment, this solution is not fool-proof and may still cause runoff.

![Fig A14 - Areas where spray irrigation is permitted.](image)

![Fig A15 - Permeable buffer within the setback.](image)
Plant material within the twenty four inch (24") buffer area, may be irrigated with a subsurface drip irrigation system to water that perimeter planting area. Figure A16 shows a properly laid out drip system.

In some cases mature tree roots may make the installation of these systems impractical.

For information on proper street tree care and the watering needs of trees, visit www.santamonicatrees.com.

In some cases the roots of a street tree may occupy the entire parkway precluding the installation of an irrigation system. Landscaping or irrigation in the parkway shown in Figure A17 would be detrimental to the tree.

In cases where surface roots of street trees may make landscaping, access ways, step-out strips and/or the installation of an irrigation system impractical or impossible, as determined by the Community Forester, installation is not permitted.

Permits
A permit is generally not required for landscaping the parkway. However, a Tree Trimming Permit is required for any pruning to the City street trees performed by non-City staff. Tree trimming permits are issued by the Community Forester.

A Street Permit from the Public Works Department is required for the installation of a concrete access way in the parkway.

• Street permits for access ways in parkways:
  Contact Public Works Administrative Services at (310) 458-8737 or public.works@smgov.net
• Landscaping and irrigation in parkways:
  Contact the Office of Sustainability and the Environment at (310) 458-2213 or environment@smgov.net
• Trees in parkways:
  Contact the Community Forester at (310) 458-8974 or community.forester@smgov.net
Installing Decomposed Granite (DG) Paving Materials

Base Course Aggregate:
ASTM C33, crushed stone or crushed gravel

Decomposed Granite (DG):
• Clean, hard, durable particles or fragments of " minus fines, select brown/gray crushed granite, river rock or basalt. Fines shall be evenly mixed throughout the aggregate. When produced from gravel, 50 percent, by weight, of the material retained on a No. 4 sieve shall have one fractured face. Color to be California Gold, Brimstone or Architect approved equal.
• The portion retained on the No. 4 sieve shall have a maximum percentage of wear of 50 at 500 revolutions as determined by AASHTO T96-77.
• The portion passing a No. 4 sieve shall have a maximum liquid limit of 25 and a maximum plasticity index of 7, as determined by AASHTO T89-81, and AASHTO T90-81, respectively.
• The crushed aggregate screenings shall be free from clay lumps, vegetable matter, and deleterious material.

Preparation for Installation
Surface Preparation:
• All excavation within the dripline of street trees shall be done with hand tools. Mechanical excavations are not allowed.
• Excavation within the dripline shall not exceed three and a half inches (3-1/2”).
• All roots two inches (2”) and larger shall be left intact. Roots two inches (2”) and smaller may be pruned in accordance with the root pruning standards in this Appendix.
• Establish subgrade by hand and compact with tamper. Building up of subgrade under forms after they are in place will not be permitted. Set forms in place, test sub grade with template, reduce high spots to grade and raise low spots to grade with materials compacted in place by tamping.

Decomposed Granite (DG):
• Sub grade preparation - Prior to placing the DG, shape, fill, grade, and compact the sub grade (crushed aggregate base).
• Forms - Install adjacent paving in lieu of forms, the full depth of decomposed granite area, curving as required, and secure in place to hold firmly to and grade required.
• If stabilizer is to be used, modify these instructions according to the manufacturer’s specifications. If stabilizer is used, decomposed granite paving will be considered an impermeable surface in parkways governed by this policy.

Installation
Base Course:
• Construct a base course layer to a depth of two inches (2”) compacted. Deposit aggregate directly on prepared subgrade or preceding layer of compacted aggregate. Keep placed material free from segregation. Compact each layer of material with tamping roller, with pneumatic tired roller, with vibration machine, or with combination of the three.
• If sub grade material is worked into base course material during compacting or finishing operations, remove base course material within affected area and replace with new aggregate. Restrict hauling over completed or partially completed work when sub grade is soft or there is tendency for sub grade material to work into base course material.
• Compact each layer with aid of water. Provide sufficient moisture to prevent segregation into pockets of fine and coarse material.
Decomposed Granite (DG):

- Place the DG on the prepared sub grade, in one layer of two inches (2") minimum thickness and rake smooth using a steel tine rake to desired grade and cross section. Do not apply DG deeper than three inches (3").
- Water to achieve full depth moisture penetration. Watering is best accomplished using a garden hose with spray nozzle set to a coarse spray; pressure should not disturb leveled surface. It is essential that the full depth of water penetration is achieved by random inspection of cores. After inspection, fill core holes with material removed, smooth and hand tamp to match adjoining trail surface grade. Let watered mix stand six to twenty four (6 to 24) hours until surface water is no longer present; the mix should then be moist but not wet.
- While the mix is still thoroughly moist, roll with a heavy lawn roller (minimum 225 pounds and maximum thirty inch (30") width, to achieve finish grade and initial compaction. Hand tamp edges around poles, and other objects. Use a heavy (1 ton minimum) small rider, after having initially used the lawn roller, to obtain the desired final dense, smooth, uniform texture. Do not use whackers or vibratory rollers; the mix will not harden for weeks after vibration.
- Landscape header or curb is to remain in place, secured to hold firmly to approved line and grade. After finished compacted surface has been achieved, finish adjacent shoulders by backfilling required grade and cross section.

Inspection

- Finished surface shall be smooth and uniform with no evidence of chipping or cracking. Dried, compacted material shall be firm all the way through with no spongy areas.
- Significant irregularities shall be smoothed out prior to final acceptance of work. Smoothing shall be accomplished by rewetting/saturating rough areas thoroughly, and then rolling the surface again with a heavy roller (1,000 to 1,500 lbs. powered walk-behind or small rider). Whackers are not recommended.
- Final thickness of completed area shall not vary more than 1/4 inch from dimension indicated. Measurements may be taken by means of test holes taken at random in the finished surface. Correct any variations in the thickness beyond the allowable 1/4 inch by repeating the procedures listed above.

Maintenance Responsibility

Maintenance of parkways is the responsibility of the adjacent property owner.

The City may request the removal of any existing pedestrian obstructions, traffic dangers, landscaping, or irrigation system.

The City has the right to remove any offending improvements and restore the parkway using City staff. The abutting property owner shall be responsible for the reimbursement of all costs incurred by the City to properly restore parkway areas fronting his/her property.

Parkway Grass Removal Guidelines

Removing turf from underneath a City’s street tree can cause irreparable damage if it is not done properly. It is imperative that the following guidelines be adhered to in order to protect the health and stability of street trees.

Removing turf from under a tree will be a major change in a tree’s growing environment, as will the reduction of irrigation. Trees growing in an irrigated turf setting are accustomed to the consistent moisture in the top four to six inches (4–6") of topsoil, which is also where much of the tree’s roots will be found.

Also consider the significant loss of organic material, which greatly contributes to the health of plants. It must be restored as compost, aged manure, or in some other form. Usually, topsoil must also be replaced after turf is removed. Some of it may be shaken out of the sod that was removed, however more will be needed, especially when raising the level of the subgrade.

Starving the lawn of water prior to removing turf can actually have a negative effect on certain species of trees.
Excavation Within the Parkway
Where excavation for turf removal is required within a tree protection zone or the critical root zone care shall be taken to avoid disturbing the roots. All excavation under the dripline of any tree shall be done by manually with hand tools, an Air Spade® or by washing the soil away with a hose or water truck. The objective of these methods is to prevent breakage or other injury to branches and roots. Excavated turf and soil shall be deposited in trucks and hauled off or deposited temporarily on one inch (1”) thick plywood outside the critical root zone. Excavated turf and soil shall not be deposited, even temporarily, on unprotected natural grade.

No roots larger than two inches (2”) shall be cut during excavation. Smaller roots that require cutting shall be cut flush at the edge of the excavated area with pruning saws or pruning shears.

The minimum distance between an excavated area or an open trench and any tree shall be one foot (1’) or six inches (6”) for every six inches (6”) of trunk diameter measured at four and a half feet (4-1/2’) above existing grade if this method defines a greater distance.

Redirect roots in backfill areas where possible. When encountering large, main lateral roots, expose roots beyond excavation limits as required to bend and/or redirect them without breaking. When encountering roots that cannot be redirected and redirection is not practical, consult with the Community Forester on pruning requirements and techniques.

Do not allow exposed roots to dry out before replacing soil and mulch. Provide temporary earth cover or pack with peat moss and wrap with burlap. Water and maintain in a moist condition. Temporarily support and protect roots from damage until they are permanently relocated and covered with soil.

Turf Removal Process
Water the area three days prior to removing the turf to make the soil easier to work with. The soil shall be moist but not soggy.

Use a sod cutting machine or a flat edge spade to slice just under the grass, then pull the turf back while severing the roots of the grass just below the soil line.

Cut the turf into parallel strips using an edger or sharp spade (with square edge). Be sure to keep strip sizes small (approximately 1 foot (1’) wide by 2 feet (2’) long), otherwise they will be difficult to move. Shake off excess topsoil during this process.