



# City of Santa Ana Public Works Agency **PARKWAY IMPROVEMENT** GUIDELINES



While most parkways have been planted with grass, property owners may want to make improvements such as replacing grass with drought tolerant plants or installing a paved surface to step onto when leaving a parked car.

These guidelines have been developed by the City of Santa Ana to:

1. Highlight the property owner's responsibilities in making improvements to and maintaining their adjacent parkway.
2. Provide basic design parameters for improvements (see Standard Plan #1123 on page 5).
3. List the type of improvements allowed **without a permit**, especially improvements that promote water conservation, including:

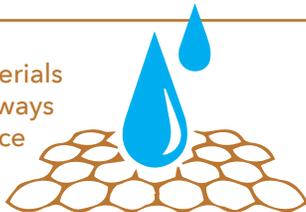
Landscaping with California Friendly® and Orange County native plants that are naturally drought tolerant and use substantially less water than a traditional lawn.



Smart irrigation systems.



Permeable materials that allow parkways to absorb surface runoff water.



4. Outline when a permit **is required** and how to obtain one.

## What are parkways?

A parkway generally refers to the narrow strip of land between the street and the sidewalk. They are sometimes called tree lawns, parking strips or planting strips. Traditionally, parkways have been planted with grass and a street tree. Parkway and their bordering sidewalk together make up the public right-of-way (ROW), which is owned by the City. **Please note: Although the City is responsible for improvements made to sidewalks, property owners are responsible for planting and maintaining their adjacent parkway.**

## Why are Parkway important?

Parkways offer aesthetic, environmental and safety value. When properly landscaped and cared for, they provide scenic corridors and curb appeal, both which increase property values. In addition to acting as a buffer between pedestrians and vehicles on the roadway, parkways often line streets with trees that provide shade and absorb carbon dioxide. They also prevent stormwater and irrigation runoff into the streets, allowing water to seep down to the underlying groundwater basin.



**Together with the community, we strive to ensure Santa Ana is a sustainable and beautiful place to live, work and play.**



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**PARKWAY IMPROVEMENT**  
**GUIDELINES**



# IMPROVEMENTS ALLOWED WITHOUT A PERMIT

## LANDSCAPING

By adhering to the following, you can make these improvements to your parkway landscape *without* a permit:

- Landscaping should cover at least 65% of the parkway (excluding the driveway approach).
- Parkway landscaping can include turf, ornamental grasses, ground cover, shrubs and synthetic turf (only when quality and installation requirements are met). See the standards for synthetic turf in parkways on page 6.

- Please note that street trees are the responsibility of the City of Santa Ana. If you would like a tree planted in your adjacent parkway, if your existing tree needs attention, or you have any questions about street trees, please contact the Tree Maintenance Division at (714) 647-3330.
- Choose California Friendly® and Orange County native plants that are suited for our climate: hot dry summers and warm wet winters. See the resources section on page 7 for suggestions on local plants that are readily available.

<p><b>Turf</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Utilize drought tolerant varieties.</li> <li>• Berming (building mounds) are not permitted.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Ornamental Grasses</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Great alternative to turf.</li> <li>• Select dwarf varieties.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Groundcovers</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Great alternative to turf.</li> <li>• Pay attention to your sunlight conditions and select plant accordingly i.e., don't plant a shade loving plant in a sunny location.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Shrubs</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shrubs should be no higher than 2.5 feet at maturity.</li> <li>• Do not choose shrubs that are spiky or thorny.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Synthetic Turf</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Synthetic turf for parkways does not qualify for a rebate.</li> <li>• Must meet industry standards for outdoor use (see page 6). Carpet-like green covers are prohibited.</li> <li>• The City reserves the right to plant a new tree at any time. If there is existing synthetic turf in the parkway, the homeowner will be responsible for removing the synthetic turf.</li> </ul>	



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## IMPROVEMENTS ALLOWED WITHOUT A PERMIT

### IRRIGATION

Only irrigation systems installed no more than 12" deep are allowed **without** a permit. Following are requirements and best practices when installing and using irrigation systems in your parkway:



- Limit watering to a maximum of every 3 days (or according to the City's current Water Use Restrictions).
- Irrigate between 6 p.m. and 6 a.m.
- Repair irrigation leaks and breaks within 72 hours as required by the City.

<p><b>Spray Sprinkler Heads</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use high-efficiency nozzles.</li> <li>• Ensure they fully retract when not in use.</li> <li>• Install 6" from edge of pavement and adjust to prevent overspray onto sidewalks or street.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Drip – Above Ground</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low flow drip systems are recommended.</li> <li>• Emitters are built-in and apply water directly to root zone.</li> <li>• Evaporation and runoff are minimized.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Drip – Underground</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low flow drip systems are recommended.</li> <li>• Landscape surface is free from irrigation equipment.</li> <li>• Evaporation and runoff are minimized.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Natural Rainfall &amp; Rainwater Harvesting</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maximizes water conservation.</li> <li>• Rainwater is very pure and naturally soft, making it a great option for watering plants.</li> </ul>	



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## IMPROVEMENTS ALLOWED WITHOUT A PERMIT

### PERMEABLE HARDSCAPE

By adhering to the following, you can make these improvements to your parkway landscape **without** a permit:

- Permeable hardscape should cover less than 35% of the parkway.



- Permeable hardscape includes pavers and stepping stones, decomposed granite (DG), gravels and boulders.
- Concrete paving is subject to review and approval.

<p><b>Pavers</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pavers should be installed on a permeable base (e.g., soil or sand).</li> <li>• Grouting is not permitted.</li> <li>• When installing, level pavers with the ground to avoid trip hazards.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Stepping Stones</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Size: maximum 18" in length or width.</li> <li>• Stepping stones should be installed on a permeable base (e.g., soil or sand).</li> <li>• Grouting is not permitted.</li> <li>• When installing, level pavers with the ground to avoid trip hazards.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Decomposed Granite (DG) &amp; Gravels</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use for walkable surfaces and/or landscape treatment.</li> <li>• Gravels should be less than 2" diameter.</li> <li>• Stones should only be used as part of stormwater handling system.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Boulders</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Size: maximum 18" in width and height.</li> <li>• Take care when placing:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Locate outside of car door range.</li> <li>• Locate 2'-0" behind the face of the curb.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	

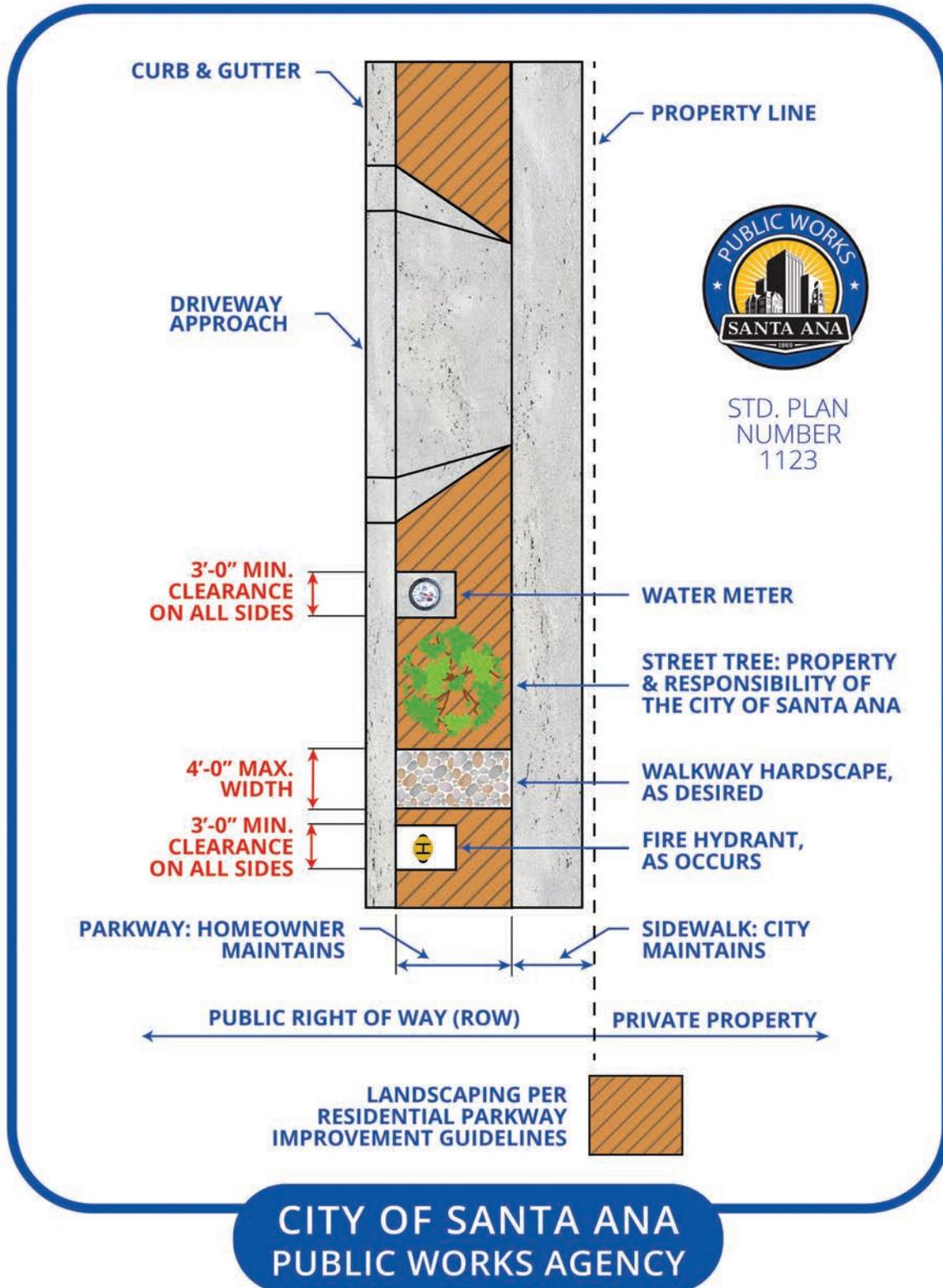


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## STANDARD PARKWAY PLAN

The City of Santa Ana's Standard Plan #1123 shows basic design parameters for parkway improvements.



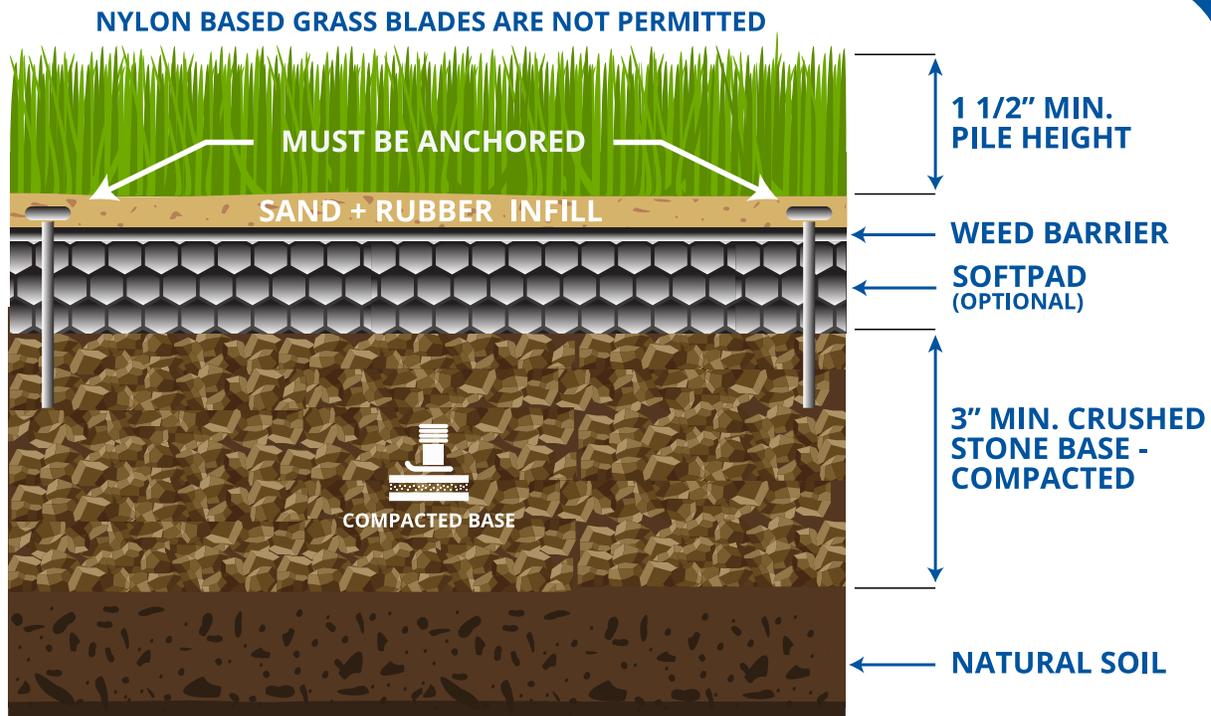
(Plan shown is a typical layout; your actual parkway configuration may vary.)



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## STANDARDS FOR SYNTHETIC TURF



- Parkway with existing trees - Synthetic turf in parkways with existing trees is **NOT** allowed.
- Parkway with **no** trees - Synthetic turf is allowed when these standards are met. Location would be deemed unsuitable for future plantings.
- Installation of synthetic turf by a contractor with a valid contractor's license is recommended. The contractor shall also have all permits and licenses necessary to conduct business in the City.
- The synthetic turf must have a minimum blade length (pile height) of 1½ inches. **Nylon based grass blades are not permitted.**
- All existing sprinkler systems (piping, valves and sprinkler heads) no longer in use must either be capped or removed. All existing landscaping must be removed where the synthetic turf will be located and a minimum of 3 inches of soil excavated.
- The turf area shall be leveled, with a crushed stone sub base (such as decomposed granite) added to establish a foundation and facilitate drainage for the turf. The stone sub base shall be a minimum of 3 inches in depth and be compacted to ensure proper drainage.
- A permeable geotextile (weed barrier) must be provided to prohibit the growth of weeds. This barrier may either be incorporated into the synthetic turf or be installed as a separate layer.
- The synthetic turf shall be securely fastened to the ground. Seams shall be glued and stapled to minimize tears. The synthetic turf should be placed in patterns that emulate real grass.
- An infill consisting of sand and rubber must be poured into the synthetic turf to keep the blades erect and to provide a natural look and feel.
- The synthetic turf must be maintained at all times. Rips and/or tears, holes, seam separations and uplifted surfaces should be repaired in a timely manner as required by Section 41-609 of the Santa Ana Municipal Code.



**CITY OF SANTA ANA  
PUBLIC WORKS AGENCY**



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## IMPROVEMENTS REQUIRING A PERMIT

The following instances require a permit, which can be obtained by visiting the Public Works Engineering Counter located at 20 Civic Center Plaza, Ross Annex (First Floor).

- For any work that involves excavating deeper than 12" as outlined in these guidelines.
- When a property owner wants to install permeable hardscape greater than 35% of the total area.
- When a property owner wants to install concrete.
- Anything else outside of these guidelines.

### SUGGESTED RESOURCES

For more information about creating and maintaining a California Friendly® landscape, here are a number of resources:

[bewaterwise.com](http://bewaterwise.com)

[santa-ana.org/SAwatersmart](http://santa-ana.org/SAwatersmart)

[santa-ana.org/smart-landscapes](http://santa-ana.org/smart-landscapes)

[santa-ana.org/city-landscape-design-guidelines](http://santa-ana.org/city-landscape-design-guidelines)

[santa-ana.org/documents/california-friendly-maintenance-guide](http://santa-ana.org/documents/california-friendly-maintenance-guide)

[bloomcalifornia.org](http://bloomcalifornia.org)



<sup>1</sup> Per Santa Ana Municipal Code Section 41-609, landscape maintenance is defined as "proper pruning, mowing of lawns, weeding, removal of litter, fertilizing, replacement of plants and decorative material when necessary..."

<sup>2</sup> Per Santa Ana Municipal Code Sections 16-48 and 16-49, no person that has responsibility over a lot shall allow noxious growths, growths dangerous to life, health, convenience of the community, weeds, or cause/permit rubbish to exist on that lot. If a property owner allows such conditions to occur, then he/she may be subject to possible enforcement actions by the City of Santa Ana.