



# City of Coral Gables Planning and Zoning Staff Report

Applicant: City of Coral Gables

Application: **Zoning Code Text Amendments – Athletic Fields Artificial Turf**

Public Hearing: Planning and Zoning Board

**Date & Time: February 8, 2023; 6:00 – 9:00 p.m.**

Location: City Commission Chambers, City Hall,  
405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, Florida 33134

## 1. APPLICATION REQUEST

The City of Coral Gables is requesting review and consideration of the following:

*An Ordinance of the City Commission of Coral Gables, Florida providing for text amendments to the City of Coral Gables Official Zoning Code by amending Article 6, "Landscape," Section 6-103, "Landscape general requirements," and Article 16, "Definitions," providing a definition, requirements, and review processes to utilize artificial turf within athletic fields in the Special Use (S) Zoning district; providing conditional use review and approval when such artificial turf athletic field are visible from the street; clarifying minimal usage and requirements of artificial turf; and providing for a repealer provision, severability clause, codification, and providing for an effective date.*

The request requires three public hearings, including review and recommendation by the Planning and Zoning Board, and 1st and 2nd Reading before the City Commission.

## 2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Staff has prepared Zoning Code text amendments for landscape regulations and general requirements to allow the installment of artificial turf for athletic fields and grassed areas actively used for sports when not seen from a street. Otherwise, the use of artificial turf on athletic fields will require Conditional Use approval. Conditional use review requires review by the Development Review Committee (DRC), preliminary approval by the Board of Architects, Planning & Zoning Board recommendation, and final approval from the City Commission.

Artificial turf emulates natural grass and is durable with low maintenance. Water is not essential to maintain artificial turf – only periodically to avoid dust and odors – and reduces water usage on the site.

From an environmental standpoint, artificial turf reduces air pollution since these surfaces do not require maintenance from gas-powered gardening equipment like mowers, edgers, and blowers. Artificial turf does not require harsh fertilizers, herbicides, and pesticides to prevent insects and remain beautiful. Artificial turf is not susceptible to diseases, weeds, pests, germs, and bacteria.

Artificial turf is capable of weathering foot traffic on athletic fields that may cause unplanned bare spots, ruts, and paths. By design, this type of surface evades puddling from rainstorms and flooding, as well as dips or humps on the landscape that could cause injuries while playing, running, and walking.

**Case Studies**

Several cities – the City of Doral, Village of Pinecrest, City of Homestead, City of Miami, City of Miami Beach, and City of Surfside – in Miami-Dade County allow the installment of artificial turf on athletic fields. These cities require the installment of artificial turf to be permeable and integrate natural infill components over synthetic materials as a form of best management practices for landscaping. In addition, these cities require artificial turf to be maintained in an attractive and clean state. Finally, these cities require installing artificial turf that is lead free. Excerpts of these regulations are provided in Attachment A.

**3. PROPOSED ZONING CODE TEXT AMENDMENT**

The proposed Zoning Code text amendments are provided below in ~~striketrough~~/underline format.

**ARTICLE 6. LANDSCAPE**

Section 6-103. Landscape general requirements.

\*\*\*

A. The following are general requirements that are applicable to all rights-of-way (r.o.w.) and private properties within the City, unless exempted herein:

\*\*\*

6. Plant materials.

\*\*\*

b. Vegetation requirements specified herein shall be installed in accordance with all of the following unless noted otherwise:

\*\*\*

vii. Artificial Turf. Areas of recyclable artificial turf require a permit and are allowed as a component of the overall design for landscape requirements as follows:

- 1) SFR and MF1 Zoning Districts: allowed within the rear yard, with an acceptable buffer, as determined by the Public Works Landscape Services Division. All other locations may be approved only if site conditions limit landscape options, as determined by the Public Works Landscape Services Division.
- 2) Special Use (S) Zoning Districts: allowed within athletic fields when not visible from any street. Additionally, a minimum buffer width of five (5) feet shall be provided with landscape to provide water drainage. Other locations within this zoning district visible to the street, require Conditional Use review and approval pursuant to Section 14-203.
- 3) All other zoning districts: not allowed at ground-level. Other locations may be allowed in accordance with the open space requirements of the Zoning Code.

All artificial turf shall resemble the natural color of grass and be installed and maintained in accordance with all of the following:

- Artificial turf may be utilized in open joints of pavement in any location and shall provide a buffer to separate the artificial turf from other landscaping;
- Plant-based and natural infill materials shall be utilized to the greatest extent possible, such as soybean oil in the backing, sugarcane in the thatch, and crushed walnut shell for the infill;
- Synthetic materials, such as polypropylene, polyethylene, latex, and polyurethane shall be minimized, lead free, and flame resistant;

- Subgrade shall be equipped to provide proper water drainage with an evenly graded, permeable aggregate base that is at least three inches in depth with sufficient space for tree root growth provided;
- Areas containing any pits, tears, marks, discoloration, seam separations, uplifted surfaces or edges, heat degradation, and excessive wear are prohibited.

\*\*\*

**Article 16. Definitions**

**Artificial turf** means a surface intended to imitate grass and composed with natural or recyclable materials and installed as a pervious system.

**4. REVIEW TIMELINE / PUBLIC NOTICE**

**City Review Timeline**

The submitted applications have undergone the following City reviews:

REVIEW COMMITTEES AND BOARDS	DATE
Planning and Zoning Board	02.08.23
City Commission – 1 <sup>st</sup> and 2 <sup>nd</sup> Readings	TBD

The following has been completed to solicit input and provide notice of the Application:

PUBLIC NOTICE	DATE
Legal advertisement	01.27.23
Posted agenda and Staff report on City web page/City Hall	02.03.23

**5. FINDINGS OF FACT**

In accordance with Section 14-212.5 of the Zoning Code, the Planning and Zoning Board shall not recommend adoption of, and the City Commission shall not adopt, text amendments to these land Zoning Code unless the text amendment:

Standard	Staff Evaluation
a. Promotes the public health, safety, and welfare.	The intent of the proposed amendment is to provide a definition, requirements and review processes to utilize artificial turf within athletic fields.
b. Does not permit uses the Comprehensive Plan prohibits in the area affected by the text amendment.	The proposed amendment does not affect any uses permitted in the Comprehensive Plan.
c. Does not allow densities or intensities in excess of the densities and intensities which are permitted by the future land use categories of the affected property.	The proposed text amendment does not allow densities or intensities in excess of what are permitted by the future land uses.
d. Will not cause a decline in the level of service for public infrastructure which is	The proposed text amendment will not affect the level of service for public infrastructure.

the subject of a concurrency requirement to a level of service which is less than the minimum requirements of the Comprehensive Plan.

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| e. Does not directly conflict with any objective or policy of the Comprehensive Plan. | The proposed amendment does not directly conflict with any objective or policy of the Comprehensive Plan. |
|---|---|

**Staff comments:**

The proposed text amendment to Section 6-103.6 of the Zoning Code provides the authority to utilize artificial turf for athletic fields. This granted authority is consistent with the goals, objectives, and policies of the Coral Gables Comprehensive Plan.

Per REC-1.1., the City aspires to “provide quality recreation programs and adequate provision of recreation facilities to meet the needs of residents.” Use of artificial turf will improve the quality and durability of athletic fields used to play sports and other recreational activities. In REC-1.3., “The City shall continue to maintain a high standard of aesthetic quality and improve the appearance of municipal recreation areas and public open spaces.” The authority to utilize artificial turf will fulfill the standard of aesthetic quality and appearance of athletic fields due to its resilience and ability to stay green and appear lush. Policy GRN-1.1.2. states that “The City will adopt a ‘Go Green Initiative’ to implement strategies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions within the City’s borders.” The use of artificial turf meets this policy by reducing the necessity to rely on gas-powered gardening equipment and therefore, will begin eliminating air pollution.

Staff finds that all five of these criteria are **satisfied**.

**6. STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

The Planning and Zoning Division recommends **approval**.

**7. ATTACHMENTS**

- A. Artificial turf regulations in neighboring municipalities.
- B. Legal advertisement published.

Please visit the City’s webpage at [www.coralgables.com](http://www.coralgables.com) to view all Application plans and materials, notices, applicable public comments, minutes, etc. The complete Application and all background information also is on file and available for examination during business hours at the Planning and Zoning Division, 427 Biltmore Way, Suite 201, Coral Gables, Florida 33134.

Respectfully submitted,



Jennifer Garcia, AICP, CNU-A  
City Planner  
City of Coral Gables, Florida

***City of Doral Code of Ordinances***

***Chapter 71 – Landscaping and Buffers / Article II. – Minimum Standards / Division 7. Artificial Turf / Sec. 71-225. – Intent***

(b) Installation. The installation of artificial turf is permitted in the single family and multifamily MF-1 zoning districts and in public parks, private parks, schools, and for recreation purposes.

***Chapter 71 – Landscaping and Buffers / Article II. – Minimum Standards / Division 7. Artificial Turf / Sec. 71-226. Minimum Requirements***

- (a) All artificial turf shall comply with the following minimum requirements:
- a. Artificial turf may be permitted within front, rear and side yards in single family and multifamily (MF-1) zoning districts and is allowed as a component of the overall design for landscape requirements. Artificial turf installed for commercial or recreational purposes shall require a building permit.
  - b. Installation of artificial turf shall only be allowed within the adjacent right-of-way of local or collector streets in residential districts. A "right-of-way" permit must be executed and submitted to the City of Doral Public Works Department. In the event the City of Doral or public utility company conducts work in the public right-of-way adjacent to the lot, the homeowner (including homeowner associations) shall be responsible to reconstruct, restore, or repair the artificial turf in front or abutting upon such property.
  - c. Landscape permit plans shall be provided with artificial turf specifications, sections and details for review and approval by the planning and zoning department. Artificial turf specifications and details shall include percolation rates.
  - d. Applicants shall provide an owner affidavit agreeing to perpetually maintain the artificial turf system in good working conditions in order to ensure that there is continued ground permeability.
  - e. Where artificial turf is utilized for institutional recreational uses (e.g., playgrounds, athletic fields), the artificial turf product installed shall be designed for the intended use and meet the appropriate industry standards.
  - f. The use of rubber infill material shall be prohibited except where artificial turf is utilized for institutional recreational uses (e.g., playgrounds, athletic fields).
  - g. Artificial turf shall be lead free.
  - h. The use of indoor or outdoor plastic or nylon carpeting as a replacement of synthetic turf or natural turf shall be prohibited.

***Village of Pinecrest Code of Ordinances***

***Chapter 30 – Land Development Regulations / Article 4. – Zoning District Regulations / Div. 4.4. – Public and semi-public services (PS) district / 6. Green space and landscaping***

6. Green space. On each lot there shall be provided a green space equal to at least 35 percent of the total lot area. The required green space shall be unencumbered with any structure or off-street parking and shall be landscaped and well maintained with grass, ground cover included within the "Florida-friendly plant database," trees and shrubbery, except that ten percent of any driveway or parking area constructed of open cell unit pavers (turf block) and two percent of any driveway or parking area constructed of brick pavers with a sand and/or gravel sub base or underlayment and any artificial turf provided within a sports field or stadium may be counted as green space.

**Chapter 30 – Land Development Regulations / Article 4. – Zoning District Regulations / Div. 4.4. – Public and private parks and recreational facilities (PR) district / g. Green space and landscaping**

- g. Green space. On each lot there shall be provided a green space equal to at least 35 percent of the total lot area. The required green space shall be unencumbered with any structure or off-street parking and shall be landscaped and well maintained with grass, ground cover included within the "Florida-friendly plant database," trees and shrubbery, except that ten percent of any driveway or parking area constructed of open cell unit pavers (turf block) and two percent of any driveway or parking area constructed of brick pavers with a sand and/or gravel sub base or underlayment and any artificial turf provided within a sports field or stadium may be counted as green space.

**Chapter 30 – Land Development Regulations / Article 6. Environmental Regulations / 6.1 Landscape Regulations / 12. Stormwater retention/detention areas**

- b. Stormwater retention/detention areas shall be planted throughout with native herbaceous facultative plants with the following exceptions:

i. Areas that are designated and actively used for play or picnic areas, overflow parking or sports activities shall be planted with grasses which are very drought tolerant, as well as tolerant of wet soils.

**Homestead Code of Ordinances**

**Part II – Code of the City / Chapter 30 – Zoning / Article 1. In General → Sec. 30-1. Definitions**

Athletic field shall mean a level, open playing area intended to be used for organized team sports such as soccer, baseball, softball, football, or similar, whether natural or artificial turf

**Part II – Code of the City / Chapter 30 – Zoning / Article IV. – Supplemental District Regulations / Division 8. – Special Exceptions / Sec. 30-536.3. - Athletic Field**

The following minimum standards and criteria shall apply to all properties seeking a special exception permit to allow the establishment of an athletic field:

- (1) Permanent restroom facilities shall be provided on-site
- (2) Field lighting shall not be permitted.

(3) If natural turf is utilized the field shall be sodded and an irrigation system installed, in accordance with section 29-6(2).

### ***City of Miami Zoning Code (Miami 21)***

#### ***Appendix B – Waterfront Design Guidelines / Section 7: Hardscape Elements / 7.1 Hardscape***

- i. In proposed playground areas, poured-in-place rubberized play surface and artificial turf may be utilized.

#### ***Article 9. Landscape Requirements / 9.5 Minimum Standards / 9.5.1 Lawn Area (turf)***

- a. Grass areas shall be planted in species well adapted to localized growing conditions in Miami-Dade County. Grass areas may be sodded, plugged, sprigged, hydromulched, or seeded except that solid sod shall be used in swales or other areas subject to erosion. In areas where other than solid sod or grass seed is used, overseeding shall be sown for immediate effect and protection until coverage is otherwise achieved.
- b. Exclusions from maximum permitted lawn areas:
  1. Stabilized grassed area used for parking;
  2. Grassed areas designated on landscape plans and actively used for sports, playgrounds or picnic areas;
  3. Grassed areas in the right-of-way;
  4. Stormwater retention/detention areas planted in grasses which are very drought tolerant, as referenced in the Landscape Manual, as well as tolerant to wet soils.

### ***City of Miami Beach Code of Ordinances***

#### ***Subpart B – Land Development Regulations / Chapter 126 – Landscape Requirements / Sec.126-2. – Definitions***

Grass, artificial: A grass mat manufactured with manmade materials such as polypropylene, polyethylene and installed as a pervious system on a finely graded sand layer over filter fabric on gravel, drainfield rock and on a compacted subgrade.

#### ***Subpart B – Land Development Regulations / Chapter 126 – Landscape Requirements / Sec.126-6. Minimum Standards***

(3) Artificial grass areas may be permitted within required rear yards in single-family zoning districts, in accordance with the following:

- a. Artificial grass shall be allowed as an alternative to lawn grass and shall count towards the maximum lawn area as described in Table A.

- b. Artificial grass shall be installed as a system that is pervious and contributes to storm drainage. The permeability shall be equal to or greater than that of natural grass.
- c. Landscape permit plans shall be provided with artificial grass system specifications, sections and details for review and approval by planning department staff.
- d. Applicants shall provide an owner affidavit agreeing to perpetually maintain the artificial grass system in good working order in order to ensure that there is continued ground permeability.
- e. The artificial grass system shall utilize organic plant-derived and other natural infill components to the maximum extent feasible, including, but not limited to, cork, coconut, corn husk, rice husk, and sand. The use of crumb rubber and other synthetic materials shall be minimized.

***Subpart A – General Ordinances / Chapter 46 – Environment / Article IX. – Use of Fertilizer / Sec. 46-217. – Definitions***

Specialized turf means areas of grass used for golf courses, athletic fields, and high impact areas, and other similar activities

***Subpart A – General Ordinances / Chapter 46 – Environment / Article IX. – Use of Fertilizer / Sec. 46-226. – Golf course, athletic fields, specialized turf, and greenspace requirements***

- b) All new athletic fields and all renovated athletic fields, provided their renovation exceeds 50 percent of its total area, shall meet all the following requirements:
  - 1. Incorporate best management practices for landscaping by including the use of native and Florida-friendly trees, shrubs and ground cover landscaping
  - 2. Incorporate the use of green infrastructure elements and/or low impact development (LID) design in the design of the field's drainage system and in allowing ample, uncompacted areas for tree root growth.
  - 3. Include at minimum a ten-foot low-maintenance zone buffer adjacent to water courses, seawalls and storm drain inlets
- d) Requests for exceptions to the requirements set forth in subsections 46-226 (a), (b), and (c) shall be submitted in writing to the environment and sustainability director or his/her designee, detailing the project's design and details, demonstrating that good faith effort was made to achieve substantial compliance with the applicable requirements, and explaining what hardship would be incurred if a proposed exception or variance is not granted. The environment and sustainability director or his/her designee will have discretion to approve or reject exemption requests on a case-by-case basis.
- e) All renovations to any golf courses, athletic fields, and parks shall provide a management plan with fertilization strategies, chemical-mixes and distribution/utilization regimes to reduce nitrogen and phosphorus-related nutrient load.

***City of Surfside Code of Ordinances***

***Chapter 90 – Zoning / Article VIII. – Landscape Requirements / Sec. 90-89. – Plant Material / 90-89.8***



## ***Turf***

(4) The following percentages shall apply to turf areas:

- a. No more than 80 percent of the landscape area for single-family and duplex dwellings may be in turf grass.
- b. No more than 60 percent of the landscape area for multifamily dwellings may be in turf grass.
- c. No more than 50 percent of the landscape area for other development uses may be in turf grass, notwithstanding the use of artificial turf for the purpose of municipal athletic fields.

**MIAMI-DADE**

**STATE OF FLORIDA  
COUNTY OF MIAMI-DADE:**

Before the undersigned authority personally appeared ROSANA SALGADO, who on oath says that he or she is the LEGAL CLERK, Legal Notices of the Miami Daily Business Review f/k/a Miami Review, of Miami-Dade County, Florida; that the attached copy of advertisement, being a Legal Advertisement of Notice in the matter of

CITY OF CORAL GABLES - PUBLIC HEARING LOCAL PLANNING AGENCY / PLANNING AND ZONING BOARD - FEB. 8, 2023

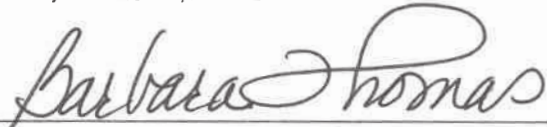
in the XXXX Court, was published in a newspaper by print in the issues of Miami Daily Business Review f/k/a Miami Review on

01/27/2023

Affiant further says that the newspaper complies with all legal requirements for publication in chapter 50, Florida Statutes.

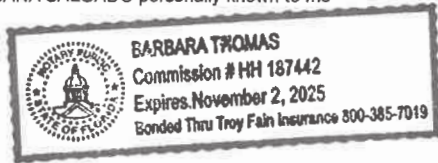



Sworn to and subscribed before me this 27 day of JANUARY, A.D. 2023



(SEAL)

ROSANA SALGADO personally known to me

**CITY OF CORAL GABLES, FLORIDA  
NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING  
HYBRID MEETING ON ZOOM PLATFORM**

<b>City Public Hearing Dates/Times</b>	<b>Local Planning Agency / Planning and Zoning Board Wednesday, February 8, 2023, 6:00 p.m.</b>
<b>Location</b>	<b>City Commission Chamber, City Hall 405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, FL 33134</b>

# City of Coral Gables

2/8/2023

**PUBLIC NOTICE** is hereby given that the City of Coral Gables, Florida, Local Planning Agency (LPA)/ Planning and Zoning Board (PZB) will conduct Public Hearing on the following:

1. An Ordinance of the City Commission of Coral Gables, Florida amending the Future Land Use Map of the City of Coral Gables Comprehensive Plan pursuant to Zoning Code Article 14, "Process," Section 14-213, "Comprehensive Plan Text and Map Amendments," and Small Scale amendment procedures (ss. 163.3187, Florida Statutes), from "Commercial Mid-Rise Intensity" to "Commercial High-Rise Intensity" for Lots 5 through 24, Block 36, Section "K," (306, 318, 330 and 350 Aragon, 2324 Salzedo, and 2341 Le Jeune Road), Coral Gables, Florida; providing for a repealer provision, severability clause, and providing for an effective date.
2. An Ordinance of the City Commission of Coral Gables, Florida making zoning district boundary changes pursuant to Zoning Code Article 14, "Process," Section 14-212, "Zoning Code Text and Map Amendments," for Lots 5 through 24, Block 36, Section "K," from Mixed-Use 2 (MX2) District to Mixed-Use 3 (MX3) District, (306, 318, 330 and 350 Aragon, 2324 Salzedo, and 2341 Le Jeune Road); providing for a repealer provision, severability clause, and providing for an effective date.
3. An Ordinance of the City Commission of Coral Gables, Florida providing for text amendments to the City of Coral Gables Official Zoning Code by amending Article 6, "Landscape," Section 6-103, "Landscape general requirements," and Article 16, "Definitions," providing a definition, requirements, and review processes to utilize artificial turf within athletic fields in the Special Use (S) Zoning district; providing conditional use review and approval when such artificial turf athletic fields are visible from the street; and providing for a repealer provision, severability clause, codification, and providing for an effective date.
4. An Ordinance of the City Commission of Coral Gables, Florida providing for text amendments to the City of Coral Gables Official Zoning Code, Article 16, "Definitions", by amending the definition of carport; and providing for a repealer provision, severability clause, codification, and an effective date.

The Planning and Zoning Board will be holding its regular board meeting on Wednesday, February 8, 2023, commencing at 6:00 p.m. Pursuant to Resolution No. 2021-118, the City of Coral Gables has returned to traditional in-person meetings. However, the City Commission has established the ability for the public to virtually provide sworn testimony or public comments (non-sworn and without evidentiary value). Any individual who wishes to provide sworn testimony virtually must have their video on and must be sworn in.

Members of the public may join the meeting via Zoom at (<https://zoom.us/j/83788709513>). In addition, a dedicated phone line will be available so that any individual who does not wish (or is unable) to use Zoom may listen to and participate in the meeting by dialing: (305) 461-6769 Meeting ID: 837 8870 9513. The public may comment on an item using the City's E-Comment function which may be found on the City's website at: (<https://coralgables.granicusideas.com/meetings>) once the meeting's agenda is published, or by sending an email to [planning@coralgables.com](mailto:planning@coralgables.com) prior to the meeting.

The meeting will also be broadcasted live for members of the public to view on the City's website ([www.coralgables.com/cgtv](http://www.coralgables.com/cgtv)) as well as Channel 77 on Comcast.

Sincerely,  
City of Coral Gables, Florida  
1/27

23-59/000643289M

2/2