




CITY OF GLENDALE PLANNING DEPARTMENT
PLANNING COMMISSION STAFF REPORT

TO: Members of the Planning Commission
PREPARED BY: Kristen Asp, Senior Planner 
REVIEWED BY:  Timothy Foy, Assistant Director of Planning 
Craig Kuennen, PBC Marketing Manager
MEETING DATE: December 3, 2008
FILE NO./CASE: Zoning Code Amendment Case No. PZON 2008-010
PROPOSAL: Amendments to Title 30 of the Glendale Municipal Code, 1995, relating to revisions to landscaping requirements.
APPLICANT: City Initiated
LOCATION/APN: Citywide

RECOMMENDATION:

The Planning Department staff recommends that the Planning Commission review the proposed amendment to Title 30 of the Glendale Municipal Code, 1995, relating to revisions to landscaping requirements and provide a recommendation to the City Council.

SUMMARY:

Council requested that staff examine alternatives for the landscaping standards in the Zoning Code, to address the need for conservation of water. This is an interim step prior to a more comprehensive revision of the landscape ordinance which must be accomplished by 2010, to comply with state law. The amendments provide flexibility to property owners for landscape requirements helping balance landscape requirements and water conservation.

The report also outlines options for consideration of artificial turf.

Landscape Advisory Group (LAG)

A Landscape Advisory Group of professional landscape architects and designers was created to review these amendments. A summary of the LAG discussion is included as it relates to the proposed changes.

BACKGROUND:

Updated Model Water Efficient Landscape Ordinance AB 1881

As the water supplies in California become more limited and subject to ever increasing demands, the continuation of California's economic prosperity is dependent on adequate supplies of water being available for future use. Since the majority of the City's water supplies are consumed in landscape irrigation, the efficient management of water used for that purpose becomes increasingly essential.

The Water Conservation in Landscaping Act of 2006 (AB 1881) directs the California Department of Water Resources (DWR) to update the Model Water Efficient Landscape Ordinance and adopt the

updated Model Ordinance by January 1, 2009, and cities to adopt a compatible ordinance by January 1, 2010.

As an interim step, staff proposes an amendment to landscaping standards in the Zoning Code that would allow homeowners to use drought-tolerant xeriscape and still meet code standards.

DISCUSSION:

Current Regulations

The Zoning Code regulates landscaping by requiring all street setback areas be fully landscaped with plant materials in single family zones (ROS, R1R, and R1). The Zoning Code also requires that a minimum of 40% of the total lot be landscaped and can include decorative elements like pools and fountains, but landscaping must be composed primarily of live plant materials. In all zones other than single family, all setback areas and other areas not occupied by buildings, parking, driveways, walkways, and other incidental activities shall be fully landscaped with plant materials.

Proposed Regulations

The proposed amendments to the landscaping requirements address the need for water conservation in the Zoning Code. These minor amendments provide flexibility to property owners while balancing required landscaping and water use.

Staff has proposed amended language for required landscaping as follows:

- Allow the inclusion of non-plant ground covers such as wood chips, bark, decorative rock, and stone in combination with plant materials in the street front setback for single family zones.
- Allow the combination of plants and permeable surfaces to provide property owners with flexibility to balance plant choice and water use. Encouraging the use of permeable surfaces also allows water to penetrate the soil on-site, rather than allowing it to run off the property.
- Clarify that the majority (more than 50%) of the street front setback area must consist of live plant material.
- Language has been added to require that non-turf areas be covered (top dressed) with mulch in an effort to reduce dust and evaporation of moisture. This requirement is flexible beneath tree canopies to address different needs of tree species such as oak trees where mulch may not be appropriate.

The majority of these amendments do not make significant changes to the current landscaping regulations. Incorporating permeable surfaces and using non-plant ground covers have always been permitted. The proposed changes clarify existing requirements and encourage alternatives to lawn (turf), while encouraging water conservation.

It should be noted that the regulations may marginally decrease the amount of plant material in certain cases – in the street setback areas of single-family zones and in the required landscape areas of multi-family, commercial and some mixed use zones. Currently, regulations in non-single family zones require areas to be “fully” landscaped with plant material. The proposal is to decrease this to 50% of the area to be covered with plant material, and the rest with permeable surfaces. This may decrease “green” space, but will aid in designing xeriscape landscaping.

Measuring Landscaping Areas

The proposal clarifies the Code regarding how to measure the area covered with plant materials. Whereas current regulations indicate that a landscape area must be “composed primarily of plant materials”, the proposal specifies that this means at least 50% of the area. Staff’s intention is that this include the area under the canopies of trees. This is especially important for some protected indigenous trees, such as oaks, where planting under the canopy can harm the trees.

Artificial Turf

Artificial turf has been suggested as an alternative material for landscaping in response to water conservation. The Landscape Advisory Group (LAG) has discussed this topic and staff has outlined options below. A small survey of surrounding cities regarding artificial turf was conducted as follows:

- La Canada Flintridge – Not permitted for required landscape areas, but may be used in other areas outside the front yard setback.
- Los Angeles – Allows artificial turf in landscape areas, but counts as hardscape area, and not as required landscaped/planted area.
- Burbank – Not permitted for multi-family and non-residential projects. For single family projects the landscaping requirements are less specific and would likely be allowed.

Landscape Advisory Group Discussion

The Landscape Advisory Group discussed the use of artificial turf and expressed concerns generally relating to the potential poor appearance of the product, potential leaching of lead, inappropriate use in sloped conditions, and creating an area that absorbs and retains heat. The group unanimously agreed that if artificial turf was permitted, they felt it would be appropriate in a rear yard only. They also discussed that artificial turf is not appropriate beneath tree canopies because of the incompatibility with tree roots. Additionally, the group agreed that artificial turf should not be counted toward the live plant material code requirement.

Options for Artificial Turf

The following are options for the Commission to consider regarding artificial turf:

1. Permit artificial turf as a non-plant material (similar to pervious surfaces) when it is not visible from the public right-of-way immediately adjacent to the property. It would count toward the overall landscaping requirement, but not as live plant material. Additionally, include language prohibiting artificial turf beneath tree canopies.
2. Do not permit artificial turf in any required setback area. This would permit artificial turf any place outside the required setbacks including front and street side locations where there may be an area between the required setback line and the building. Its use would count toward the overall landscaping requirements, but not as live plant material. Additionally, include language prohibiting artificial turf beneath tree canopies.
3. Prohibit artificial turf by adding language to the code that strictly disallows its use.
4. Make minor revisions to the current code by adding additional language for clarification. Currently the Zoning Code does not address artificial turf, but if used it does not satisfy the landscaping requirement for live plant material. Add language to prohibit artificial turf in the ROS and R1R zoning districts. These properties are generally located in hillsides and preventing its

use in these zones would address concerns about artificial turf use on slopes. Some concerns about artificial turf and slopes relate to uneven drainage and the collection of the crumb-filling, which settle at the bottom of the slope. Also, consistent with the other options above, prohibit artificial turf beneath tree canopies.

Next Steps

Glendale Water and Power and the Planning Department plan to prepare an ordinance consistent with the Water Conservation in Landscaping Act of 2006 (AB 1881) during the next year.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW:

This project has been determined to be exempt from CEQA.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Planning Commission Motion
2. Draft Ordinance

MOTION

Moved by Commissioner _____, and seconded by Commissioner _____, that upon consideration of the proposed ordinance relating to revisions of landscaping requirements the Planning Commission hereby recommends that the City Council adopt the proposed amendments to Title 30 of the Glendale Municipal Code, 1995.

Adopted this 3rd day of December, 2008.

Vote as follows -- Ayes:
 Noes:
 Absent:
 Abstain:

ORDINANCE NO. _____

AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF GLENDALE, CALIFORNIA AMENDING SECTION 30.31.010 AND 30.31.020 OF TITLE 30 OF THE GLENDALE MUNICIPAL CODE, 1995.

BE IT ORDAINED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF GLENDALE:

SECTION 1. Section 30.31.010 of the Glendale Municipal Code is hereby amended to read as follows:

30.31.010 – Regulations for the ROS, R1 and R1R Zones. The following regulations shall apply in the ROS, R1R and R1 zones.

A. All street setback areas shall be ~~fully~~ landscaped with plant materials or a combination of plant materials and permeable surfaces and shall be permanently maintained in a neat and orderly manner. Non-living materials may be used as ground cover including but not limited to: wood chips, bark, decorative rock, and stone. Plant materials shall compose a majority (more than 50%) of the street setback areas, exclusive of permitted driveways. Other than permitted hardscape, all areas not planted shall be covered (top dressed) with materials such as wood chips or approved alternative. Top dressing beneath tree canopies shall be to the satisfaction of the Director of Planning, and shall be calculated as area of live plant material.

Permeable surface allows the movement of water through the surface material and include materials such as pavers, decomposed granite or grasscrete. Permeable surfaces are encouraged wherever possible in lieu of impermeable hardscape.

B. A minimum of forty (40) percent of the total lot area shall be permanently landscaped open space. Decorative design elements such as swimming pools, spas, fountains, sculptures, planters, rock gardens or other similar elements may be permitted where they are integral parts of a landscape plan composed ~~primarily~~ of a majority (more than 50%) of live plant materials. Neither the interior nor the street setback areas shall be completely paved or covered with gravel. Any live plant material or permeable surface located in a required driveway shall not count toward required landscaping.

C. All plant materials shall be maintained for a period of at least 5 years when planted in conjunction with a landscape plan for a project approved by the design review board.

D. In the R1R zone only, the superintendent of building shall not issue a permit for construction of a dwelling or accessory buildings on a lot which has a slope greater than two horizontal to one vertical (2:1) unless the plans are accompanied by a landscaping plan which shall accurately show the location of all existing trees to be retained or removed and the type and extent of proposed landscaping including provisions for irrigation thereof. Said plan shall be prepared by a licensed landscape architect, and approved by the director of planning. This requirement shall not apply to a lot having either a split-level pad of not less than four thousand (4,000) square feet, or a single-level pad of not less than five thousand (5,000) square feet.

SECTION 2. Section 30.31.020 of the Glendale Municipal Code is hereby amended to read as follows:

30.31.020 –Regulations for all Multi-family, Commercial, Industrial, and Mixed Use Zones, the CE Zone and the PS Overlay Zone

A. The following regulations shall apply in the R-3050, R-2250, R-1650, R-1250, C1, C2, C3, CPD, CR, IND, IMU-R, SFMU and CE zones, and the PS Overlay Zone.

1. Landscaping required.

- a. All setback areas and other areas not occupied by buildings, parking, driveways, walkways, and other incidental activities shall be ~~fully~~ landscaped with a majority (more than 50%) of plant materials or a combination of plant materials and permeable surfaces and shall be permanently maintained in a neat and orderly manner. The street setback area shall not be completely paved or covered with gravel. Permeable surfaces are encouraged wherever possible in lieu of impermeable hardscape.
- b. Decorative design elements such as fountains, sculptures, planters, rocks or other similar elements may be permitted where they are integral parts of a landscape plan composed ~~primarily of live plant materials of a majority (more than 50%) of live plant materials~~ are permitted in the R-3050, R-2250, R-1650, R-1250, IMU-R and SFMU zones.
- c. Pedestrian walks and vehicular accessways shall be permitted in such landscaped areas. Such areas may not be counted as landscaped open space in the R-3050, R-2250, R-1650, R-1250, IMU-R and SFMU zones.
- d. Useable open space in the form of landscaped setbacks, walkways, patios and landscaped areas within parking lots may be considered in the computation of required landscaping in the CPD zone.
- e. In the PS Overlay zone, pedestrian walks and vehicular accessways which are not closer than twenty (20) feet from any adjacent residential zone boundary shall be permitted in the landscaped area of the street setback area only, provided that a twenty (20) foot distance need not be provided from any lot also in the PS overlay zone.

2. Percentage of lot with landscaping.

Lots shall be developed with permanently landscaped open space, as follows:

Table 30.31 – A

Zone	Minimum percentage of total lot area to be permanently landscaped open space
R-3050	30%
R-2250, R-1650, R-1250	25%
IMU-R, SFMU, CPD	10%
C1, C2, C3, CR, CE, CEM, IND, IMU, PS Overlay	Not Applicable

P Overlay	The front and street side setback and landscaping requirements for parking areas in the P overlay zone shall be subject to the provisions of the residential zone in which the property is located and/or chapter 30.32 of this title, whichever is the most restrictive.
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3. **Permanent landscaping.** For the purposes of this chapter, permanent landscaping shall consist of landscaped areas at the ground level or in planters having a minimum length, width, diameter and depth of twenty-four (24) inches. In the R-3050, R-2250, R-1650 R-1250, IMU-R and SFMU zones and the PS overlay zone, the soil depth shall be increased to thirty (30) inches minimum in the area where trees are to be planted.
4. **Irrigation.** Permanent and automatic irrigation facilities shall be provided in all permanent landscaped areas except potted containers.
5. **Preparation of plans and installation of landscaping and irrigation.**
 - a. Prior to the issuance of any building permit, all landscape and irrigation plans shall be prepared and wet stamped by an individual who is licensed in the state of California to prepare such plans. All landscaping and irrigation facilities shall be installed and in proper working order according to approved plans prior to the final inspection and approval of any said building permit. In the alternative, a cash bond may be deposited with the building official in an amount not less than the estimated cost of installing said landscaping and irrigation facilities. Should said estimated cost of installing such landscaping and irrigation facilities exceed ten thousand dollars (\$10,000), an instrument of credit may be deposited with the building official in lieu of a cash bond. Said cash bond or instrument of credit may be released only upon final inspection and approval of said building permit by the building official.
 - b. Prior to the issuance of any temporary or permanent use and occupancy certificate, an individual licensed in the state of California to prepare landscape and irrigation plans shall file a certificate of compliance with the building official certifying that all landscaping and irrigation facilities have been installed in substantial compliance with the approved plans.
 - c. In the event the developer fails to install the landscaping and irrigation facilities for any reason, after having had reasonable time to do so, the building official may notify the developer and thereafter cause said landscaping and irrigation facilities to be installed pursuant to the approved plans and to use the cash bond or instrument of credit to pay for the cost of such installation.
6. **Additional open space requirements for the R-2250, R-1650, and R-1250 zones.** On a lot with a minimum width of ninety (90) feet and with a density exceeding the maximum density permitted by code for lots with less than ninety (90) feet in width, an additional nine hundred (900) square foot open space area shall be provided contiguous to a street front/side setback area. For each additional foot of lot width thereafter, or minor fraction area thereof, an additional twenty (20) square feet of such open space area shall be provided. Said area may be located on top of a subterranean or semi-subterranean garage area and may be "common outdoor space"; may be landscaped; shall be located within the fifty (50) percent of the lot depth/width nearest the front property line or street side property line; shall be visible from the public street; shall not

include "private outdoor space"; and shall not include or be located within any required minimum interior, street front or street side setback area. Planter walls not exceeding a height of thirty (30) inches and railings shall be allowed in this area. The design of such additional open space area shall be integrated with the landscaping of the contiguous street front/side setback area. Second and third floors may not project into any required additional open space area and shall be proportionally stepped back from said area a minimum of three (3) feet for the second floor and a minimum of six (6) feet for the third floor to preserve the front and side elevation change-of-planes encouraged by this title.

7. **Additional requirements for the PS overlay zone.** Planter boxes, with a minimum width of twenty-four (24) inches, shall be incorporated into the design along the entire length of each tier of the parking structure facing the street, alley or residential zone. Clinging type vines shall be planted along any solid sheer exterior walls.

B. The following regulations shall apply in the DSP zone.

1. Irrigation. Permanent and automatic irrigation facilities shall be provided in all permanent landscaped areas except potted containers.
2. Preparation of Plans and Installation of Landscaping and Irrigation.
 - a. Prior to the issuance of any building permit, all landscape and irrigation plans shall be prepared and wet stamped by an individual who is licensed in the state of California to prepare such plans. All landscaping and irrigation facilities shall be installed and in proper working order according to approved plans prior to the final inspection and approval of any said building permit. In the alternative, a cash bond may be deposited with the building official in an amount not less than the estimated cost of installing said landscaping and irrigation facilities. Should said estimated cost of installing such landscaping and irrigation facilities exceed ten thousand dollars (\$10,000), an instrument of credit may be deposited with the building official in lieu of a cash bond. Said cash bond or instrument of credit may be released only upon final inspection and approval of said building permit by the building official.
 - b. Prior to the issuance of any temporary or permanent use and occupancy certificate, an individual licensed in the state of California to prepare landscape and irrigation plans shall file a certificate of compliance with the building official certifying that all landscaping and irrigation facilities have been installed in substantial compliance with the approved plans.
 - c. In the event the developer fails to install the landscaping and irrigation facilities for any reason, after having had reasonable time to do so, the building official may notify the developer and thereafter cause said landscaping and irrigation facilities to be installed pursuant to the approved plans and to use the cash bond or instrument of credit to pay for the cost of such installation.