



Memorandum

To: Planning Commission
From: Niall Connolly, Director of Community Development
Date: July 10th, 2026
Re: Landscape and Water Conservation

Introduction

The Planning Commission has previously expressed an interest in discussing ways of improving water conservation in Springdale. In discussion with staff, the Mayor has also identified this as a priority, in particular with regards to our landscape standards. Utah continues to experience a record drought, and the Department of Natural Resources has recently imposed restrictions on the use of some water rights within the Virgin River catchment. Although the Town of Springdale has not been affected by these current restrictions, drought conditions are of concern to the Town. The overwhelming majority of water usage in Springdale is for irrigation. With this in mind, it may be beneficial for the Planning Commission to review our landscaping standards to see if they could more effectively promote water conservation.

Landscape and Water Conservation

One of the stated purposes of the Town's existing landscape ordinance is to promote water conservation (see section 10-18-1(A)). It achieves this in a number of ways, including:

- 80% of plants in landscape areas are required to be water conserving species (see section 10-18-4(B)).
- The Town holds a list of approved plant species which are native and drought tolerant (although landscape areas are not limited to this list). This list is commonly used in new developments in Springdale.
- Drought tolerant grass varieties are required for turf and lawn areas. Turf and lawn areas are required to be a minimum of ten feet in width. The intention of this requirement is to avoid the creation of narrow areas of lawn or park strips which are not functional and may be difficult to irrigate efficiently.
- Irrigation systems must be designed to water efficiently and avoid overspray and overflow. Excessive irrigation of landscape is not allowed (see 10-18-9).

The Code defines water conserving plants as follows:

Plants which are native or naturalized to the Zion Canyon area and that can generally survive with available rainfall, although supplemental irrigation may be needed or desired during summer months. Water conserving plants that may be used to meet the minimum landscape requirements of this chapter are those included on, or are similar to those included on, the plant list adopted by resolution of the Town Council.

The Landscaping chapter of the Code has generally been successful in directing property owners to create water efficient landscape areas. However, there are some ways it could be enhanced. Some ideas include:

- Limiting grass and lawn areas. For example, the City of St. George bans non-functional ornamental grass in all new commercial developments. Functional grass is defined as an area where people or pets actively recreate, such as a sports field, a park or a dedicated backyard play area. For new residential homes, grass can cover a maximum of 8% of the total lot size. Springdale could consider implementing similar regulations.
- Artificial turf is currently prohibited if visible from adjacent properties or the street (10-18-4(B)1). The Commission could consider removing this prohibition. The quality and appearance of artificial turf has improved since the time this standard was adopted, and it may be a good option in certain instances.
- Restricting water features, or the amount of water that can be used in them.
- Time of day regulations for outdoor watering (for example prohibit outdoor irrigation between 10 a.m. and 8 p.m. in the summer season.)

Conclusion

Water conservation is a perennially important topic for our region. By reviewing our landscape ordinance and making some minor adjustments to it, there is the potential for the Town to make incremental gains in water conservation.