



MWELO and GMC Landscape Ordinance Overview

Sustainability Commission

July 6, 2023.

Model Water Efficient Landscape Ordinance (MWELO)

- About half of urban water produced in California is used for landscape irrigation.
- Large water savings can be gained by efficient landscape design, installation, management, and maintenance.
- The MWELO was created by the California Department of Water Resources (DWR) as a model for local agencies to enforce minimum standards in landscape design, construction, and management.
- Research shows that creating and maintaining landscapes that meet MWELO use 80% less water; require 60% less maintenance; produce 50% less yard waste.

MWELO Goals

- Promote the values and benefits of landscaping practices that integrate and go beyond the conservation and efficient use of water;
- Establish a structure for planning, designing, installing, maintaining and managing water efficient landscapes in new construction and rehabilitated projects by encouraging the use of a watershed approach that requires cross-sector collaboration of industry, government and property owners to achieve the many benefits possible;
- Establish provisions for water management practices and water waste prevention for existing landscapes;
- Use water efficiently without waste by setting a Maximum Applied Water Allowance as an upper limit for water use and reduce water use to the lowest practical amount;
- Encourage local agencies and water purveyors to use economic incentives that promote the efficient use of water, such as implementing a tiered-rate structure; and

MWELO Overview

- MWELO provides a path to design, install, manage, and maintain landscapes that conserve water. In turn, MWELO helps improve the wellbeing, health, safety, and resiliency of California communities.
- It achieves this through specific requirements related to soil, plants, irrigation, stormwater, and non- potable water supplies.
- It sets an upper limit for the water budgets of landscape projects, thereby driving water-efficiency through the thoughtful selection of climate-appropriate plants, organic soil amendments, water- saving irrigation devices, and the use of alternative water supplies.

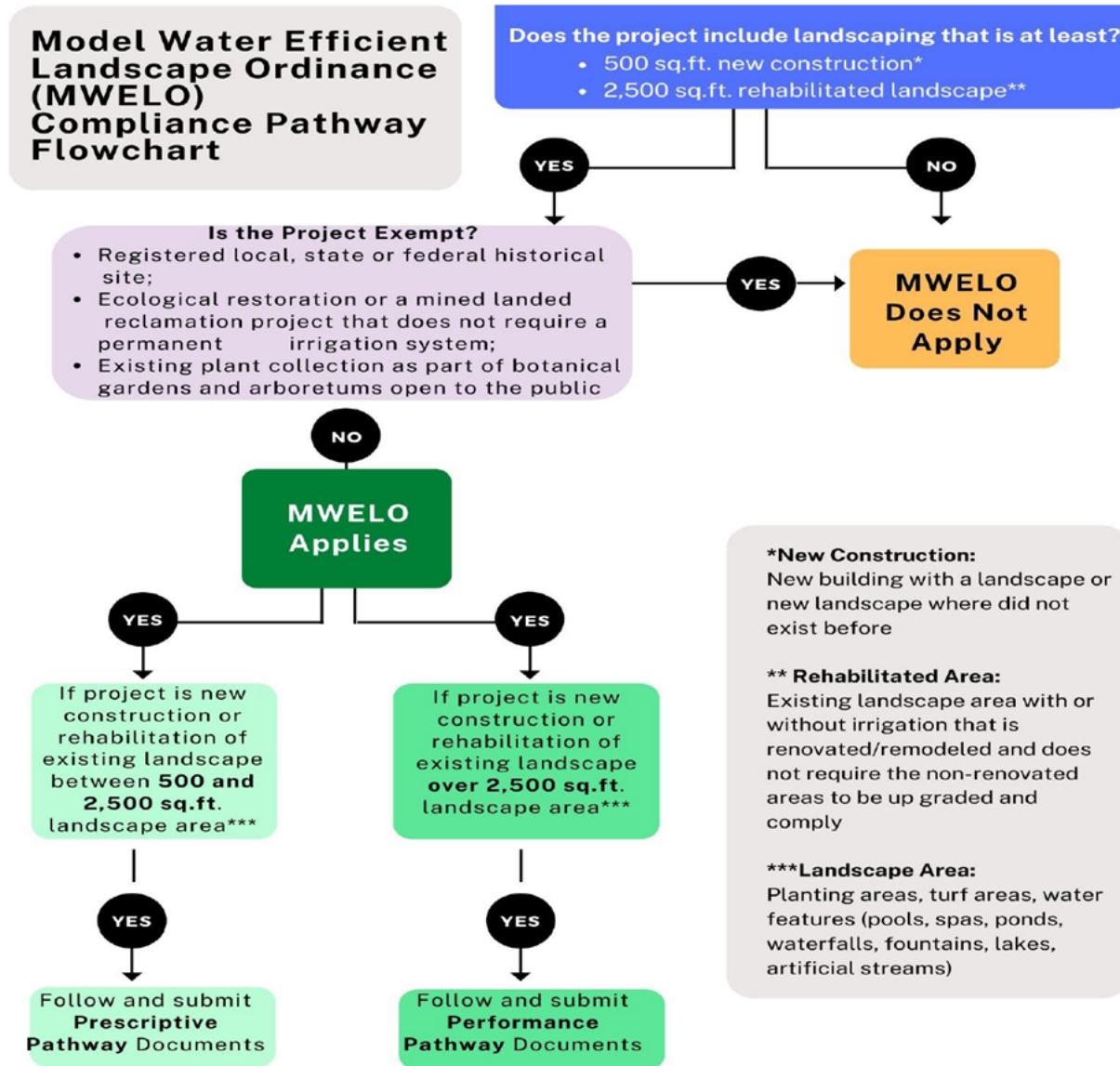
MWELO Overview

- New development and retrofitted landscape water efficiency standards are governed by the [Model Water Efficient Landscape Ordinance \(MWELO\)](#).
- **All local agencies must adopt, implement, and enforce the MWELO or a local Water Efficient Landscape Ordinance (WELO) that is at least as effective as the MWELO.**
- Local agencies are required to report on implementation annually by January 31 of each year to DWR's Water Use Efficiency branch

MWELO Overview

- After December 1, 2015, and consistent with Executive Order No. B-29-15, the ordinance shall apply to all of the following landscape projects:
 - new construction projects with an aggregate landscape area equal to or greater than 500 square feet requiring a building or landscape permit, plan check or design review;
 - rehabilitated landscape projects with an aggregate landscape area equal to or greater than 2,500 square feet requiring a building or landscape permit, plan check, or design review;

Sample Model Water Efficient Landscape Ordinance (MWELO) Compliance Pathway Flowchart



Note: Local agencies can require new or rehabilitated landscapes to follow the Performance Pathway even if the size is 500 to 2,500 sq.ft.

Note: Local agencies may choose not to adopt Prescriptive Pathway (MWELO Appendix D)






GMC Title 30 Zoning, Chapter 30.31 Landscaping

- Chapter 30.31 Consists of the following:
 - 30.31.010 Regulations for the ROS, R1 and R1R zones.
 - 30.31.020 Regulations for all multi-family, commercial, industrial, and mixed use zones, and the CE and MS zones.
 - 30.31.030 Landscaping and walls adjacent residential zones.
 - 30.31.040 Landscaping in parking areas.
 - 30.31.050 Maintenance of landscaping.
 - 30.31.060 Water conservation.




GMC Title 30 Zoning, Chapter 30.31 Landscaping

- Projects subject to the MWELO, shall comply with those regulations in addition to all of the regulations in this chapter.
- In the case of a conflict between MWELO and this code (including mandates of Title 13), the MWELO shall prevail
 - Except that in the case of a conflict whereby this code imposes a requirement intended to be more effective in conserving water than MWELO, the GMC shall prevail.
- For all properties and all other projects not subject to the MWELO, the City has established regulations.



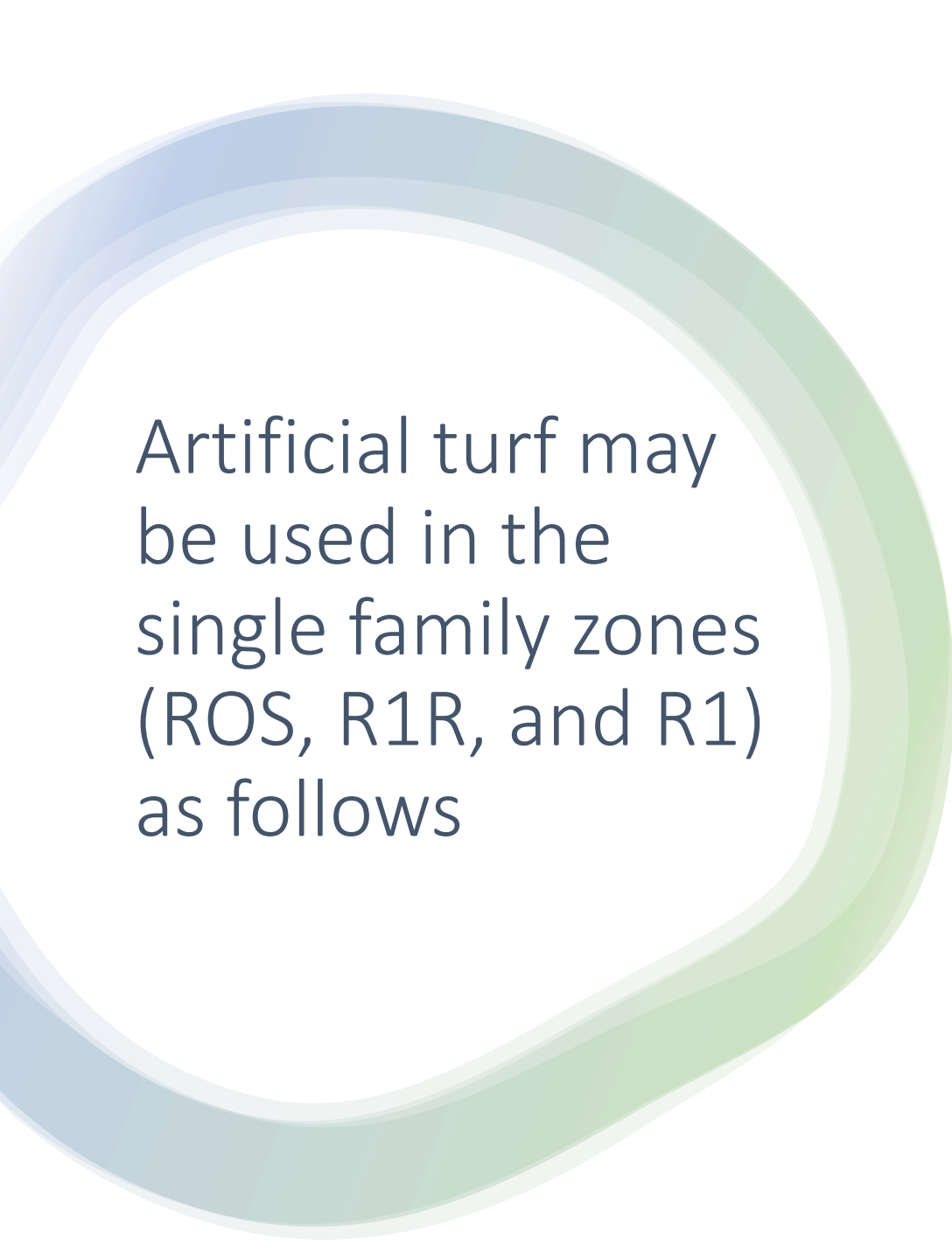
Regulations for ROS, R1 and R1R zones.

- All street setback areas shall be 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.
- Plant materials shall compose a majority (more than fifty (50) percent) 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 community development, and shall be calculated as area of live plant material.
- Permeable surfaces are encouraged wherever possible in lieu of impermeable hardscape.




Regulations for ROS, R1 and R1R zones.

- 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 of a majority (more than fifty (50) percent) of live plant materials.
- When drought tolerant landscaping is used, the live plant material requirement shall be calculated at mature growth of the drought tolerant plants.




Artificial turf may
be used in the
single family zones
(ROS, R1R, and R1)
as follows

- Artificial turf shall be calculated toward the total lot area requirement for landscaping, but shall not be calculated toward the live plant material requirement.
- Artificial turf shall not be permitted beneath the drip line of tree canopies.
- A minimum three (3) foot wide live plant material landscape border shall be required at the street front and street side property line.
- A minimum three (3) foot wide live plant material landscape border shall be required at the base of a building facing a street front or street side setback.
- Artificial turf shall only be permitted on sloped areas less than twenty-five (25) percent.




Regulations for all multi-family, commercial, industrial, and mixed use zones, and the CE and MS zones.

- All setback areas and other areas not occupied by buildings, parking, driveways, walkways, and other incidental activities shall be landscaped with a majority (more than fifty (50) percent) of plant materials or a combination of plant materials and permeable surfaces.
- Permeable surfaces are encouraged wherever possible in lieu of impermeable hardscape.
- 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 of a majority (more than fifty (50) percent) of live plant materials are permitted in the R-3050, R-2250, R-1650, R-1250, IMU-R and SFMU zones.



Regulations for all multi-family, commercial, industrial, and mixed use zones, and the CE and MS zones.

- 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.
- When drought tolerant landscaping is used, the live plant material requirement shall be calculated at mature growth of the drought tolerant plants. However, the live plant material calculation for tree canopies shall only include the canopy area as it exists at the time of planting.



Preparation of plans and installation of landscaping and irrigation.

- Permanent and automatic irrigation facilities shall be provided in all permanent landscaped areas except potted containers.
- 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.
- 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.



Artificial turf

- Artificial turf shall not be permitted in any portion of a property located in a commercial, industrial, or special purpose zones (C1, C2, C3, CPD, CR, CH, CA, IND, MS, CEM, SR and CE).
- Artificial turf shall be permitted on property located in a mixed use zone (IMU, IMU-R, SFMU and DSP) only when not visible from the public street immediately adjacent to the property.



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