



City of Laguna Beach

Community Development
Department

INFORMATION GUIDE FOR:

LANDSCAPE DESIGN

Intent and Purpose

This guide provides a brief overview of the City's landscape plan review process. When landscape plans are required (as described below), the Design Review Board examines the plans for water-efficiency, view preservation, integration with existing vegetation, privacy enhancement, slope stability, bluff preservation, implementation of the Community Design and Landscape Guidelines and the Scenic Highways Element, the use of fuel modification techniques and yard waste minimization.

The City strongly urges water conservation through the effective use of drought-resistant planting materials in combination with well-designed irrigation systems. Importantly, the procedures, requirements, policies and techniques outlined herein are not meant to restrict innovative and creative landscape proposals. Designers are encouraged to implement their own water-management techniques whether in proposals submitted for plan review or in plans for private clients.

In an effort to assist the landscape designer, the City has prepared a booklet entitled "Recommendations for Landscape Design". This booklet offers many suggestions for achieving a water-efficient landscaping plan, including irrigation techniques and plant selection, and is available from the Department of Community Development. Since each zoning district may have individual landscape requirements, landscape professionals or designers of landscape should consult with staff to determine applicability of additional documents.

Background

The Design Review Board is authorized by the City Council to review new development plans and certain rehabilitation plans for compliance with building and site plan standards contained in the General Plan, Zoning Regulations and applicable Specific Plans. Landscape design approval is an integral part of the Design Review Board's evaluation process, and approval must be obtained in order for a project to continue through the building plan check process.

Applicability

Landscape plan approval is required for all multi-family, commercial, institutional, recreational and industrial landscaped areas (inclusive of all parking areas) and all new single family residential landscaped areas. The following are exempt from landscape plan approval:

1. Interior residential alterations, commercial or industrial tenant improvements and all demolitions.
2. Projects which do not require Planning Commission or Design Review Board approval.
3. Non-residential additions which do not result in a cumulative increase of more than 10% of the original floor area.
4. Replacement of existing plant material or repair of irrigation systems in conjunction with routine maintenance.
5. Additions that are less than 50% of the original gross floor area, do not create a new upper story or do not exceed a height of 15 feet above the adjacent ground elevation, when in conformance with the zoning regulations and not within an environmentally sensitive area.

The Process

After plans have completed the zoning plan check process, the project will be scheduled for a hearing before the Design Review Board. At that time, the applicant will be requested to bring in colored elevations, a materials board, and detailed landscape plans. All landscape plans must be submitted in duplicate and are required to contain the following information:

- * North arrow, scale and property lines.
- * All structures (buildings, signs, walls, fences, utility structures, overhead utilities, pools, decks, etc.)
- * Topographic grades (all slopes 3:1 or greater, final grades at property corners, all berms and landforms).
- * Identify existing vegetation scheduled to remain.
- * Plant legend indicating botanical and common names of all proposed plants. Include container size at installation and mature width and height for each species (shrubs at 5 years, trees at 10 years after installation)
- * Minimum planting sizes are as follows: Trees – 15 gallons; Shrubs – 5 gallons.
- * Minimum California Native planting sizes are as follows: Trees – 5 gallons; Shrubs – 1 gallon.
- * Each plant must be shown at mature size using symbols.
- * Indicate irrigation type (drip or spray, automatic or manual).
- * Lighting must be identified. Indicate fixture type, wattage and location. Submit manufacturer product information.
- * Alignment of the sewer and water lines to the main line connection point.

Landscape Techniques

The installation of water-conserving landscaping is strongly encouraged and may reduce a property owner's water costs substantially. Suggested techniques for accomplishing water-conservation goals are provided in the City's "Recommendations for Landscape Design". Basic techniques include using drought-tolerant or native plants, limiting turf areas, grouping plants according to their watering needs and incorporating soil amendments to improve water holding capacity.

To limit damage to below ground sewer pipes, it is recommended that trees and shrubs with aggressive root systems be planted at a distance of no less than 10 feet from a sewer pipe.

Irrigation Techniques

Water conservation in landscaping is greatly promoted by the use of well-designed, low-gallonage irrigation systems with automatic controllers. Landscape materials which require different watering needs should be irrigated by separate control valves. In addition, landscape designers are strongly encouraged to install irrigation that is sensitive to slope factors and should use reclaimed or recycled water whenever possible.