

Riverside Parkway shows good example of xeric landscaping
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Is it possible to build a new parkway, enhance the entryways to Grand Junction and use attractive landscaping which uses less water at the same time?

It has been nearly a year since the grand opening for the seven-mile-long Riverside Parkway, where 80 percent of the landscaping along the parkway is xeric. The root of the word, “xeros” comes from the Greek word meaning “dry.” Xeric landscaping includes plants that are compatible with an area’s climate, and may include many plants native to an area which can tolerate times of drought once they are established.

One of the goals when designing the Riverside Parkway was to create attractive entrances to the city. This includes 5th Street, 24 Road at I-70, and Horizon Drive at I-70. The Gateway Committee was established with members from City Council, the Colorado Department of Transportation, the Visitor and Convention Bureau and the City’s Public Works and Parks departments to achieve that goal. This committee established a consistent design for these gateways and along the Riverside Parkway.

There are three areas along parkway that have enhanced landscaping with grass - the Fifth Street bridge entryway to town, the Riverside neighborhood, and the 25 Road bridge. Only 20 percent of the parkway includes sod. The rest of the parkway, or 80 percent of the roadway, is xeric.

The parkway was planted with 706 trees, 9,987 shrubs, and 4,431 perennials. All of the planting consists of trees and shrubs from a list of very low-to-moderate water use plants. Granite mulch and bark mulch help retain moisture and drip irrigation waters all of the non-sod areas. As these trees, shrubs and perennials mature, they provide an attractive addition to our community. Without landscaping, the city constantly battles weeds along the parkway.

The total amount spent on landscaping on all three phases of Riverside Parkway was \$1,300,423, plus another \$714,506 for landscape irrigation systems. Out of a total project cost of \$110 million for the Riverside Parkway, 1.8 percent, or a total of \$2,014,929, was used for landscaping and irrigation of the project. The City Parks department maintains the landscaping on the parkway.