

Draft Policy Plan Amendment Text—Natural Landscaping—Public Facilities
October 2, 2018

Introduction

A group of county staff members, led by the Urban Forest Management Division, developed recommendations in 2007 for a number of efforts to implement natural landscaping at county facilities (both for new projects and existing facilities). The team developed the recommendation below (in blue type) for the addition of a new Policy Plan objective (and related policies) to address natural landscaping for county facilities. This document presents the 2007 recommendation as well as another option that could be considered to incorporate within the Policy Plan support for natural landscaping for public facilities.

Recommendation from 2007

Draft Fairfax County Natural Landscaping Policy (September 2007)

On reviewing the policy plan language, it seems that the best place to insert natural landscaping is under Fairfax County Comprehensive Plan, Policy Plan, Public Facilities, Countywide Objectives and Policies, **new** objective 6:

Objective 6: Use environmentally-friendly techniques and Natural Landscaping methods where practical to minimize resource consumption, reduce stormwater runoff, and decrease life-cycle maintenance requirements for public facilities and sites.

Policy a: Adopt Natural Landscaping practices as generally promoted by the US Environmental Protection Agency for use at all Fairfax County public facilities.

Policy b: Plan and design new facilities and sites using Natural Landscaping, Low Impact Development (LID), and other similar practices or methods.

Policy c: Consider modifying or retrofitting existing facilities and sites after thorough evaluation, to incorporate Natural Landscaping, LID, and other similar practices or methods to the greatest extent practical.

Policy d: Educate staff on environmentally sound practices such as Natural Landscaping and LID, and encourage a sense of stewardship of natural resources at all levels of County employment.

Policy e: Educate the public about environmentally sound practices such as Natural Landscaping, LID, and the stewardship of natural resources in Fairfax County.

[Note: The intent of the natural landscaping efforts at the federal level is spelled out pretty well in the EPA source materials at <http://www.epa.gov/glnpo/greenacres/toolkit/chap1.html> :

“Local officials are in a position to advocate natural landscaping and bring its benefits to their communities. Local governments demonstrate the benefits by using native plant materials on government owned and managed lands. Government officials can amend comprehensive plans and adopt ordinances to promote the appreciation and use of natural landscapes. Citizen education about the benefits of natural landscaping can provide a powerful incentive, especially if government officials can point to pilot projects of their own.”]

Alternative Approach for Consideration

The alternative approach presented below would also add a new Objective 6 and related policies to the Public Facilities section of the Policy Plan, within the countywide objectives and policies, as the concept is broadly applicable to all public facilities and not limited to any particular category of facility. In comparison to the 2007 proposal, the objective statement would focus more broadly and succinctly on environmentally-sensitive public facility design, retrofits and maintenance, recognizing within a supporting policy that natural landscaping would be one component of such an approach (along with green building design and low impact development practices). There would also be the addition of a definition of “natural landscaping” as opposed to a reference to federal guidance. It is noted that there are already Policy Plan definitions for green building and low impact development. Finally, because Policy Plan text is intended to inform land use decisions about the built and natural environment and the extent to which the location, character and extent of a proposed public facility would be substantially in accord with the comprehensive plan, policies supporting programmatic efforts relating to education and outreach are not suggested.

ADD: Fairfax County Comprehensive Plan, 2017 Edition, Policy Plan, Public Facilities, as amended through July 25, 2017, page 4:

Objective 6: Design, retrofit and maintain public facilities and sites in an environmentally-sensitive manner.

Policy a. Apply, within the design of public facilities and their associated sites, low impact development (LID) practices and natural landscaping methods where feasible to minimize resource consumption, reduce stormwater runoff and decrease life-cycle maintenance requirements.

Policy b. Consider retrofitting and maintaining existing facilities and sites with natural landscaping and LID methods/practices.

Policy c. Apply green building practices within the design of public facilities.

ADD: Fairfax County Comprehensive Plan, 2017 Edition, Policy Plan, Glossary, as amended through March 20, 2018, page 11:

NATURAL LANDSCAPING: A landscaping approach through which the aesthetic and environmental functions of landscapes installed in the built environment are improved, and through which natural areas are restored, by preserving and recreating land features and native plant communities. Sustainable landscapes are formed which seek to protect and restore natural ecosystem components, maximize the use of native plants, remove invasive plant species, reduce turf grass and chemical inputs, improve soils and retain rain water on-site. In natural areas only locally occurring native plant species are used to provide the greatest possible ecological benefits and improve environmental conditions, while in built landscapes non-invasive exotic plants may be used where appropriate, but the majority of plant cover is composed of native species that support wildlife.

EXHIBIT 5