

Park Strip Landscaping

Salt Lake City's Park strip standards are intended to maintain the appearance, design flexibility, and safety of park strips while ensuring access to public utilities and encouraging water conservation.

These standards are based on statutes in the City code, available online here:

sterlingcodifiers.com/codebook/index.php?book_id=672§ion_id=780655

Applicability

The requirements apply to all park strips, defined as the ground area within the street right of way situated between the back of curb and the sidewalk or, if there is no sidewalk, the back of curb and the right of way line.

- 1 These standards apply to all properties, including vacant lots, that have street curbs. Owners of property on streets without curbs and gutters are not required to maintain formal landscaping within the public right of way.
- 2 These requirements do not apply to lots in the D-1 district & beautification districts.
- 3 The zoning administrator may modify the standards of this section to better achieve its intent and address site specific conditions such as, among other things, steep grades between the curb and sidewalk or the presence of canals or drainage channels.

General Landscape Requirements

- 1 It is the property owner's responsibility to landscape all park strips adjacent to the property. During the construction of a new principal building, the contractor is responsible for landscaping the park strips. In general, this landscaping will involve improving the ground surface of the park strip with plant material, or hard surface treatments where permitted.

- 2 All park strip landscaping must be maintained in a safe and well kept condition by the abutting property owner. Trash, debris, and noxious weeds are not permitted.
- 3 Sufficient water shall be provided for vegetative ground cover, annuals, perennials, shrubs and trees to keep them in a healthy condition.

Park Strip Trees

- 1 There shall be at least one tree for each 30 feet of street frontage. They may be clustered or spaced linearly as deemed appropriate by the urban forester. Tree size shall be a minimum of 2 inch caliper (measured at a point 6 inches above the soil line) at time of planting.
- 2 Tree grates (wells) with adequate dimensions to accommodate the tree species are required for trees in which the surrounding has an impervious surface.
- 3 No trees shall be planted in a park strip without first obtaining a permit from the urban forestry division Salt Lake City Public Services Department. Tree species and location shall be approved by the urban forester.
- 4 Planting and maintenance (pruning, removal, etc.) of trees may require a permit and must conform to urban forestry standards and specifications which are available through the urban forestry office.

Park Strip Ground Surface Treatment

- 1 Plant materials should cover 33% or more of the park strip surface within 3 years of planting or when planting has reached maturity, whichever comes first. For lots multiple street frontages, this standard shall be applied separately to each park strip. In new or replacement landscaping, it is recommended that water conserving plants constitute at least 80% of plants used.
- 2 If annual or perennial flowering plants are used, the property owner must 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 park strip.

- 4 Gravel, rocks, and boulders, may be used on portions of the park strip. Large diameter rocks and boulders shall be kept a minimum of 18 inches away from existing street trees. Organic mulch or gravel, as approved by the urban forester, shall be used near existing street trees.
- 5 Paving materials, limited to poured concrete, concrete pavers, brick pavers, or natural stone pavers, may be used in portions of a park strip subject to these following:
 - a Poured concrete shall not be used in park strips with existing trees. Other paving materials shall be kept a minimum of 18 inches away from existing trees. Organic mulch or gravel, as approved by the urban forester, shall be used near existing trees.
 - b Except as specified above, any paving material may be used in 100% of a park strip that is 24 inches or less in width. If poured concrete is used, it shall be stamped with a brick, stone, or other decorative pattern to distinguish it from the adjacent sidewalk.
 - c In park strips that are 36 inches or less in width, brick, concrete, or natural stone pavers may be used in 100% of the surface area. Poured concrete shall not be used except for carriageways as outlined below. The use of plants in combination with paving materials is encouraged.
 - d In park strips over 36 inches in width, paving materials, gravel, rocks, and boulders shall not exceed 67% of the total park strip surface area. Poured concrete shall not be used except for carriageways as outlined below.
- 6 For safe, convenient access to vehicles across park strips, carriageways (walkways through the park strip) are encouraged. The material used may be poured concrete, concrete or brick pavers, or flat, natural stone paving materials such as flagstone or a combination of these. If poured concrete is used, the carriageway shall be not more than 4 feet in width and shall be located so as to provide the most direct route through the park strip. The area of carriageways shall be included in calculating the percentage of inorganic material in the park strip.

- 7 Materials prohibited in park strips include asphalt, concrete, thorn bearing plants (flowering shrubs, such as roses, may be authorized by the zoning administrator), ground cover which exceeds 18 inches in height at maturity, shrubs which create visual barriers, and structural encroachments. These materials are prohibited for the following reasons:
 - a Asphalt is inconsistent with the city's urban design policy and deteriorates quickly. Asphalt also reduces road definition and encourages people to drive over the curb. Concrete and asphalt may also impede access to public utilities.
 - b Plants with thorns, spines, or other sharp, rigid parts are hazardous to pedestrians and bicyclists. Limited use of thorn bearing flowers, such as roses, may be acceptable subject to the approval of the zoning administrator.
 - c Continuous ground cover and shrubs which exceed 18 inches in height at maturity are hazardous because they reduce the visibility of pedestrians, pets, and children. They are difficult to walk across, create visual barriers which promote crime, and limit access to the sidewalk from parked vehicles.
 - d Retaining walls, fences, steps, and other similar structural encroachments in park strips are prohibited unless they are specifically approved through the city revocable permit and review process. These are generally prohibited because they limit access to sidewalks from the street and obstruct, and increase the cost of, performing public improvements and maintenance of utilities.
 - e Except for trees, no plant, boulder, monument, or other object over 18 inches in height shall be located within sight distance areas.
 - f Turf and gravel are not permitted in park strips with a slope greater than 3 horizontal feet to 1 vertical foot. Turf is difficult to mow on steep slopes and gravel will migrate down the slope and collect in the gutter. Larger rocks or boulders used on steep park strips shall be buried in the ground to a depth equal to at least 1/3 of the rock to anchor them to the slope.

8 Exceptions to these park strip standards are limited to the following:

- a In both of Salt Lake City's beautification districts (one located downtown and one in the Sugar House business district area), materials other than vegetation have been approved.
- b All vegetation located in park strips prior to November 5, 1992, may be maintained subject to city transportation division approval for sight distance and public way safety requirements.
- c Concrete may be used in park strips 24 inches or less in width due to maintenance and irrigation difficulties associated with narrow park strips but must be finished with a stamped pattern resembling brick, natural stone, or scored with another decorative pattern to distinguish it from the sidewalk. Poured concrete may also be used for carriageways that are 4 feet or less in width. Poured concrete shall not be used in park strips which contain existing street trees.

Park Strip Design Standards

PARK STRIP MATERIALS STANDARDS

Annual and perennial flowering plants

Permitted: not to exceed 18 inches in height at maturity when located within sight distance areas at street intersections, alleys, or driveways. Annuals and perennials, up to 36 inches in height, may be used as individual specimens or accent plants when not located within sight distance areas. These plants shall not be planted at a spacing that would result in a visual barrier between the street and sidewalk.

Carriageways providing access to street

Permitted: carriageways not to exceed 4 feet wide if they are poured concrete.

Evergreen ground cover

Permitted: less than 18 inches in height at maturity.

Inorganic materials including pervious materials (gravel, stone, and boulders) or paving materials (limited to brick, concrete, or natural stone pavers)

Park strips 36 inches or less: Permitted in 100% of the park strip surface area. The use of plants in combination with these materials is encouraged.

Park strips over 36 inches in width: Permitted either as water conserving mulch for plants or may also be used alone on portions of a park strip.

Paving materials shall be kept a minimum of 18 inches away from existing street trees.

Organic mulch such as bark, shredded plant material, or compost

Permitted and encouraged to conserve water around plants. May also be used as the only material on portions of the park strip.

Shrubs

Not permitted as a continuous hedge or when located within sight distance areas at street intersections, alleys, or driveways. Permitted, up to 36 inches in height, as individual specimens or accent plants when not located within sight distance areas. Shrubs shall not be planted at a spacing that would result in a visual barrier between the street and sidewalk. (See subsection F of this section.)

Trees

Permitted: see subsection D of this section.

Turf

Permitted on slopes less than 3:1 (3 feet horizontal to 1 foot vertical).

Water

Sufficient water shall be provided to keep all plants in a healthy condition.

Clarifying Definitions

- 1 "Ground covers" are defined as any perennial evergreen plant species that does not exceed 18 inches in height at maturity and will spread to form a uniform "mat". "Perennial" is defined as a plant having a life span of more than 2 years. "Evergreen" is defined as a plant having foliage that remains on the plant throughout the year.
- 2 "Perennial flowering plants" are flowering plants which have a life span of more than 2 years but which become dormant each fall, losing all foliage, and generate new foliage and flowering buds the following spring and summer from the dormant root system.
- 3 "Annual flowering plants" are flowering plants which have a life span of only one growing season outdoors.
- 4 "Shrubs" are generally long lived woody plants that may be either evergreen or deciduous. They differ from ground covers in that they are generally over 18 inches tall and do not generally form a uniform mat. Shrubs shall not be planted at a spacing that will form a mass or hedge which creates a visual barrier between the street and sidewalk. The appropriate use of shrubs in park strips is as accent or specimen plants. Shrubs shall not be planted within street intersection, alley, or driveway sight distance areas. Shrubs may be planted outside sight distance areas but shall not exceed 36 inches in height at maturity.