

MOTION

An historic and worsening drought has prompted a shift away from thirsty lawns to climate appropriate landscapes in the City of Los Angeles. This process of landscape transformation offers residents opportunities to help meet state and City mandates for conserving water (Governor's and Mayor's directives), preventing polluted runoff (MS4 Permit), mitigating climate change (AB 32) and reducing "heat island" impacts, recharging groundwater basins for local supply, supporting biodiversity (Sustainability City pLAn), reducing green waste going to landfill (AB 1826, AB 1594), and increasing healthy soil as a tool for groundwater restoration, drought resistance and carbon sequestration (Healthy Soil Initiative, SB 367).

According to the Bureau of Sanitation, one-half-inch of rain generates 3.8 billion gallons of polluted runoff in the City. According to the USDA, healthy soil sequesters carbon, holds 20 times its weight in water, reduces landscape irrigation needs, and promotes groundwater recharge. According to the Department of Water and Power (LADWP), an accelerated effort to recharge our groundwater basins and expand water reuse could increase our local water supply yield from 11% to 50% over the next two decades.

As the studies and models developed through these Departments' *Stormwater Capture Master Plan* and *Enhanced Watershed Management Plans* show, managing and harvesting rainwater on a property-by-property basis can significantly reduce stormwater pollution, mitigate local flooding, recharge local groundwater supplies, and offset the use of potable water for landscape irrigation. Simple retrofits designed to accomplish these complementary goals can save property owners money on their water bills and help the City implement more cost-effective green infrastructure projects.

Currently, LADWP's \$3.75/square-foot turf replacement rebate encourages the use of "California Friendly© plants, mulch, and permeable pathways." While this popular program is a good step in the right direction, it misses opportunities to realize the Department's comprehensive "Capture, Conserve, Reuse" motto through a more integrative, multi-benefit approach.

Removing lawn provides ideal opportunities to build healthy soils, expand habitat for pollinators, and to re-contour sites through grading techniques such as berms, swales, and basins that detain, cleanse, and infiltrate stormwater. These simple measures, utilized in concert with strategies such as rain tanks, reduced hardscapes, infiltration trenches and greywater systems, can simultaneously help residential property owners maximize available water resources, support the ongoing health of our urban forest, and assist the city in meeting its water supply, water quality, biodiversity, climate resilience and sustainability goals.

There is growing consensus around the value of parcel-based stormwater management, a "watershed approach" that synergistically treats each site as a mini-watershed where water is Captured, Conserved, and Reused, as follows:




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- Capturing at least the first 1" of rainwater with rain tanks, permeable surfaces, and grading strategies like bioswales, berms and basins to help manage stormwater onsite, improve water quality, reduce local flooding, and recharge local groundwater.
- Conserving outdoor water use by installing landscaping with at least 60% SoCal native, climate-appropriate plants and trees that support wildlife habitat and preserve our region's biodiversity, and with the use of mulch and organic ground covers that mitigate heat island impacts, build healthy soils, and help sequester carbon.
- Minimize use of water and utilize more water reuse to help maintain our urban forest and support landscape and ecosystem needs without additional potable supplies.

I THEREFORE MOVE that the Department of Water and Power and the Bureau of Sanitation, and consultation with stakeholders, be requested/directed to evaluate and present the City Council within 60 days options to incentivize applicants to meet this multi-benefit "watershed approach." Such options should include tiered rebate levels, on-bill financing, and measures to ensure fair geographic and economic distribution of rebate funds. Additionally, the options should describe their potential to accelerate or diminish expected water savings from turf removals and encourage direct groundwater recharge and infiltration where applicable.

I FURTHER MOVE that the Department of Water and Power and the Bureau of Sanitation be directed to report back in 60 days on potential funding sources to help incentivize residents to adopt the "watershed approach."

PRESENTED BY:



PAUL KORETZ
Councilmember, 5th District



PAUL KREKORIAN
Councilmember, 2nd District

SECONDED BY:

