



MEMORANDUM

To: Alex Pharmakis, Sustainability Manager

From: Tara Bradley, Planning Manager

Date: April 16, 2026

Subject: Review of Proposed Amendments to the Citywide Landscape Ordinance
(Section 4.1 – Landscaping)

CC: Scott Webster, Interim Director of Community Services
Maria Minter, Managing Superintendent

This item is for the Sustainability Committee to review and provide feedback on the draft amendments to Section 4.1 of the Citywide Landscape Ordinance. No formal action or adoption is being requested currently. Staff is seeking feedback, which will be incorporated into a revised draft for additional review by other committees and commissions and ultimately the City Council.

Purpose

The proposed amendment is intended to update the City's landscaping standards and support flexible, functional, and attractive landscape design across the city, excluding City-owned property. Key objectives of the ordinance include:

- Establishing updated minimum landscaping requirements
- Expanding and preserving the City's tree canopy
- Improving safety and aesthetics through clearer delineation of pedestrian and vehicular spaces
- Reducing stormwater runoff and enhancing natural filtration
- Preserving habitat for birds and local wildlife
- Encouraging use of drought-tolerant and native species
- Supporting compatible transitions and visually appealing buffers between land uses
- Incorporating current industry terminology and updated definitions to promote tree diversity

Background

Planning staff was tasked with updating the City's existing Landscape Code, found in Chapter 94, Article 4 – Site Development Standards, Section 4.1-Landscaping. A draft ordinance was completed in January 2023 and

has undergone review by the Sustainability Committee, the Planning and Zoning Commission, and the City Council through January 23, 2024. During these reviews, staff received direction to revise several areas, including introducing more flexibility for residential standards, adding irrigation plan requirements, and clarifying installation, maintenance, and Certificate of Occupancy provisions.

Summary of Key Ordinance Components

The draft ordinance incorporates several updates, including:

- **Applicability:** Minimal requirements for one- and two-family residential uses; full standards for multifamily, commercial, industrial, and institutional uses.
- **Irrigation Requirements:**
 - Irrigation plan required for nonresidential and multifamily uses
 - Automatic irrigation and ET-based controllers required; watering hours limited to midnight–6:00 a.m.
- **Installation & Maintenance:** Standards for plant health, pruning, irrigation maintenance, installation, replacement timelines, and conditions for issuing Certificates of Occupancy.
- **Use-Specific Standards:**
 - *Multifamily:* 20% landscaped area, street trees every 25 feet, native/drought-tolerant planting, limits on synthetic turf.
 - *Nonresidential:* 15–20% landscaped area, 50% in the front yard, street tree spacing, and enhanced parking lot and screening requirements.
 - *Parking lot landscaping:* 7% of internal parking lot must be landscaped when more than 15 spaces are required.
- **Screening & Buffers:** Masonry wall and tree-spacing requirements for developments adjacent to residential uses.
- **Sustainable Design Incentives:** Eligibility for a 5% reduction in required lot coverage for incorporating approved sustainable or enhanced landscape features.
- **Updated Plant Lists:** Expanded preferred plant list with a 50% cap on any single tree species; updated prohibited plant list.

These updates reflect direction from previous review bodies and respond to expectations for beautification, water efficiency, and resilient landscape materials and plantings.

Boards and Committee role is to review the draft ordinance and provide feedback on the proposed landscaping updates. Staff will use the Board and Committee input to refine the draft prior to its next review by the Planning and Zoning Commission.

Next Steps

Following Board and Committee review, staff will incorporate the Board's comments into the next draft. The updated ordinance will proceed to the Planning and Zoning Commission for a study session and further review on May 11.