



Community & Economic Development Department
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Planning Division

CULTURAL HERITAGE BOARD MEETING DATE: MARCH 17, 2021
AGENDA ITEM NO.: 7

DISCUSSION ITEM

<i>Case Numbers</i>	Not Applicable
<i>Request</i>	Discussion regarding the use of artificial turf within historic Districts
<i>Project Location</i>	Citywide
<i>Ward</i>	All
<i>Staff Planner</i>	Scott Watson, Historic Preservation Officer 951-826-5507 swatson@riversideca.gov

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the Cultural Heritage Board receive and file this report on using artificial turf within historic districts.

BACKGROUND

On March 20, 2019, the Cultural Heritage Board approved a Certificate of Appropriateness (P18-0900) for the construction a new single-family residence with an Accessory Dwelling Unit at 2470 Mission Inn Avenue.

In compliance with a Condition of Approval, on June 25, 2020 the applicant submitted, for staff approval, a landscape plan indicating artificial turf to be installed within the front and side yard. Staff reviewed the proposal and approved it, in part, because using artificial turf is reversible, allowing a future property owner to install a grass lawn or water efficient landscape, if so desired. Staff found the artificial turf consistent with Title 20 and the *Citywide Residential Historic District Design Guidelines* that states "[t]he traditional character of residential front and side yards should be preserved." Staff also found the proposal consistent with the Secretary of the Interior Standards, which specifies "new construction will not destroy historic materials, features and spatial relationships that characterize the property."

At the December 16, 2020 Cultural Heritage Board (CHB) meeting (Exhibit 1), a public comment was received regarding Staff approval of the use of artificial turf at 2470 Mission Inn Avenue (Exhibit 2), a non-contributor to the Seventh Street East Historic District.

CHB requested a discussion on the use of artificial turf within historic districts be added to the next agenda. On January 20, 2021, CHB initiated a discussion on use of artificial turf and the discussion was continued to the next agenda due the absence of Board Member Brown (Exhibit 3).

DISCUSSION

State Regulations

In 2015, Governor Brown issued a statewide mandate which limited the amount of grass in the front, rear, and side yard to 25% of the combined landscaping square footage for new construction. Assembly Bill (AB) 1164 (Exhibit 4), was passed by the State Legislature on September 11, 2015 and signed into law on October 9, 2015.

AB 1164 prohibits municipalities from enacting or enforcing any ordinance or regulation that prohibits the installation of drought tolerant landscaping, synthetic grass, or artificial turf on residential properties. However, the bill does allow municipalities to impose reasonable restrictions that do not effectively prohibit the use of artificial turf.

Title 20 of the Riverside Municipal Code

The approval of landscaping within an historic district is regulated under Section 20.25.030 - Administrative Certificate of Appropriateness in Title 20 (Exhibit 5). This Section specifies that the Historic Preservation Officer, or Qualified Designee, may administratively approve, approve with conditions, refer to the Board, or deny a Certificate of Appropriateness as follows:

- B. For all cultural resources, except designated landmarks:
 - 4. Removal or alteration of landscape features, such as walkways, planter walls, fountains, and in certain circumstances mature foliage, that contribute to the historic character of the property but are not designated or listed as contributing to a designated resource.
- C. For non-contributing features and non-contributors in a Historic District, all actions except:
 - 1. Demolition.
 - 2. New and in-fill construction.
 - 3. Large additions (increasing floor area by 100 percent or more).
 - 4. Increasing the number of stories (e.g., adding a second story to a single-story structure).

Title 20 provides that landscaping within a historic district, at contributors and non-contributors alike, is to be reviewed administratively by Staff. Projects are reviewed in accordance with the "Principles and Standards of Site Development and Design Review" specified in Section 20.25.050. This includes consistency the with the *Citywide Residential Historic District Design Guidelines*.

Citywide Residential Historic District Design Guidelines

Landscaping within historic districts is covered in Chapter 10 (Landscaping Design Guidelines) of the *Citywide Residential Historic District Design Guidelines* (Guidelines) (Exhibit 6). The Landscape Design Guidelines "encourage designs that respect the architecture and placement of structures on the site and in the neighborhood."

The Design Guidelines address landscape improvements visible from the street including streetscape/public right-of-way, the front yard, and side yard areas which are openly exposed to the street.

As it relates to the front yard, the Guidelines state:

- The traditional character of residential front and side yards should be preserved. These areas should be reserved for planting materials and lawn. Paving and nonporous ground coverings should be minimized.

Although the Guidelines encourage front yards to be reserved for planting materials and lawn, it is not required. Staff found that the use of artificial turf is consistent with the Guidelines as follows:

- It maintains the visual character of the residential front yard, as viewed from the public right-of-way.
- It is a porous ground covering, as encouraged by the Guidelines
- Its use respects the structure's setback from the street and its relationship to the surrounding neighborhood.

Use of Artificial Turf in Historic Districts

The City has not received a lot of requests to use artificial turf in historic districts. The precedent to allow artificial turf in historic districts was set in 2008 when the Historic Preservation Officer issued an over-the-counter approval for artificial turf at 5036 Brockton Avenue (Exhibit 2) as part of a re-landscaping project. A determination was made that the artificial turf is an acceptable landscape material, particularly during prolonged and recurring drought periods in California.

This same determination was made for the property at 2470 Mission Inn Avenue.

EXHIBITS LIST

1. Cultural Heritage Board Minutes – December 16, 2020
2. Site Photos
3. Cultural Heritage Board Minutes – January 20, 2021
4. Assembly Bill 1164
5. Section 20.25.030 of the Riverside Municipal Code
6. Chapter 10 of the *Citywide Residential Historic District Design Guidelines*

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Approved by:	Mary Kopaskie-Brown, City Planner