



City Council Staff Report

Meeting Date: November 1, 2021

TO: Marco Island City Council

FROM: Daniel J. Smith, A.I.C.P., Director of Community Affairs

DATE: October 12, 2021

RE: Change to Section 30-435 to add a section regarding synthetic turf material and installation standards.

DESCRIPTION:

The City Council had asked the Planning Board to review the use of “synthetic turf” which is currently prohibited in the Land Development Code but allowed through the City as an approved ground cover pursuant to Resolution 15-23, adopted on March 16, 2015. In light of the previously approved resolution, Staff is of the opinion that the language should be codified into the City’s Land Development Code. The proposed draft ordinance is below for your review.

Staff researched other government agencies, and found that most have similar language as the City’s current Resolution. One key element that is not clear is the use of sythetic turf and its environmental impacts. Storm water runoff and heat gain seem to be the major factors that may have negetative effects.

PLANNING BOARD:

The Planning Board heard this item. There was discussion regarding language and formatting, perviousness of synthetic turf installation, percentage slope and stormwater runoff, areas on a single-family lot allowed for synthetic turf, heat gain, the use of sports fields, landscape screening, and installation standards.

The Planning Board voted 7-0 to add a section in the Land Development Code allowing for synthetic turf based on the proposed ordinance.

PROPOSED CODE LANGUAGE

Sec. 30-435. Plant material and installation standards.

(e) *Ground covers.* Prior to the issuance of a site permit, certificate of completion or certificate of occupancy for any single-family residence, multifamily, commercial, or institutional development, ground coverings, as described below, shall be installed. ~~Artificial turf or similar synthetic turf materials are expressly prohibited as ground covers unless otherwise approved by standards and specifications approved by city council.~~

(3) *Impervious surfaces, single-family districts.* No more than 67 percent of the total lot area within a single-family zoning district shall be covered with impervious surfaces. The use of pervious pavers and synthetic turf will be ~~considered~~ included in the calculation to the extent the applicant provides credible evidence of the permeability of the surface. Impervious surfaces may not cover a French drain, if required, except that up to two four-foot-wide walkways to a dock facility may be used;

(i) **Synthetic turf**

1. Standards

a. The use of artificial plants and surfaces painted to appear as plant material are prohibited in a landscaped area except as provided by this section.

b. Synthetic turf that complies with the following standards may be permitted:

- (1) Simulate the appearance of live turf, organic turf, grass, sod or lawn.
- (2) Be of a type known as cut pile infill with pile fibers a minimum height of 1.75 inches and maximum height of 2.50 inches.
- (3) Be a minimum 75 ounces per square yard.
- (4) Be manufactured from polyethylene monofilament, Dual Yarn System.
- (5) Be affixed to a permeable backing with a pervious subgrade equal or exceeding real turf permeability.
- (6) Have a minimum 8-year "No Fade" warranty.
- (7) Be a lead free.
- (8) Be a product that is flame retardant.
- (9) Turf shall not be permitted within thirty-six inches of an unfenced side property lot line. The 36-inch buffer shall be landscaped with living plant material.

d. The use of indoor or outdoor plastic or nylon carpeting as a replacement for natural or synthetic turf shall be prohibited.

e. A material other than polyethylene monofilament may be approved by the City Manager or his/her designee if the product has been certified to meet applicable environmental and health regulations regarding lead content.

f. Use of Synthetic turf in the public right of way or swale is prohibited.

g. Turf shall not be treated as a fill in material, but rather as a planned element of the landscape.

2. Installation.

a. Synthetic turf shall:

- (1) Be installed by a licensed professional pursuant to manufacturer's requirements;
- (2) Be installed over a subgrade prepared to provide positive drainage and an evenly graded mass of compacted, porous crushed rock aggregate material.
- (3) Be anchored at all edges and seams.

b. A drainage system shall be installed underneath the turf to prevent excessive runoff or pooling.

c. Where multiple panels are used, the change from one panel to the next shall not be readily visible and seams shall be joined in a tight and secure manner.

d. An infill medium consisting of clean silica sand or other approved mixture shall be brushed into the fibers to ensure that the fibers remain in an upright position and to provide ballast that will help hold the turf in place and provide a cushioning effect. Rubber is prohibited.

e. Areas of living plant material shall be installed or maintained in conjunction with the installation of synthetic turf when utilized in the front yard area. Living plant material shall include shrubs, vines, trees and groundcovers in separate planter areas and tree wells.

f. Synthetic turf shall be separated from planter areas and tree wells by a concrete mow strip, bender board, or other barrier with a minimum 3/8" thickness to prevent the intrusion of living plant material into the synthetic turf areas.

g. Use of an irrigation system for non-active use turf shall be prohibited.

h. An existing irrigation system that will not be utilized for the synthetic turf may remain, however, heads shall be removed, and pipes shall be capped below ground.

3. Maintenance

a. Synthetic turf shall be maintained in a green fadeless condition and free of weeds, debris, tears, holes, and impressions.

b. Synthetic turf shall be prohibited in the public right of ways and swales within the City of Marco Island. The City, City employees or its contractors or Subcontractors are not responsible to repair or replace any Synthetic Turf located within the public right of way, swales or easements damaged as a result of an associated city project or work order. Replacement of any synthetic turf material removed or damaged to repair or maintain roadways or utilities in the public right of way, swales or easements shall be the responsibility of the property owner and such repairs shall be made within 30 days or result in a code compliance violation.

4. Material Specifications and Plans.

a. Materials specifications and plans shall be provided to the City Manager or their designee for review and approval prior to the installation of the synthetic turf.

b. The submittal shall include:

- (1) A landscape plan showing the area of synthetic turf, area of living plant material, and separation material between these areas.
- (2) A dimensioned cross section of proposed materials and installation details, including subgrade, drainage, base or leveling layer, and infill.
- (3) Edge material and detail for treatment of seams; and
- (4) Material description and specifications, including manufacturer, installer (with contact information), and warranty information.

5. Exceptions

Sports courts

- a. An exception to the material selection, design and installation specifications for synthetic turf shall be allowed for sports courts. Sports courts shall include putting greens, miniature golf courses, bocce courts, lawn tennis courts, volleyball, badminton, soccer courts and other similar courts for sports typically played on grass surfaces. The material specifications and plans provided to the city manager or their designee for review and approval may include deviations from the requirements for synthetic turf that is designed to simulate lawn turf or grass. The specifications submitted shall show that the materials and installation are consistent with products designed specifically for sports courts.
- b. Sports courts deviating from the synthetic turf standards above ((i)1.) will be considered impervious surface.
- c. Sports courts shall not be between the front of the house and the right of way, except for corner and should lots, which will be allowed in only one of the two front yards.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends the City approve the proposed amendments outlined in the staff report with the following findings:

1. The amendment is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan, and in particular the Future Land Use Element Objection 1.7.

Daniel J. Smith, AICP
Director of Community Affairs.