

CITY OF SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA  
**COUNCIL POLICY**

CURRENT

SUBJECT: PARK AND RECREATION FACILITY LANDSCAPE DESIGN  
POLICY NO.: 200-14  
EFFECTIVE DATE: JANUARY 28, 2016

BACKGROUND:

The City of San Diego has a large number of landscaped park and recreation facilities, and additional facilities will be required to serve the City's increasing population. The cost of development and maintenance of these facilities continues to rise while there is a concurrent reduction in financing available for this purpose. There is also an increased awareness of the need to promote user safety in these facilities and to conserve diminishing water and energy resources. This Council Policy provides policy direction for the design, or redesign, of landscaped areas which will meet community needs within the limits of available resources.

PURPOSE:

To provide policy guidance to City staff and design consultants relative to the landscape design of general park and recreation facilities.

POLICY:

It is the policy of the City Council that landscaping for new facilities, and the improvement or redevelopment of existing facilities, be designed in a manner that will assure user safety and facility function, reduce water and energy use, and reduce construction and maintenance costs through conformance with the following guidelines.

DESIGN GUIDELINES:

When feasible and in the City's best interests, parks should be designed, or redesigned, giving consideration to the following:

I. Landscaping - General

- a. High maintenance, water demanding landscaping should be limited to those areas where such improvement is essential.
- b. Each facility should be designed to retain significant existing native or naturalized plant growth, if any, consistent with intended use of the facility and the other requirements of this Council Policy.

CITY OF SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA  
**COUNCIL POLICY**

CURRENT

II. Visual Access

- a. Site grading, the location of park furnishings, structures and plantings should permit adequate visual access into the entire site from an adjacent public thoroughfare, building or parking lot.

III. Grading - Drainage

- a. Site grading should be accomplished in such a manner as to reduce steep grades and/or eliminate unnecessary grade changes.
- b. Adequate drainage should be provided for active use areas.

IV. Irrigation Systems

- a. Irrigation systems should be automated and designed to apply water at a rate which will minimize runoff.
- b. Irrigation systems for non-turfed, but planted areas, should be operated by a controller that is independent from units that control turf area irrigation.
- c. The most effective and readily available vandal/theft resistant components should be utilized.

V. Lighting

- a. Area and parking lot lighting should be provided where ambient light from adjacent areas is inadequate for user safety and convenience.
- b. Lighting for athletic areas should be provided at a minimum level consistent with user safety and intended use.
- c. Energy efficient fixtures should be utilized.
- d. Automatic controls, with convenient manual override, should be provided.
- e. Athletic area lighting should be operated by controls which do not operate other lighting systems.

CITY OF SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA  
**COUNCIL POLICY**

CURRENT

VI. Furnishings and Fixtures

- a. Custom designed park furnishings and fixtures (i.e., picnic facilities, benches, drinking fountains, lighting fixtures, play and athletic equipment) should be avoided except in unique and special situations.
- b. Wooden bollards, fences, barricades, walls, play equipment and other “timber” structures should not be used except in unique and special situations.
- c. Vandal resistant materials and installation methods should be used.
- d. Park furnishings located in turf should be limited in number and spaced to permit the effective use of mechanized maintenance equipment and the effective operation of the irrigation system.
- e. Park structures, fixtures and furnishings located in turfed areas should be provided with a concrete pad or footing flush with the adjacent turf and sufficiently wide to permit efficient turf maintenance.
- f. Children’s play apparatus should be limited to basic equipment such as slides, swings and climbers. Play apparatus should be placed in informal groupings in non-turfed areas and should avoid the use of formalized enclosures or sand base.

VII. Native/Naturalized Plantings

- a. The restoration of natural areas disturbed by site development with native or naturalized plantings, in a manner which will require minimal maintenance, including irrigation, is encouraged, if consistent with the intended use of the facility and the other requirements of this Council Policy.
- b. Plant material should be selected that will provide a “natural” succession of plants designed to provide initial surface stabilization followed by a permanent, long lived plant community.

VIII. Turf

- a. Turf plantings should be generally limited to areas where required for functional use.
- b. Turf areas should be of a size and configuration to permit the most effective use of mechanized maintenance equipment and reduce turf edging.

CITY OF SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA  
**COUNCIL POLICY**

**CURRENT**

- c. Turf areas should terminate at the inside edge of perimeter walks wherever possible.
- d. Concrete mowing strips should be placed at the interface of a turf area with shrub or groundcover plantings.
- e. Athletic fields should be turfed only if they are multi-sports fields. Single use baseball fields and softball fields should not be turfed. Baseball infields should not be turfed.

IX. Trees and Shrubs

- a. Plant selection should be limited to those species which are considered to be relatively disease and pest free, and require minimal trimming to be maintained in a safe and attractive condition.
- b. Drought tolerant species should be utilized where practical, particularly in non-turfed areas.
- c. Planting locations and spacing should permit normal plant development without undue crowding or trimming. Plant symbols on drawings and general development plans should be in scale with the mature size of the species proposed.
- d. Trees planted in turfed areas should be spaced to permit the most effective use of mechanized maintenance equipment and operation of the irrigation system.
- e. Dense tree groves should be excluded from turfed areas. Where planted, the soil surface under such groves should be mulched with a wood chip product or equal.
- f. Shrub plantings should not be permitted except where required, for example, when needed for safety or to screen objectionable views.
- g. Foundation planting of park and recreation buildings should only occur in unique design situations.

X. Groundcover

- a. Living groundcovers should be permitted only where necessary to control surface erosion.
- b. Plant selection should be limited to low maintenance species.
- c. Drought tolerant species should be utilized where practical.

CITY OF SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA  
**COUNCIL POLICY**

CURRENT

XI. Non-Planted Areas

- a. Non-planted areas should be covered with mulch, wood chip product, decomposed granite or other material suitable for the intended use of the area.

IMPLEMENTATION:

- I. Landscape design should conform to the guidelines listed above.
- II. General development plans for the landscaping of new facilities, or significant redevelopment of existing facilities, will be implemented according to the process set forth in Council Policy 600-33.
- III. Deviation from specific sections of this Council Policy due to special site conditions and/or use considerations may be necessary. However, such deviations should be approved at the time of the general development plan according to the processes set forth in Council Policy 600-33.
- IV. Staff should ensure that detailed construction documents are prepared in a manner consistent with this Council Policy and the approved general development plan.

CROSS REFERENCE:

City Charter Sec. 55  
Municipal Code Sec. 63.01  
Council Policy 200-05

HISTORY:

Adopted by Resolution R-254869 - 08/24/1981  
Amended by Resolution R-310202 - 01/28/2016