



Legislation Text

File #: ID#20-827, **Version:** 1

AGENDA CAPTION:

Approve Sustainability Committee Strategic Initiative LDC changes for turfgrass limitations, use of drought-tolerant turfgrass species, minimum soil depths, and separate irrigation system meters in new development.
(T. Taggart)

Meeting date: December 8, 2020

Department: Public Services

Amount & Source of Funding

Funds Required: Click or tap here to enter text.

Account Number: Click or tap here to enter text.

Funds Available: Click or tap here to enter text.

Account Name: Click or tap here to enter text.

Fiscal Note:

Prior Council Action: Click or tap here to enter text.

City Council Strategic Initiative: [Please select from the dropdown menu below]

Choose an item.

Choose an item.

Choose an item.

Comprehensive Plan Element (s): [Please select the Plan element(s) and Goal # from dropdown menu below]

☐ Economic Development - Choose an item.

☒ Environment & Resource Protection - Natural Resources necessary for community's health, well-being, and prosperity secured for future development

☐ Land Use - Choose an item.

☐ Neighborhoods & Housing - Choose an item.

☐ Parks, Public Spaces & Facilities - Choose an item.

☐ Transportation - Choose an item.

- ☐ Core Services
- ☐ Not Applicable

Master Plan: *[Please select the corresponding Master Plan from the dropdown menu below (if applicable)]*

Choose an item.

Background Information:

The Sustainability Committee and City Council have received information from staff regarding potential water conservation enhancements by limiting the amount of turfgrass and requiring separate irrigation system water meters in new development. Irrigation use of water for lawns and landscaping comprises more than half of total seasonal water use, and represents a major opportunity for water savings going forward.

The proposed amendments would limit the amount of irrigated turfgrass that can be installed to 50% of the landscaped area in new single-family residential properties and 25% in all other new developments. The 25% limitation is currently a recommendation in the ordinance and the change simply requires that limit. The Austin Homebuilders Association was the source of the 50% limitation in single-family homes, and the Sustainability Committee requested they review the proposed changes as a major stakeholder. The HBA indicated they supported the proposed changes and appreciated the outreach.

The proposed changes would also require use of drought-tolerant turfgrass species and minimum soil depths, which are currently recommendations in the LDC. Changes also include addition of a definition for turfgrass and other minor edits for clarity.

Associated plumbing ordinance changes would require a separate irrigation meter for new single-family residential properties, which matches the requirement for commercial and multi-family services that was adopted in 2006. This change will enable accurate metering of water used by automatic irrigation systems. Existing residential customers would be grandfathered and no retrofits would be required by these changes.

The proposed changes are applicable to turfgrass in new development only. City staff (Community Enhancement, Habitat Conservation, Code Compliance) are reviewing the codes for native plants and mowing in existing developments and will be preparing proposed amendments for those in 2021.

Council Committee, Board/Commission Action:

The Sustainability Committee referred this item to City Council on September 30th, and on November 4th City Council approved referral of this item to P&Z.

Alternatives:

Click or tap here to enter text.

Recommendation:

The Sustainability Committee is charged with advancing the strategic initiative of Sustainability, and recommends P&Z consider and approve referral of the proposed LDC changes to City Council for consideration of approval. City staff concur with these recommendations.