



Landscape Design Guidelines for Medians and Planting Strips

This document establishes landscape guidelines for medians, parkways and planters for new development. The purpose of the document is to identify suitable plantings and materials that are attractive, minimize maintenance, discourage graffiti and conserve water. Proposed designs should recognize stormwater as a sustainable, natural resource and incorporate stormwater management techniques. Techniques should reduce runoff in addition to promoting filtration, encouraging infiltration, capturing runoff and re-using stormwater for landscape irrigation.

The following guidelines reflect the recognized principles of xeriscape. The Guidelines are intended for use on all projects in the City, both public and private. For public projects, guidelines for medians, parkways or planters may be waived by the Public Works Department, based on safety of pedestrian circulation and/or additional requirements may be identified based on site specific conditions.

All concrete work within historic districts, including but not limited to sidewalks, curbs, and gutters shall be earth-toned as per Section 14-9.2(F) and (H). Additional standards may be applicable for structures within historic districts, including but not limited to walls, fences, signage, and bus shelters as per Section 14-5.2. Contact the Historic Preservation staff for more details.

Coordination with the Adopt-a-Median Program is encouraged. These Guidelines were compiled with the assistance of the Keep Santa Fe Beautiful Program which implements the Adopt-a-Median Program.

1. Planning Ahead

- A. If construction of the median, parkway or planter strip is required as part of a subdivision, development plan or building permit, Santa Fe City Code 14-8.4 must be followed (attached here for reference).
- B. Create a scaled drawing of the median, parkway or planter. Identify sunny and shady areas, slopes and views.
- C. Evaluate how the area is used and the purpose of the work. For example, will there be any pedestrian traffic or cross-traffic such as people accessing a sidewalk either from a parking space or crosswalk
- D. Include maintenance access as part of the design.
- E. Consider phasing the landscape plan as money and time allow. For public projects, phasing should be clearly identified on the plans.
- F. Consider the following physical features;
 - i. Provide for the placement of curb cuts with stormwater harvesting features. Examples include rain gardens, vegetated swales, stormwater planters and bioretention cells.

- ii. Interference with sight distance triangles is not permitted. Turning bay medians or planters shall not contain plant materials or other hardscape features that will modify the visibility.
- iii. Utilize landscape improvements to force pedestrians to the crosswalks in areas of intense pedestrian traffic (such as schools). For public projects, fencing may be required to direct pedestrians.
- iv. Construct hard surface turnout bays for city maintenance trucks in medians or planting strips wherever practical.
- v. Place boulders at a minimum of three feet from any curb.
- vi. Place weed barrier at the time of installation.
- vii. Use of tree grates and tree guards is discouraged. However, in areas where there is insufficient clearance or high pedestrian traffic, tree grates or guards may be utilized.
- viii. Design a median, parkway or planter less than four feet wide with the following considerations:
 - a. Do not install plants.
 - b. Install pervious hard surface materials to allow for storm water capture and infiltration. Examples include pervious concrete or paverstone treatments.
 - c. Include hard surface treatments that provide a diverse aesthetic.
 - d. Boulders are discouraged because of the narrow width of the planter.

2. Soil Improvement

- A. Promote stormwater infiltration by utilizing the proper soil medium. Loam is preferable (approximately 40% sand, 40% silt and 20% clay).
- B. Send a soil sample to a soil lab to determine nutrient content.
- C. Consider adding organic matter to soil. Most soils benefit from adding two to three cubic yards of organic matter, such as commercial compost or aged manure, for every 1,000 square feet of landscape area.

3. Efficient Irrigation

- A. Encourage passive water harvesting techniques. Examples include vegetated swales, permeable surfaces (permeable concrete or drivable grass products) and rain gardens.
- B. Include an irrigation system with moisture sensors for introduced plants or native plants that require supplemental irrigation after establishment, for projects on private property. For public projects, moisture sensors are discouraged and irrigation controls should be in communication with Central Control.
- C. Place irrigation control and valve boxes between the sidewalk and the plants to be watered, wherever possible. Placing these boxes between the curb and sidewalk is discouraged. Plant material should not be installed within five feet of the irrigation control boxes.
- D. Provide safe access and stopping area if plant material is to be watered by truck. Even the low water use plants need water to become established and during extended hot, dry periods.
- E. Construct medians, parkways and planters to encourage the harvesting of precipitation for irrigation water. Planting beds shall be swaled, sloped, or recessed below grade to manage stormwater by promoting infiltration. The use of vegetated infiltration features,

swales, meanders and water collection devices is encouraged. Water will not be impounded for more than 96 hours, without approval from the Office of the State Engineer.

- E. Use drip or bubbler emitters for trees, shrubs, flowers and groundcovers.
- F. Re-program automatic irrigation systems regularly to meet seasonal needs.
- G. Consider installing a rain shutoff device for projects on private property. For public projects shut off device should communicate with Central Control.
- H. Water deeply and infrequently to develop deep roots.
- I. Water between 6pm and 10am to reduce water loss due to evaporation. For more information, reference the City's Water Restriction webpage at the following link; http://www.water2conserve.com/water_restrictions.html. The City's Landscape Irrigation Design Standards can be accessed through the following link; http://www.water2conserve.com/source_files/LIDS_2-19-2010.pdf
- J. Low flow irrigation is preferred.
- K. Do not use sprinklers.

4. Limited or No Turf

- A. Do not use turf grass. The use of native xeric grasses, including grass mixes, may be appropriate for larger and outlying areas in certain circumstances.
- B. Use of xeric ornamental grass may be an attractive and low maintenance alternative to turf grass.

5. Plant Material

- A. Refer to the City's List of Recommended Plants for trees and shrubs. The list is available at the following link: www.water2conserve.com
- B. Consider the following when choosing plant material;
 - i. Utilize plant material that is drought tolerant and disease resistant.
 - ii. Give preference to native species.
 - iii. Avoid species with brittle wood, invasive roots or tendencies to sucker.
 - iv. Consider the following when selecting trees or shrubs;
 - a. Avoid obstruction of the visibility triangle or interference with pedestrian passage by mature heights or branching patterns. Also, note any overhead obstructions when making your selection.
 - b. Maintenance of the selected species must be incorporated into the plans so that there is no obstruction of the visibility triangle or interference with pedestrian access.
 - c. Select upright forms of trees.
 - v. Consider the following when selecting groundcovers;
 - a. Variation in seasonal appearance.
 - b. Combine evergreen with deciduous material.
 - c. Relate or contrast plant material with the existing streetscape or landscape.
 - d. Do not select "messy" plant material such as trees with large seed pods or dropping fruit.
 - e. Enhance erosion control benefits.
 - f. Select groundcovers that are compatible with bioinfiltration features such as the ability to filter stormwater.

- C. For public projects, state the mature height and branching. Also, show overhead and underground utilities on the plans.

6. Mulch

- A. Cover planting areas with four inches of mulch to conserve soil moisture, control weeds and add interest to the landscape.
- B. Provide for the surface of the organic mulch or crusher fines to be at least two inches below the top of the curb of the median, parkway or planter.
- C. Utilize bark chips, shredded wood chips or pole peelings as they will decompose and improve soil texture. These types of mulch will need to be restored from time to time and could pose maintenance problems. For City maintained projects, allow two inches between the top of curb and the surface of mulch.
- D. Utilize gravel or crushed stone, as they are good mulch material in Santa Fe. For City maintained projects, use cobble approximately four inches or larger.
- E. Apply mulch over a landscape fabric.
- F. Do not use black plastic; it prevents air and water from reaching plant roots and prevents infiltration of stormwater.
- G. Only stable materials that will not wash or float away in precipitation events should be used for mulch.

7. Maintenance

- A. Maintenance of plant material is required to ensure full visibility at sight triangles for vehicles, pedestrians and bicyclists.
- B. Maintenance of plant material, including trimming lower branches, is required to ensure safe access for vehicles, pedestrians and bicyclists.
- C. Installed weed barrier must be maintained.

References;

- City's Water Restriction webpage;
http://www.water2conserve.com/water_restrictions.html
- City of Santa Fe Landscape Irrigation Design Standards:
http://www.water2conserve.com/source_files/LIDS_2-19-2010.pdf