

Topic: Aquifer Protection; Water Conservation; Landscaping
Resource Type: Regulations
State: Nevada
Jurisdiction Type: Municipal
Municipality: City of Las Vegas
Year (adopted, written, etc.): 2002
Community Type - applicable to: Urban; Suburban
Title: City of Las Vegas Landscaping Ordinance: Turf Limitation
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Abstract

The City of Las Vegas Landscaping code includes a section limiting area that may be covered with turf in order to reduce irrigation requirements in the water limited desert of Nevada. Turf limitations range from 25% to 50% of landscapable land on a parcel that may be planted with turf based on the type of development. The remaining cover is to be water efficient landscaping.

Resource

Title 19 - Zoning
19.12.030 General.

(A) Landscape Required.

(1) All required Site Development Plans shall meet or exceed the minimum standards, and shall comply with any restrictions, established in this chapter. In addition, the City's policy document entitled "Landscape, Wall and Buffer Standards" is a resource for acceptable standards and design solutions. To the extent that such document establishes minimum requirements and standards and is formally adopted by the City Council, a Site Development Plan must comply with that document.

(2) Landscape and irrigation plans may be combined on the same drawing with required Site Development Plans.

(3) All landscape and irrigation plans shall be prepared and stamped by a registered Architect, Landscape Architect, Residential Designer or Civil Engineer.

(4) The owner, developer and occupant of the property are jointly and severally responsible for maintaining or assuring the ongoing maintenance of installed landscaping so that the landscaping continues to thrive. Prior to the issuance of a building permit, the owner,

developer or contractor shall post a performance bond or equivalent security to assure the performance of the maintenance obligation for a minimum of two years.

(B) Additional Landscaping May Be Required. Additional landscaping may be required by the Director, or reviewing authority, in order to respond to special site features, maintain an established landscape pattern created by existing landscaping in the surrounding area, or mitigate the impact of a particular development.

(C) Alternative Landscape Design. The Director, or other reviewing authority, may approve variations to the standards and designs set out in this chapter if they respond more appropriately to a particular site and provide equivalent means of achieving the intent of this Chapter.

(D) Maintenance. Property owners shall maintain all walls in good structural and finish condition. All landscaping shall be maintained in a healthy and vigorous living condition. Dead vegetation shall be promptly replaced, in accordance with standard seasonal planting practices, with healthy, living plants.

(E) Installation of Required Landscaping. All required perimeter landscaping shall be installed with the first phase of construction when adjacent to or across the street from existing residential uses, or as soon as permitted by standard seasonal planting practices.

(F) Irrigation of Landscaping. All required landscaping shall be installed with an irrigation system designed to eliminate any run-off of water into the public rights-of-way.

In order to minimize damage to buildings and solid walls from soil settling, expansion/contraction (cracked foundation), all overhead spray irrigation systems shall be a minimum of twenty-four inches back from any building and solid walls with no overspray contacting any building or solid walls.

An automatic irrigation system is required for all planting areas, and shall include:

- (1) An electric automatic controller with multiple program capabilities;
- (2) Multiple repeat cycle capabilities; and
- (3) A flexible calendar program.

All irrigation water shall be retained on-site. When required, swales shall channel water to larger holding areas, catch basins, other planting areas, gravel sumps and/or dry-wells. Areas that accumulate system water shall be provided with underground drainage systems to carry water to holding or discharge areas. Nuisance flows shall not spill over the sidewalk and into any street (see Figure 1).

FIGURE 1 LANDSCAPE AREA SWALE

(G) Turf Limitations.

- (1) The use of turf shall be limited as follows:

Zoning District/Use	Use of Turf
Commercial/Industrial Districts	Limited to a maximum of 25% of total landscapable area
Public Facilities Districts	Prohibited, except for schools, parks and cemeteries
Golf Course Use	Limited to 5 acres average per hole, with a maximum 10 additional acres for driving range
Residential Districts (Single-Family)	Limited to a maximum of 50% of total front yard area
Residential Districts (Multi-Family)	Limited to a maximum of 30% of total landscapable area

(2) The turf limitations contained in this Subsection are intended to increase the use of water efficient vegetation. Landscaping shall be designed, and the landscaping materials shall be chosen and installed, so as to ensure that, within three years of normal growth, at least fifty percent of the area covered by non-turf landscaping will consist of water efficient vegetation.

(3) The maximum amount of turf allowable pursuant to Paragraph (1) may be increased proportionally by the percentage of water used for irrigation that comes from a source to which the property owner has secured water rights.

(H) Perimeter. Perimeter landscaping shall be provided and shall include drought-resistant and water efficient plant materials consistent with the Southern Nevada Water Authority xeriscape guidelines and the turf limitations of Subsection (G). The width of perimeter landscape areas shall conform to the requirements as found in the "Landscape, Wall and Buffer Standards" policy document.

(I) Plants and Shrubs. Plants or shrubs are required and shall include a minimum of four shrubs of five gallon minimum each, and four shrubs of one-gallon minimum each, per each twenty-four inch box and fifteen-gallon tree provided.

(J) Ground Covers. Ground covers shall be installed in all landscaped areas. Non-vegetative ground covers shall include, but not be limited to, rocks and small stones, crushed rock, and bark installed to a minimum depth of two inches in all areas.

(Ord 5509 §§ 1, 2 (part), 2002)

Statutory Authority:

NRS 278.250 Zoning districts and regulations.

1. For the purposes of NRS 278.010 to 278.630, inclusive, the governing body may divide the city, county or region into zoning districts of such number, shape and area as are best suited to carry out the purposes of NRS 278.010 to 278.630, inclusive. Within the zoning district it may regulate and restrict the erection, construction, reconstruction, alteration, repair or use of buildings, structures or land.

2. The zoning regulations must be adopted in accordance with the master plan for land use and be designed:

- (a) To preserve the quality of air and water resources.
- (b) To promote the conservation of open space and the protection of other natural and scenic resources from unreasonable impairment.
- (c) To provide for recreational needs.
- (d) To protect life and property in areas subject to floods, landslides and other natural disasters.
- (e) To conform to the adopted population plan, if required by NRS 278.170.
- (f) To develop a timely, orderly and efficient arrangement of transportation and public facilities and services, including facilities and services for bicycles.
- (g) To ensure that the development on land is commensurate with the character and the physical limitations of the land.
- (h) To take into account the immediate and long-range financial impact of the application of particular land to particular kinds of development, and the relative suitability of the land for development.
- (i) To promote health and the general welfare.
- (j) To ensure the development of an adequate supply of housing for the community, including the development of affordable housing.
- (k) To ensure the protection of existing neighborhoods and communities, including the protection of rural preservation neighborhoods.

3. The zoning regulations must be adopted with reasonable consideration, among other things, to the character of the area and its peculiar suitability for particular uses, and with a view to conserving the value of buildings and encouraging the most appropriate use of land throughout the city, county or region.

References:

1. Ordinance downloaded from <http://www.bpcnet.com/codes/lasvegas/>, copyright 2002 Book Publishing Company LexisNexis.
2. Personal communication: City Planner, Las Vegas Department of Community Development, April 9, 2003.

Interview notes: The amount of land that can be planted with turf is limited depending on what zone the parcel is in. Compliance with turf limits are ensured during the planning and permitting process as one of the routine checks conducted during plan review. Many of the developers leave landscaping until the last minute so they often like finding out about the ordinance during the planning process because it can be easier to use an alternative "rock mulch" than to design and install turf. It was further indicated that since most properties being developed are raw land, they have little vegetation on them to begin with, so in this way too may reduce the time and cost involved in turf inputs during the development of a property. The city planner did not have any data on actual water consumption reductions resulting from the turf limitations, but indicated that the ordinance was effective in its goal of limiting the amount of turf planted on new development.