

STAFF REPORT
CITY OF PALM DESERT
RESOURCE PRESERVATION & ENHANCEMENT COMMITTEE

MEETING DATE: February 26, 2024

SUBMITTED BY: Shawn Muir, Community Services Manager

REQUEST: Provide Staff with Direction on Developing an Artificial Turf Policy

Recommendation

Provide staff with direction on developing a policy on the use of artificial turf on City-owned properties, rights of way, and parks.

Background

On December 14, 2023, in response to multiple questions and suggestions from the public in the past, Staff conducted research and provided a presentation to the City Council regarding the use of artificial/synthetic turf.

Artificial turf is a landscaping option that has been praised for its benefits in beautifying landscaped areas while reducing water consumption, however there are some drawbacks to its use compared with natural grass. The City has addressed the topic in several instances, however a formal policy on the use of artificial turf has not been adopted. Staff provided the attached presentation on the history of the City's stance on this matter, other municipalities' and organizations' policies, and the known benefits and drawbacks of using artificial turf.

The City Council Study Session facilitated a robust discussion on the use of artificial turf, including the following topics:

- Clarification on the “informal policy” of using natural grass on recreational turf and converting non-recreational turf to desert landscape
- Use of artificial turf in experimental areas – a small area was installed on an El Paseo median
- Adverse impact on water supply as a result of “forever chemicals”
- Not favorable in areas where people and pets are recreating, but may be aesthetically pleasing in landscaped areas such as medians and may help control dust
- No good reason to use “plastic carpeting” in Palm Desert
- Frequency of replacement may be extended by increasing maintenance
- Base material impacts the heat that is emitted from the surface

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- Opportunities to provide aesthetically pleasing landscapes without the use of artificial turf such as a variety of desert plants and inorganic material
- “Artificial” does not match the aesthetic that we strive for in Palm Desert

Staff intends to present a policy for the use of artificial turf in public parks and rights-of-way for consideration at a future City Council meeting. Staff is requesting that RPEC members provide direction on the development of the artificial turf policy and its content.

Fiscal Analysis

There is no cost associated with development of the updated landscaping policies to reflect specific use of artificial turf. Any cost associated with this action is dependent on the policy that is adopted.



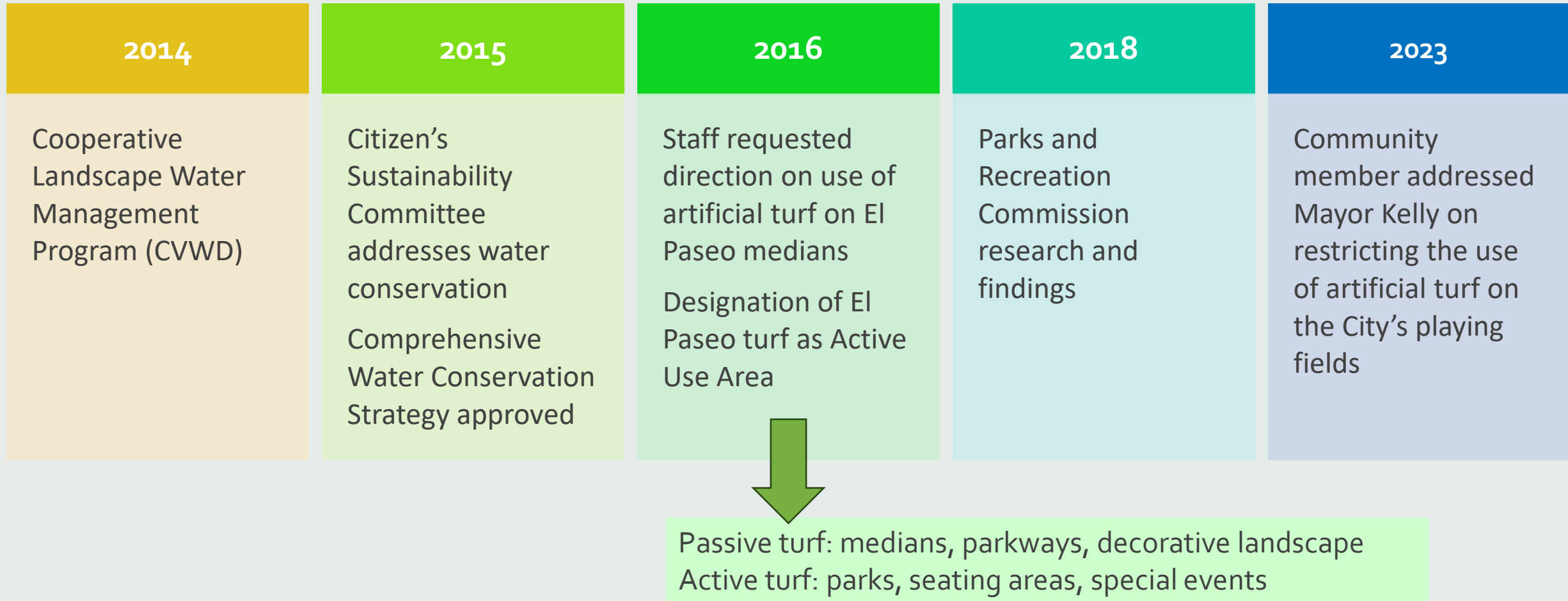
Use of Artificial Turf on City Property

City Council Study Session
12/14/2023

Agenda

- Background
- Research
- Pros and Cons
- Current Informal Policy and next steps

Timeline





NFL Injuries

National Football League Players Association (NFLPA) calling for a return to natural turf

Turf Removal Projects



Removal of turf in medians on Country Club Drive, between Portola Avenue and Cook Street



Removal of turf in median on Cook street, between Country Club Drive and Hovley Lane East.



Removal of turf around the Civic Center Campus on Fred Waring Drive and San Pablo Avenue



Removal of turf along the Haystack parkway from Highway 74 to Heliotrope Drive



Removal of passive turf at Hovley Soccer Park

Community Organizations and other Municipalities

PSUSD

- No formal policy; currently discussing policy development
- Installed limited artificial turf at some schools
- Not used for sports

DSUSD

- No formal policy
- Not used
- Concerns about heat, vandalism, and ongoing maintenance

Community Organizations and other Municipalities

City of La Quinta

- No formal policy
- Limited use in medians
- Still requires heavy maintenance

City of Indian Wells

- No formal policy
- Used on several medians, but not installed/planned for recreational spaces
- High cost - \$50,000 for one small median
- Must be well-maintained but has lasted over 10 years
- Difficult to dispose

City of Indio

- No formal policy
- Limited use around monument signs
- Fading led to full replacement within 2 years



Community Organizations and other Municipalities

- National Recreation and Parks Association
- California Parks and Recreation Society
 - Discussion boards
 - Stormwater mitigation
 - Athletic field conversion



Maintenance

Artificial Turf

- Debris removal
- Rinsing
- Brushing
- Replenishing base



Maintenance

Natural Grass

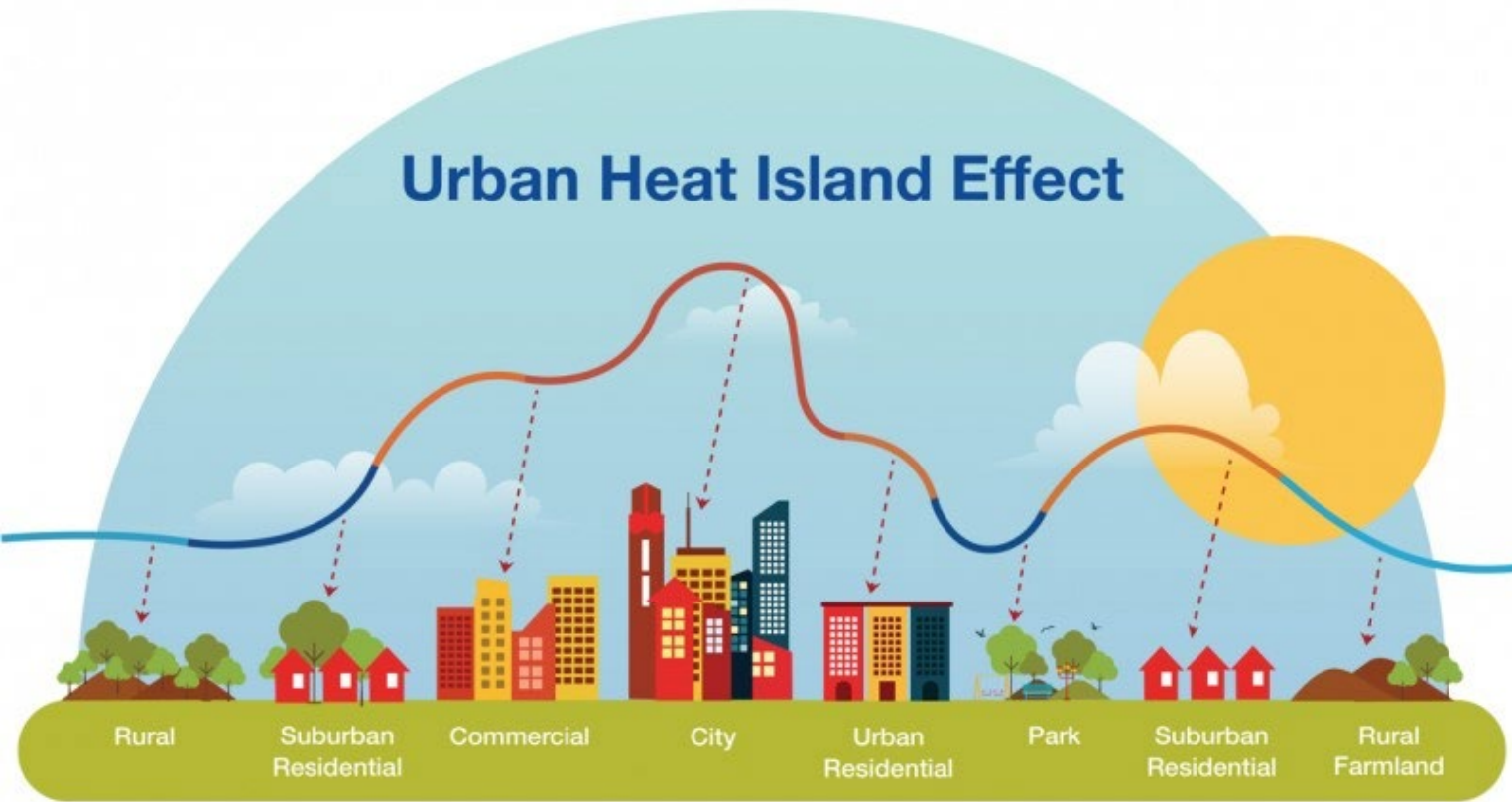
- Mowing
- Watering
- Overseeding
- Fertilizing



Cost

- Artificial turf has a higher up-front cost and lower overall maintenance
 - Cannot patch worn or damaged areas
 - More practical for small areas
- Larger areas are easier and less expensive to maintain well with natural grass
 - Overseeding and fertilizer \$1,600 per acre annually (currently ~75 acres of turf)
 - Watering

Urban Heat Island Effect



Other Factors

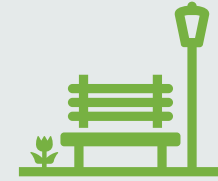
- Appearance, smell, feel
- Water consumption
- Heat
- Stormwater
- Allergies
- Sanitation

Policy is currently informal

Potential policy for use of artificial turf in City of Palm Desert public rights-of-way, landscaped areas, and parks



Conduct additional research



Present findings to Parks and Recreation Committee and Resource Preservation and Enhancement Committee



Work with legal counsel to develop policy



Present for consideration at a future City Council meeting



Thank you

Questions?