

**CITY OF TEMECULA
AGENDA REPORT**

TO: City Manager/City Council

FROM: Matt Peters, Director of Community Development

DATE: October 28, 2025

SUBJECT: Introduce Ordinance Amending Title 17 of Temecula Municipal Code to Make Technical Revisions and Updates to Water Efficient Landscape Ordinance (Long Range Project No. LR25-0099)

PREPARED BY: Mark Collins, Senior Planner

RECOMMENDATION: That the City Council introduce an ordinance entitled:

ORDINANCE NO.

AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF TEMECULA AMENDING TITLE 17 OF THE TEMECULA MUNICIPAL CODE MAKING TECHNICAL REVISIONS AND UPDATES TO THE WATER EFFICIENT LANDSCAPE DESIGN ORDINANCE TO MAKE CONSISTENT WITH THE CITYWIDE DESIGN GUIDELINES AND MAKE A FINDING OF EXEMPTION UNDER CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT (CEQA) GUIDELINES SECTION 15061 (B)(3)

SUMMARY OF

ORDINANCE: The proposed ordinance would make amendments to Title 17 of the Temecula Municipal Code. Listed below is a summary of the proposed changes to the Municipal Code, each of which is discussed further in the analysis section, which follows:

1. Definitions – Section 17.32.020

The proposed Ordinance would add definitions for:

- “Artificial turf” and/or “synthetic turf”
- “Bioretention area”
- “Impervious surface”
- “Lawn” and/or “turf”
- “Lawn substitute”
- “Mulch stabilizer”
- “Permeable surface”

- “Shall” or “will”
- “Should”

The proposed Ordinance would also update the definition for “reference evapotranspiration (ET_o)” to reference Temecula’s measurement found in Appendix C of the California Department of Water Resources’ Model Water Efficiency Landscape Ordinance.

2. Landscape Design Requirements – Section 17.32.060

The proposed Ordinance would:

- Make minor revisions to the design requirements for plant materials and add a reference to Specific Plan plant lists, when applicable.
 - Allow green/artificial turf to be used in inner courtyards of memory care facilities to provide a stable surface for mobility devices as real turf may not provide for mobility impaired individuals. This memory care facility exception is codifying current practices.
 - Remove and replace “stabilizing mulch” with “mulch stabilizer” and clarify that mulch stabilizer products shall be used on slopes when a binding agent is required.
 - Set limits for inorganic ground cover of 15%. Require inorganic groundcover to be used as an accent material allowing only fifteen percent of the total landscape area to consist of such material in combination with live plants. This is intended to limit the use of gravel as a substitute for shrubs and groundcover in designated planting areas.
 - Add a new subsection to include landscape design standards for parking areas in commercial zones and multifamily developments for consistency with the Citywide Design Guidelines.
3. Irrigation System Design Requirements – Section 17.32.090
Add engineered bioretention areas as an exception for overhead spray systems when used in landscape areas narrower than ten feet in width. This exception would be subject to the Public Works Director’s approval.
4. Residential Requirements – Section 17.32.110
Add setbacks for plant material from utility equipment in residential zones.
5. Commercial/Office/Industrial/Public Institutional Requirements – Section 17.32.120
Add setbacks for plant material from utility equipment in commercial zones.
6. Maintenance and Enforcement – Section 17.32.120

- a. Require a Modification Application for proposed changes to approved landscape plans.
 - b. Require any removed trees, due to maintenance issues or death, to be replaced in accordance with the approved landscape plans.
 - c. Add a reference for protected trees to comply with Chapter 8.48 Protected Tree Ordinance of the Temecula Municipal Code.
 - d. Add a requirement for groundcovers to be used in addition to, not in place of, the approved landscaping and to be maintained accordingly.
7. Appendix B Prescriptive Compliance Option – Section 17.32.200
- a. Remove language that prohibits turf in parkways less than 10 feet wide and remove the requirement for turf to be irrigated by sub surface irrigation.
 - b. Add engineered bioretention areas as an exception for the use of overhead spray systems when used in landscape areas narrower than ten feet in width. This exception would be subject to the Public Works Director’s approval.
8. Appendix C Plant List – Section 17.32.200
- a. Amend the plant list by removing two problematic species.
 - b. Add a note for areas located in Very High Fire and High Fire Severity Zones to refer to Calflora’s Fire Safe Plant List.

BACKGROUND: The City of Temecula City Council adopted the Municipal Code in January 1990. Since its adoption, the City Council has periodically made amendments to various sections of the Code to improve its clarity, codify best practices and make necessary corrections or updates.

Pursuant to Government Code Section 65800, the Planning Commission is required to review and make recommendations to the City Council regarding zoning regulations and amendments to Title 17 (Development Code) of the Temecula Municipal Code.

About 40% of the water used by Californians at their homes is used outdoors; this coupled with the reality of longer and cyclical droughts has increased the need for ongoing conservation efforts. The State of California has continued to refine the Model Water Efficient Landscape Ordinance or “MWELo” contained in Chapter 2.7 (Model Water Efficient Landscape Ordinance) of Division 2 (Department of Water Resources) of Title 23 (Waters) of the California Code of Regulations. These requirements are intended to ensure climate adapted (drought tolerant) plants are used with high efficiency irrigation equipment.

The proposed amendments to the Temecula Municipal Code are intended to bring the City’s Water Efficient Landscape Ordinance or “WELo” in conformance with the State’s MWELo as required.

Additionally, the changes are codifying existing best practices, updating definitions and remove ambiguity regarding requirements. The proposed amendments exclusively amendment Title 17 (Zoning) and will not result in an increase in the intensity or density of any land use above what is currently allowed in accordance with the Municipal Code and General Plan.

City staff met with the Planning Commission Municipal Code Maintenance Ad Hoc Subcommittee on August 20, 2025.

City staff met with the City Council General Plan Ad Hoc Subcommittee on August 26, 2025.

The proposed Ordinance was presented at a public hearing to the Planning Commission on October 1, 2025, and Resolution No. 2025-33 was adopted making a recommendation that the City Council adopt the proposed Ordinance.

FISCAL IMPACT: The proposed Ordinance itself does not have a direct fiscal impact if adopted; however, may provide cost savings for applicants preparing such plans and the City reviewing said plans.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Ordinance
2. PC Resolution No. 2025-33
3. Notice of Public Hearing
4. Notice of Exemption