

## Definitions and Criteria of Non-Functional Turf: Examples from the Western United States

Community/ Utility	State	Non-Functional Turf Definition	Functional Turf Definition	Notes
<a href="#">Albuquerque Bernalillo County Water Utility Authority</a>	NM	<p>"Irrigated grass areas not suitable for human recreation, pet activities (or community events). Specifically, areas that meet one or more of the criteria below:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Adjacent to and within all parking lots;</li> <li>2. That has any single dimension of eight (8) feet or less;</li> <li>3. Located in the public right of way (e.g., in-between roadways such as in center medians and roundabouts, and areas between the sidewalk and the street);</li> <li>4. With a 25% slope or greater;</li> <li>5. Located at the entry to and/or exit of properties (entry and exit defined as any area within 25 ft. width perimeter of building footprint)*;</li> <li>6. Areas that are not accessible by pathways and/or are restricted by physical barriers *;</li> <li>7. Within golf course non-playing areas (i.e., out-of-bounds, maintenance areas, perimeter landscape areas, driving ranges, and between tees and fairway)"</li> </ol>	<p>"Areas exempt from the nonfunctional turfgrass definition though they may fall under the above categories are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i) Single family residential properties;</li> <li>ii) Turfgrass directly beneath tree canopies;</li> <li>iii) Turfgrass within cemeteries used for visitation and gathering;</li> <li>iv) Turfgrass in sports fields that is regularly used for recreational or gathering purposes, pet activities (i.e., pet relief or pet play areas), and/or civic / community events." </li></ol>	
<a href="#">Arizona Municipal Water Users Association</a>	AZ	<p>"If your grass serves no practical purpose and is difficult to water, it is probably non-functional. Those areas tend to be ornamental or for looks only and are typically found in front yards, along streets, or entrances to HOAs. Non-functional grass areas have lots of curves and unique angles, which makes it hard to irrigate efficiently with standard irrigation equipment, which causes runoff. Overspray or runoff can lead to paint, wall, asphalt, or other infrastructure damage."</p>	<p>"Functional grass is actively used as a recreation space for people and pets and is often found in backyards, side yards, and HOA common areas. These areas tend to be flat with straight edges, making it easy to irrigate and limiting water waste. Functional grass is easily accessible, usually by a sidewalk or pathway.</p> <p>Functional grass areas are sometimes used for stormwater retention purposes."</p>	

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<a href="#">Aurora</a>	CO		"Functional means an athletic field, picnic area, something that has a recreational component use to it, but not for aesthetic purposes"	Aurora passed a Water Conservation Ordinance in 2022 that restricts all turf that is primarily used for aesthetics, becoming the first city in the state to ban new grass that isn't "functional."
<a href="#">Boulder</a>	CO	"The definition of nonfunctional refers largely to grass lining streets and sidewalks and decorative turf around buildings that are not designated as single-family homes."	"In order to be considered functional, regardless of use, irrigated grass has to be located at least 10 feet away from a street and at a slope of less than 25 percent."	
<a href="#">Boulder City</a>	NV	"grass lining streets and sidewalks and decorative turf around buildings that are not designated as single-family homes."	In order to be considered functional, regardless of use, irrigated grass has to be located at least 10 feet away from a street and at a slope of less than 25%.	
<a href="#">California Assembly Bill (AB) 1572</a>	CA	"Any turf that is not functional turf, and includes turf located within street rights-of-way and parking lots."	"A ground cover surface of turf located in a recreational use area or community space. Turf enclosed by fencing or other barriers to permanently preclude human access for recreation or assembly is not functional turf."	
<a href="#">Castle Rock</a>	CO	"Areas of grass turf where play or recreational activities cannot take place."		

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<a href="#">Cheyenne</a>	WY	"An area of turf grass or lawn that is not used regularly for human recreational purposes or domestic animal use. Nonfunctional turf grass or lawns include Kentucky bluegrasses, fescues or similar sod-forming grasses requiring half an inch or more of supplemental watering per week during hot, dry periods."	"An area of turf grass or lawn that is used regularly for human recreational purposes or domestic animal use. Functional turf grass or lawns include Kentucky bluegrasses, fescues or similar sod-forming grasses requiring half an inch or more of supplemental watering per week during hot, dry periods."	
<a href="#">City of Tempe</a>	AZ	<p>Grass areas with any single dimension of eight (8) feet or less.</p> <p>Grass areas exceeding a 4:1, or twenty-five percent (25%), slope.</p> <p>Grass areas that are not accessible by paved pathways and/or are restricted by physical barriers that prohibit accessibility.</p> <p>Grass areas installed closer than ten (10) feet to a street and/or in front entryways to residential neighborhoods or subdivisions where other recreational amenities do not exist.</p> <p>Grass areas that are not utilized for active or programmed recreational purposes and/or for drainage conveyances, storm basins, or erosion control.</p>		
<a href="#">Coachella Valley Water District</a>	CA	"Turf that is solely ornamental and not regularly used for human recreational purposes or for civic or community events. Non-functional turf does not include sports fields and turf that is regularly used for human recreational purposes or for civic or community events."	"... Sports fields and turf that is regularly used for human recreational purposes or for civic or community events."	Definition is taken from the State's emergency regulation (many communities in California follow this definition).

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<a href="#">Colorado General Assembly House Bill (HB) 22- 1151</a>	CO	<p>... much of the turf in the state is nonessential and is located in areas that receive little, if any, use. Examples of nonessential turf include turf used for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- medians</li> <li>- areas adjacent to open spaces or transportation corridors</li> <li>- areas sloped with more than a 25 percent grade</li> <li>- storm water drainage and detention basins</li> <li>- commercial, institutional, or industrial properties</li> <li>- common elements in a common interest community</li> <li>- portions of residential yards</li> </ul>		
<a href="#">New Mexico House Bill (HB) 352</a>	NM	<p>Irrigated turf grass that has no recreational purpose or is primarily decorative, including turf in or around medians, roundabouts, parking lots, landscape strips, between the sidewalk and the street, commercial properties and industrial properties.</p>		
<a href="#">Jordan Valley Water Conservancy District</a>	UT	<p>Nonfunctional turf is grass that no one ever walks on or otherwise uses in the street medians, housing developments, and office parks.</p>		<p>Derived from Southern Nevada Water Authority's definition, which classifies ornamental lawn as any lawn that is placed in areas without a strong functional benefit.</p>
<a href="#">Metropolitan Water District of Southern California</a>	CA	<p>"Ornamental grass that serves no recreational or community purpose."</p>		

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<a href="#">Santa Clara Valley Water District</a>	CA	<p>Non-functional turf includes, but is not limited to:</p> <p>Streetscape turf:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- along private or public streets, including turf that is owned and maintained by the city/municipality (e.g., mow strips on either side of the street)</li> <li>- along streetscape sidewalks (narrow spaces of turf that line the sidewalk)</li> <li>- along driveways and parking lots</li> <li>- within community, and business streetscape frontage areas</li> <li>- within medians and roundabouts</li> </ul> <p>Turf that is solely ornamental</p> <p>Other turf that is not functional turf, as defined (to the right)</p>	<p>Functional turf is defined as turf grass that is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Needed to serve a human function, including use for recreational purposes, civic or community events</li> <li>- on the property of a single family home</li> <li>- on the property of a park used for sport, gathering, or recreation</li> <li>- on a golf course used directly for sport (driving ranges, chipping, and putting greens, tee boxes, greens, fairways, and rough)</li> <li>- on a school field used for sport, gathering, or recreation</li> <li>- on a sports field</li> <li>- needed for pet relief at veterinarian offices, boarding facilities and animal shelters</li> <li>- within cemeteries used for visitation and gathering</li> <li>- a species of turf that has a plant factor &lt; 0.3 per the California Code of Regulations Section 491 Title 23</li> <li>- watered directly beneath tree canopies and shrubs.</li> </ul>	
<a href="#">Santa Fe</a>	NM	<p>"Grass that is not drought resistant and only ornamental"</p>		
<a href="#">Southern Nevada Water Authority</a>	NV	<p>" An irrigated grass area not providing functional use. Areas of nonfunctional turf include, but are not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Streetscape turf: Grass located along public or private streets, streetscape sidewalks, driveways and parking lots, including turf within a community, park and</li> </ul>	<p>"Functional turf: An irrigated grass area that provides a recreational benefit to the community and is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Located at least 10 feet from a street, installed on slopes less than 25 percent and not installed within street medians,</li> </ul>	

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		<p>business streetscape frontage areas, medians, and roundabouts.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Frontage, courtyard, interior and building-adjacent turf: Grass in front of, between, behind or otherwise adjacent to a building or buildings located on a property not zoned exclusively for single-family residence, including maintenance and common areas.</li> <li>- Certain HOA-managed landscape areas: Turf managed by a homeowner association that does not provide a recreational benefit to the community or that otherwise does not qualify as functional turf, regardless of property zoning."</li> </ul>	<p>along streetscapes or at the front of entryways to parks, commercial sites, neighborhoods, or subdivisions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Active/programmed recreation turf, athletic fields, designated-use-area turf, golf course play areas, some pet relief turf, playground turf or resident area turf.</li> </ul> <p>Active/programmed recreation turf: Grass used for recreation that is 1,500 contiguous square feet or greater; co-located with facilities; and located at least 10 feet from a street or interior-facing parking lot unless the turf area is at least 30 feet in all dimensions or immediately adjacent to an athletic field.</p> <p>Athletic field turf: Grass used for sports or physical education that is 1,500 contiguous square feet or greater; not less than 30 feet in any dimension; and located at a school, daycare, religious institution, recreation center, senior center, park or water park. Athletic field turf may be located less than 10 feet from a street or interior-facing parking lot if the contiguous turf area is at least 30 feet in all dimensions.</p> <p>Designated use area: Grass designated for special use at cemeteries and mortuaries.</p> <p>Golf course play area: Grass in driving</p>	
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			<p>ranges, chipping and putting greens, tee boxes, greens, fairways and rough.</p> <p>Pet relief area: Grass at a property providing commercial and retail services for pets, such as veterinarian and boarding facilities. The area must not exceed 200 square feet.</p> <p>Playground turf: Grass in designated play areas with playground amenities, including but not limited to slides, swings and climbing structures on homeowner association owned/managed property or at a public park, water park, school, daycare, recreation center, senior center or religious institution. Playground turf may be located less than 10 feet from a street if fenced.</p> <p>Resident area turf: Grass up to 150 square feet per dwelling unit at multi-family residential properties, multi-family mixed use properties, or assisted living and rehabilitation centers used by tenants for recreation or leisure. May not be located in parking lots, streetscapes or other non-accessible areas."</p>	
<a href="#">St. George</a>	UT	<p>"The program specifically targets the removal of ornamental, or non-functional grass, that serves no other purpose than to help a property look more attractive and occasionally be mowed."</p>		

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<p><a href="#">Tucson</a></p>	<p>AZ</p>	<p>Conversational definition: “Any irrigated grass area not providing functional use, such as grass along streets in strip malls, shopping centers, and businesses, and also turf managed by an HOA (a homeowners association) that does not provide recreational value for people or pets.”</p> <p>According to Ordinance 12005, "ornamental turf" is defined as:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Grass areas with any single dimension of eight (8) feet or less.</li> <li>b. Grass areas exceeding a 4:1, or twenty-five percent (25%), slope.</li> <li>c. Grass areas that are not accessible by paved pathways and/or are restricted by physical barriers that prohibit accessibility.</li> <li>d. Grass areas installed closer than ten feet to a street and/or in front entryways to residential neighborhoods or subdivisions unless associated with active recreational activities.</li> <li>e. Grass areas that are not utilized for active recreational purposes.</li> </ol>	<p>"Non-functional turf ban does not apply to new single-family neighborhoods, parks, school playgrounds, or golf courses."</p>	
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