



Keep Your Runoff Clean and Your Lawns Maintained

The city does not require your lawn or property to look as green or highly manicured as a golf course however there is an ordinance that requires lawns to be maintained so that grass and weeds do not create a public nuisance. The ordinance is **Section 13-35 Weeds and Brush**. Basically, grass and weeds exceeding twelve inches in height would be considered a violation of this ordinance. Residents typically take a lot of pride in maintaining their properties. It is part of the "American Dream", having a home and a nice yard well kept. Residents are encouraged to continue taking pride in their properties and to be courteous of their neighbors' properties as well.

Some people might wonder why the city would need to have an ordinance to tell people how tall their grass should or shouldn't be. This ordinance might already be an assumed responsibility of residents who don't know there's an actual ordinance that states such language. However, there is on the other hand an ordinance that many may not be familiar with and that is **Section 13-38 Environmental pollution** that residents are encouraged to familiarize themselves with and it has to do with your local storm drainage system.

The section of particular interest to residents should be that no person shall discharge into any storm drainage system. Things that typically get neglected without residents realizing they should take responsibility for cleaning up are their sidewalks, driveways, storm drains, gutters and catch basins to name a few. Not to say that residents are sole responsible for the maintenance of their storm drains, gutters and catch basins but it is strongly encouraged that residents clean around them and help prevent unwanted items from entering into them if possible. Items not limited to garbage, pop bottles/cans, rubbish, refuse, trash, construction materials and landscape trimmings improperly or accidentally disposed of end up along the curbs and fall into storm drains, catch basins, ponds and so on.

Consider your property as "waterfront property". If there's a storm drain nearby, then "you theoretically have waterfront property"! Anything that enters a storm drain goes directly to a local pond, lake or river. It does not magically go to a waste water treatment facility. Storm drains carry run off water directly to lakes and rivers. Residents are encouraged to keep in mind that "whatever washes off your yard and street runs directly into these water bodies". That includes lawn fertilizers, grass clippings, pet waste, and tree leaves and seeds. These are all sources of phosphorus. Phosphorus is the plant nutrient that turns lakes and rivers green with algae.

A common cause of lake and river pollution is phosphorus runoff. Phosphorus stimulates the growth of algae in lakes and rivers which crowds out other water plants and reduces oxygen available to fish. The result is unattractive, foul-smelling water that is bad for fish, wildlife, and

humans. Fertilizers and pet waste are two common things that contain phosphorus. Please be aware of your surroundings and limit use and clean up properly of these items.

Many of these facts were included in the 'Green Up Your Lawn Not Your Lakes and Rivers' brochure by the University of Minnesota Extension Service, Carver County Water Management Education Plan. This brochure includes several tips on what we can be doing universally at a homeowner level. If you would like to receive a copy of this brochure they are available at the City Hall. It is also available [online](#). You may also contact the University of Minnesota Extension Services, Carver County Soil and Water Conservation District, Carver County Water and Natural Resources Department or the Minnehaha Creek Watershed District for more information.

Points to take away from this article include the following. The city does not enjoy notifying residents of ordinance violations. There are ordinances that residents should be aware of that imply what is done or not done on their property can affect not only other properties but the quality of life for other residents. There are many things each of us can do on our own properties that can improve our surroundings. So please... keep mowing and maintaining your lawns but try to keep your runoff clean.