

## Landscaped Medians

### Background

Landscaped medians, when installed correctly and properly maintained, add aesthetic appeal and value to a neighborhood and community. Presently, the City has no specific standards regarding this potential element of a development and thus, review on a case by case basis with no baseline to check against. Thus, if the City Council is open to seeing this type of improvement in a public road right-of-way, Staff would suggest compiling a standard detail or specification or similar document to provide guidance to developers (and a baseline of expectations for a landscaped median) and assist Staff with review of such an element should it be included as part of a proposed development.

### General considerations

- **Groundcover.**
  - The use of woodchip mulch or other forms of mulch should be required. While this material does breakdown over time and will need to be periodically replenished, it provides multiple benefits to plants. Mulch helps to moderate soil temperatures, helps to retain soil moisture, and as it breaks down, acts as a slow release fertilizer adding nutrients back into the soil. A proper amount of mulch will also help limit weed growth.
  - A median is a harsh growing environment for many plants, including trees, with compacted soils, limited rooting space, and higher soil temperatures. Allowing landscape rock as ground cover would only exacerbate these harsh growing conditions. Due to these concerns, landscape rock is not permitted in parking lot islands, which function much like a center median would function.
- **Vegetation.**
  - If the median is to be irrigated, than turf grass would be acceptable. If the median is non-irrigated, than a xeriscape landscape would be more appropriate. This could consist of native grasses and wildflowers, potentially interspersed with larger rocks (e.g. boulders). These plantings would need to comply with the vision clearance requirements to ensure there are unobstructed views of oncoming traffic, pedestrians, cyclists, etc.
  - If native grasses and wildflowers are utilized, there should be a maintained border of woodchip mulch (or other form or organic mulch) around the perimeter of the median to demonstrate that the plantings/landscape were designed and are being maintained.
- **Depressed Swales.**
  - The City should encourage a depressed swale as opposed to a raised median. This would help with stormwater management by providing an opportunity for infiltration of runoff of rain water and snowmelt.
- **Maintenance Agreement.**
  - Generally speaking, these type of element or improvement is only proposed when there will be a Home Owners Association (HOA) for the neighborhood. As this would be a private improvement in a public right-of-way, there needs to be a documented understanding that ongoing and future maintenance of a landscaped median would be responsibility of the HOA, not the City. A Maintenance Agreement or similar document should be required and recorded against each of the lots within a proposed subdivision that clearly outlines the maintenance responsibilities of the HOA.