



## STAFF REPORT ZONING ORDINANCE TEXT AMENDMENT NO. 25-01

**TO:** Planning Commission

**FROM:** Community Development Department

**DATE:** July 30, 2025 (Special Meeting)

**CASE NO.:** Zoning Ordinance Text Amendment ("ZTA") No. 25-01  
(CEQA Exemption § 15060(c)(2), § 15378(b)(5) § 15301 § 15303 and § 15061(b)(3))

**REQUEST:**

To amend Title 19 (Zoning) of the Commerce Municipal Code ("CMC") to establish artificial turf regulations for all zones and public right-of-way areas Citywide (hereinafter, the "Ordinance").

**LOCATION:** Citywide in all zones and public right-of-way areas

**APPLICANT:** City of Commerce

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION:**

Planning Commission of the City of Commerce ("Planning Commission") recommend that the City Council: 1) adopt 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)); and 2) adopt the related ZTA as discussed herein.

**PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE:**

The Public Hearing Notice was published in the Los Cerritos News on July 10, 2025.

**ATTACHMENTS:** A) Planning Commission Resolution No. 25-06  
B) Ordinance No. \_\_\_\_

**ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT:**

Pursuant to CEQA and 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.

#### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:**

The Community Development Department staff initiated a ZTA to amend Title 19, Zoning, of the CMC to add artificial turf regulations. The Ordinance would allow artificial turf in all zones in the City and in public right-of-way areas. The Ordinance would allow an alternative option for landscaping areas and landscaped parkways required by the Municipal Code in lieu of live plant materials and decorative hardscape. The proposed amendment will ensure that land use and urban design practices promote water conservation through landscaping and beautification of the City.

#### **BACKGROUND:**

**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:**

- **Privately-owned properties:** Allowed in lieu of live plant materials within required setbacks, parking areas and in other landscaping areas in all zones subject to the approval of a landscape plan by the Community Development Director.
- **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:**
  - 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.

## CONCLUSION:

While there are pros and cons to installing artificial turf, many property owners have expressed to staff their desire to install more artificial turf to meet their preferences and needs. Given that the City of Commerce is located in an area with a propensity to droughts and that property owners are seeking to incorporate water conserving measures, amending the landscape standards to allow artificial turf as an alternative to live plant materials and hardscape will give property owners the option to be more flexible and creative with their landscape design.

The proposed Ordinance will provide property owners with the option of installing artificial turf instead of live plant materials within privately-owned properties and within the public right-of-way, subject to standards related to aesthetics, materials, installation and maintenance.

Staff recommends that Planning Commission recommend that the City Council: 1) adopt a Categorical Exemption under the provisions of CEQA and CEQA Guidelines (CEQA Guidelines § 15060(c)(2), § 15378(b)(5) § 15301 § 15303 and § 15061(b)(3)); and 2) adopt the related ZTA as discussed herein.

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**ATTACHMENT A**  
**PLANNING COMMISSION RESOLUTION NO. \_\_\_\_**

**ATTACHMENT B**  
**ORDINANCE NO. \_\_\_\_**