



## QUESTION & ANSWER

### **What is the Grading and Landscaping Bylaw?**

The grading and landscaping bylaw was approved by Okotoks Town Council for the purpose of regulating surface grades and residential landscaping within Okotoks. This bylaw has been updated to ensure that all new builds who plan on installing turf grass on their property must install drought-tolerant turfgrass that meets the specifications indicated by the town in the Grading and Landscaping Bylaw. This amendment to the bylaw was instated to regulate the residential landscaping of newly built properties for the purposes of water conservation and to foster the well-being of the environment.

### **How does this affect Okotoks homeowners?**

This bylaw is only applicable to new home builds and properties starting on January 1, 2024, and will require all new builds deciding to install turfgrass or seed to plant only drought-tolerant turfgrass that meets the specifications indicated by the town in the Grading and Landscaping Bylaw.

New Lots landscaped prior to this Bylaw coming into force do not need to modify the existing Turfgrass, unless so desired by the homeowner.

### **What does the bylaw mean for builders and contractors?**

Prior to the commencement of construction on a parcel of land or lot, builders or contractors (person responsible for the grading of that residential parcel or lot) must obtain and submit a Lot Grade Permit Application from the Town, as well as a Plot Plan that meets the Town's requirements.

After a Lot Grade Permit has been issued, an As Constructed Grade Certificate, complete with an As Built Grade Plan, must be submitted to the Town within 12 calendar months of the Final Building Occupancy Inspection. Builders are responsible for informing an owner of a parcel or lot that landscaping cannot occur on parcel or lot until the As Construction Grade Certificate Verification of Compliance has been received from the Town.

#### **What is a Lot Grade Permit Application**

The permit issued by the Town in relation to the surface grades of a Parcel or Lot.

#### **What is a Plot Plan**

The Plot Plan is a view of a Lot indicating the location on a Parcel or Lot of the following:

- all corner grades of the Parcel or Lot;

- proposed Landscaping grades at all corners of a main Building, deck(s), garage(s) and ancillary Buildings;
- drainage pattern of the Parcel or Lot;
- the percentage of grades.

### **What is an As Constructed Grade Certificate**

An As Constructed Grade Certificate is a form completed within the Town provided electronic means in accordance with this Bylaw and includes an As Built Grade Plan, as well as the following:

- the lot grading as shown on the As Built Grade Plan will provide positive drainage of the Parcel or Lot to a Drainage Course or storm sewer system and will not have any adverse affect on adjacent property Owners;
- the lot grading as shown on the As Built Grade Plan will meet the tolerances and required minimums of the bylaw;
- the elevations for the top of footings as shown on the As Built Grade Plan conform with the submitted Plot Plan;
- the finished Topsoil depth in the area to be landscaped is a minimum of 30.48 cm (12 inches) average uniform depth, not to exceed 50 cm (19 inches) as indicated at a minimum of three representative test locations as detailed on the As Built Grade Plan; and
- Topsoil in the area to be landscaped is of the quality stated in Bylaw

### **What is a As Built Grade Plan**

An As Built Grade Plan is a post-construction plan that bears the stamp or seal of a Practitioner or Professional Engineer, and contains the following:

- both the proposed Lot elevation on the Plot Plan and the as built Lot elevations;
- contain the as built drainage slopes;
- indicate whether the Parcels on either side of the property to which the As Constructed Grade Certificate applies are vacant, under construction or built and loamed;
- indicate the measured soil depth at three representative test locations within the Lot's Landscaped Areas;
- be stamped in accordance with the Bylaw to certify that the final Lot grades have been reviewed and certified within twelve (12) calendar months of the Final Building Occupancy Inspection.

### **What are the landscaping requirements?**

No Owner shall remove Topsoil from a Parcel or Lot after an As Constructed Grade Certificate VOC has been issued unless authorized by the CAO.

Topsoil Requirements:

- Must consist of a loam-textured dark Topsoil, a fertile, friable material neither of heavy clay nor of very light sandy nature containing by volume a minimum of 6% to a maximum 25% organic matter (i.e. rotted manure, and/or composted material) and capable of sustaining vigorous plant growth;

- shall be free of subsoil contamination, roots, stones over 25mm in diameter, baler twine or subsoil clay lumps over 25mm in diameter and other extraneous matter
- shall not contain quack grass rhizomes, Canada thistle roots or other noxious weeds. Upon delivery or 30 days following delivery, electrical conductivity shall be less than 4.00 dS/m on a saturated paste basis. The pH range shall be between 6.0 and 8.0
- may be either on-site Topsoil or imported Topsoil (from within Town boundaries). On-site Topsoil which has been stockpiled properly can be reused and remediated with organic material
- will have a smooth and firm finished surface with a loose texture.

All Builders and Developers shall ensure that finished grades meet flush and smooth with adjacent grades and surfaces such as curbs, manholes, sidewalks, etc. and that the minimum depth of Topsoil shall be 300mm in all Landscaped Areas.

A minimum of 60% of the combined Hard Landscaping and Landscaped Area must be Permeable Landscaping.

Should the quality of Topsoil be in question, the Town will request the Developer to test the Topsoil (prior to placement) to these specifications.

The Town of Okotoks reserves the right to reject Topsoil not conforming to these requirements.

Living Turfgrass that is installed in all new residential properties must be a species of Drought Tolerant Turfgrass that must be a plant or seed that will grow into a mature live plant and be certified by the Turf Water Conservation Alliance (TWCA) or consist of a seed mixture of less than 30% Kentucky Bluegrass.

The Owner shall not begin Landscaping a Parcel or Lot until they have received the As Constructed Grade Certificate VOC from the Town.

### **What is grading?**

Grading is the movement and contouring of subsoil and the placement of Topsoil on a Parcel or Lot to create positive drainage.

### **What is positive drainage?**

Positive Lot Drainage involves contouring the land to direct the flow of surface water away from building foundations and toward the street, lane, or Swale without adversely affecting adjacent properties or public infrastructure.

### **Why is grading important?**

A properly graded lot ensures that surface drainage flows away from buildings, avoiding potential flooding problems and subsequent property damage. Improper lot grading can result in ponding, basement dampness, and flooding on private property. If drainage on a lot is improperly managed, it can also have negative impacts to public infrastructure, including parks, pathways, and the underground storm system.

### **What is Drought-Tolerant Turf Grass?**

Drought-tolerant turf grasses can withstand periods of drought and are suited for hot, dry climates, dealing well with limited water availability due to water restrictions as they need less water than other types of grass. These turf grass mixes contain less than 30% Kentucky bluegrass or are certified by the Turf Water Conservation Alliance

**What happens if my builders do not comply with the bylaw?**

Until January 2026, there will be a grace period in place where no fines will be issued to a homeowner or builder who installs the wrong type of turfgrass, instead a Town staff member will be sent to talk with the homeowner or builder about the requirement. They will not be required to replace their grass.