



MEMORANDUM
Public Works Department
City of Fairfax

Date: July 31, 2023

From: David Summers
Director of Public Works

To: Mayor & Council
Robert A. Stalzer, City Manager

Re: City of Fairfax Stormwater Utility (SWU) Impervious Surfaces & Gravel

The city's SWU ordinance includes the term "impervious area," and defines it as an "area covered by hard surfaces such as structures, paving, compacted gravel, concrete, or other manmade features that prevent, restrict, or impede the downward passage of stormwater into the underlying soil. The director may develop a more detailed definition of impervious area as it relates to this article."¹

Public Works has determined that there are varying uses of gravel on properties in the city that justifies differentiating between gravel that may be used for landscaping versus gravel used for walkways, driveways, or other parking or travel way areas. *Gravel used in landscaping is specifically designed to allow water to infiltrate the landscaping bed to nourish the vegetation in the feature.* Landscaping gravel, such as pea gravel, river stone, and other types of open-graded aggregate (aggregate that is sized to create voids between individual stones and has minimal fine materials), are not typically designed to compact to an eventual impervious surface for that reason. Regardless of the type of gravel used, travel ways are subject to compaction of underlying soils through their use and are considered impervious, consistent with the Department of Environmental Quality's definition of impervious surface.

Public Works seeks to better clarify the issue of which gravel surfaces are considered impervious by further elaborating that gravel features associated with a "travel way," including driveways, walkways, and parking areas will be considered impervious, while landscaping gravel designed to allow water to infiltrate will be considered pervious for purposes of SWU fee calculation.

As permitted by the SWU ordinance, for the purposes of adding clarity and in consideration of non-impervious gravel surfaces, the definition of impervious area has been further detailed as follows:

"Impervious area means area covered by hard surfaces such as structures, paving, concrete, gravel in travel ways, including any gravel areas designed for pedestrian, non-motorized or motorized travel, or any other manmade features that prevent, restrict, or impede the downward passage of stormwater into the underlying soil.

Impervious area does not include natural ground cover, lawn, landscape gravel designed to allow water to infiltrate into the underlying soil, vegetation areas, or any other surfaces not defined as impervious above, that allow stormwater to infiltrate the underlying soil."

Example photos are attached to this memo.

¹City of Fairfax Code, Article V, Sec.102-202. Definitions.

Impervious Gravel in Travel Ways



Pervious Landscaping Gravel

