



CITY OF COMMERCE AGENDA REPORT

TO: Honorable City Council

Item No. _____

FROM: City Manager

SUBJECT: PUBLIC HEARING TO CONSIDER AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF COMMERCE, CALIFORNIA, AMENDING TITLE 19 (ZONING) OF THE COMMERCE MUNICIPAL CODE TO ESTABLISH ARTIFICIAL TURF REGULATIONS FOR ALL ZONES CITYWIDE AND IN THE PUBLIC RIGHT-OF-WAY

MEETING DATE: October 14, 2025

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the City Council consider:

1. Opening the public hearing and taking testimonial and documentary evidence;
2. After closing the public hearing and considering the submitted evidence:
 - a. Introducing and waiving first reading of Ordinance No. _____ amending the Commerce Municipal Code ("CMC") establishing artificial turf regulations for all zones Citywide and in the public right-of-way as part of Zoning Ordinance Text Amendment ("ZTA") No. 25-01; and
 - b. Adopting a Categorical Exemption under the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (Public Resources Code §§ 21000, et seq. "CEQA") and the regulations promulgated thereunder (14 Cal. Code of Regs. §§ 15000, et seq., the "CEQA Guidelines") (CEQA Guidelines § 15060(c)(2), § 15378(b)(5), § 15301, § 15303 and § 15061(b)(3))
3. Taking such additional, related, action that may be desirable

PUBLIC NOTICE REQUIREMENTS:

Chapter 19.39.140 of the CMC requires the City of Commerce (the "City") to publish a notice of the public hearing including the time and place of the public hearing in a newspaper of general circulation in the City not less than ten (10) days prior to the date of the public hearing. Said notice was published in the Los Cerritos Community News on September 24, 2025.

CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT (CEQA):

Pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (Public Resources Code §§ 21000, et seq. “CEQA”) and the regulations promulgated thereunder (14 Cal. Code of Regs. §§ 15000, et seq., the “CEQA Guidelines”), the City reviewed the environmental impacts of the proposed Ordinance. No additional environmental review is required for this Ordinance pursuant to CEQA Guidelines § 15060(c)(2), § 15378(b)(5) § 15301 § 15303 and § 15061(b)(3). The proposed Ordinance is exempt from CEQA because it is a ZTA which regulates artificial turf Citywide, which will not have a direct or reasonably foreseeable indirect physical change in the environment and does not qualify as a “project” under CEQA because it will not make physical changes to the environment. The proposed Ordinance is also exempt from CEQA under the common sense exemption that it will not affect the environment. All future artificial turf proposals will require their own environmental review as outlined by CEQA guidelines.

BACKGROUND:

On July 30, 2025, the Planning Commission held a public hearing to consider ZTA No. 25-01 allowing artificial turf throughout all zones and public right-of-way areas in the City. During the hearing, the Commission posed several questions regarding:

- The types of materials used to install artificial turf;
- Concerns about the use of toxic materials;
- The approval process for artificial turf;
- The types of plant materials allowed; and
- Specific property locations where artificial turf could be installed.

Following staff presentations and public input, the Planning Commission continued the item to the August 30, 2025 meeting to allow time for staff to revise the Ordinance and address the concerns raised.

On August 20, 2025 at a continued public hearing, the Planning Commission reviewed the revised Ordinance for ZTA No. 25-01 and recommended that the City Council: 1) adopt the draft Ordinance establishing artificial turf regulations for all zones Citywide and in the public right-of-way; and 2) adopt a Categorical Exemption under the provisions of CEQA with a 3-0-2 vote.

State Legislation: Before 2015, artificial turf was permitted in only a few cities in Southern California. In 2015, Governor Brown passed Assembly Bill (AB) 1164 which prevented cities from prohibiting the installation of artificial turf in an effort to address the ongoing drought at the time. Since then, several cities have adopted ordinances to permit artificial turf as an alternative to live plants or hardscape materials.

Senate Bill (SB) 676, signed into law in 2023, counters the previously adopted bill and grants cities the authority to ban or limit the use of artificial turf due to growing health concerns about chemicals found in the materials used in artificial turf.

Current Standards: Artificial turf is currently found on properties throughout the City, but the CMC does not have any provisions which allow this in lieu of live plant materials and decorative hardscape within required landscaping areas. There are two chapters of Title

19, Zoning, of the CMC that regulate landscaping throughout the City including: Chapter 19.23, Landscaping Standards, and Chapter 19.24, Water-Efficient Landscaping Regulations.

The standards below outline the current landscape regulations for all zones and public right-of-way areas:

- **Non-residential properties (CMC Section 19.23.050.A):** All building setback areas require landscaping, which may include hardscape elements.
- **Residential properties (CMC Section 19.23.050.B):** All building setback areas with visibility to streets require landscaping, which may include hardscape elements.
- **Public right-of-way areas (CMC Section 19.23.050.D):** Property owners must maintain a planting strip within the public right-of-way abutting each property.
- **Parking areas (CMC Section 19.23.050.D):** Parking areas require landscaping pursuant to Section 19.21.120.
- **Ground cover (CMC Section 19.23.090):** Allowed ground cover includes turf, shrubs, vines, or similar live plant materials.
- **Water-Efficient Landscaping Regulations (CMC Chapter 19.24):** Water-Efficient Landscaping Regulations are additional standards that apply to larger-scale landscape projects (i.e. new or rehabilitated landscape areas greater than 2,000 square feet) to promote water conservation.
- **Definition of "Landscaping" (CMC Section 19.45.130):** means areas devoted to, or developed and maintained predominantly with, native or exotic plant materials including lawn, ground cover, trees, shrubs, and other plant materials. Landscaping may also include small amounts of accessory decorative outdoor landscape elements (i.e., hardscape) such as pools, fountains, and paved or decorated surfaces, all of which are suitably designed, selected, installed, and maintained to enhance a site.
- **Definition of "Hardscape" (CMC Section 19.45.090):** means decorative elements that may be combined with landscaping to satisfy the landscaping requirements of this [Title 19](#). Hardscape elements include, but are not necessarily limited to, natural features such as rock and stone; and structural features such as fountains, reflecting pools, swimming pools, art works, screens, walls, fences, benches, and crushed granite.

Due to persistent drought conditions and increased community interest in the installation of artificial turf, the City is now considering allowing this type of low-maintenance landscape material, which requires no watering, is low maintenance and can remain green for an extended period.

Advantages of Artificial Turf: Some of the advantages of using artificial turf are that it requires very little maintenance, conserves water and reduces greenhouse gas emissions and pollutants since it does not need to be mowed or fertilized. It is also ideal for certain areas on properties that get very little sunlight. Artificial turf is constructed of durable materials that typically has a manufacturer's warranty between 8 to 15 years ensuring its green and healthy appearance. Additional benefits include that it looks well-manicured, is manufactured to be non-toxic and non-allergenic, is uninhabitable by mosquitos, fleas, and ticks, and allows water/rainwater to percolate through the turf and into the ground. An artificial turf area that is approximately 750 square feet can conserve 22,000 gallons of water per year.

Disadvantages of Artificial Turf: While artificial turf can be considered environmentally friendly in some respects, it also has disadvantages. One of the disadvantages of artificial turf is that it is made of rubber and plastic and can reach much higher temperatures (20 to 50 degrees higher) than the outdoor temperature, causing a “heat island” effect. Heat islands contribute to higher daytime temperatures, reduce nighttime cooling, and can contribute to higher air-pollution levels. There are also concerns over chemicals found in the materials used in artificial turf installations, such as the use of crumb rubber, derived from recycled tires, as infill layers below the artificial turf. There are concerns that the “heat island” effect can cause chemicals to leach from the crumb rubber into the ground. Artificial turf has also been known to harbor odors and bacterial growth from animals. Furthermore, it can be costly to install, as a 500-square-foot application typically costs over \$6,000. Despite these disadvantages, artificial turf technology has evolved and improved to reduce the overall heat island effect, prevent odor and bacterial growth from animals, and incorporate natural infill.

ANALYSIS:

The Community Development Department has initiated a ZTA No. 25-01 to amend Title 19, Zoning, of the CMC to allow artificial turf as follows:

- Amend definition of “landscaping” to state that in addition to plant materials, landscaping may include artificial turf; and
- Amend CMC Chapter 19.23, Landscaping Standards, by adding artificial turf provisions.

The proposed Ordinance includes artificial turf provisions to ensure that the appearance, maintenance, and safety of the community are addressed Citywide.

Key components of the proposed artificial turf provisions:

- **Residential properties:** Allowed in lieu of live plant materials within required setbacks, parking areas and in other landscaping areas in residential zones subject to the approval of plan by the Community Development Director. A minimum of 30% of the required setback areas visible from the street must be designed with live natural plant and tree materials.
- **Non-Residential properties:** Allowed in lieu of live plant materials within required setbacks, parking areas and in other landscaping areas in non-residential zones. First review of the artificial turf plan is to be conducted by the Community Development Director and final approval by the Planning Commission (as a consent item on the Planning Commission agenda). A minimum of 30% of the required setback areas visible from the street must be designed with live natural plant and tree materials.
- **Public right-of-way:** Allowed within landscaped parkways within the public right-of-way, subject to the approval of the Public Works Director.
- **Prohibitions:**
 - Prohibited in lieu of paved surfaces in driveways and parking areas.
 - Indoor/outdoor plastic or nylon carpeting is prohibited.

- Artificial shrubs, flowers, trees and vines are prohibited.
- Materials containing toxic substances (such as shredded recycled tires) are prohibited.
- **Materials:**
 - Pile (blade) height: Minimum height: 1½ -inches with parallel long slit blades
 - Colors: Must include at least 2 natural green colors
 - Thatch Layer: Must contain a beige or tan thatch layer
 - Percolation: Must be affixed to a triple-layer backing that allows water to percolate at least 30-inches per hour to prevent runoff, pooling and flooding.
 - Heavy Metals: Must be consistent with federal and state standards related to lead and heavy metal content.
 - Fill Material: Must be an organic infill such as silica sand or zeolite.
- **Installation:** Must be installed pursuant to manufacturer's requirements by a licensed professional. The installation standards outline site preparation requirements, proper drainage and anchoring and protection of natural trees.
- **Maintenance:** Must be maintained in an attractive, clean, unfaded and untorn condition, free of weeds, stains, holes or depressions, among others.

FISCAL IMPACT

This activity can be carried out without additional impact on the current operating budget.

ALTERNATIVES:

1. Approve recommendation;
2. Reject recommendation; or
3. Provide staff with further direction.

RELATIONSHIP TO STRATEGIC GOALS:

This agenda item relates to the 2016 Strategic Plan:

Community Quality of Life

Guiding Principle 4, Support and evaluate community services, programs and events that promote healthy and quality lifestyles for our residents. Enhance public safety and social services through innovative programs that meet the needs of the residential and business communities.

Recommended by: Jessica Serrano, Director of Community Development

Reviewed by:

Approved as to form: Noel Tapia, City Attorney

Respectfully submitted: Ernie Hernandez, City Manager

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Ordinance No. _____
2. Notice of Categorical Exemption