



Policy Type: Board

Category: Sustainability

Policy Name: Sustainable Landscaping Policy - Board Policy 8.5

[← Previous Policy Manual Section](#)

8.5 SUSTAINABLE LANDSCAPING POLICY (Adopted 3-22-16)

Policy Summary

The County of Santa Clara finds and declares that the landscaping practices by County departments can have significant impacts on the environment. As of 2015, the County government owns 735 parcels and nearly 48,455 acres of land. Decisions regarding the development and maintenance of property under County jurisdiction provide an opportunity to promote the sustainable use of water and land, conserve soils and vegetation, support natural ecosystem functions, conserve materials, promote human health and well-being, and ensure accessibility for all users, including those with disabilities. Therefore, County operations shall practice "Sustainable Landscaping" in accordance with the following principles, practices, and standards.

A sustainable landscape is a whole system approach to the design, construction and maintenance of the landscape in order to support the integrity of the regional watershed and local ecology. Sustainable landscapes embody community values for health and safety, wildlife and the environment. It is a healthy and resilient landscape that will endure over the long term and without the need for a high input of resources. The natural functions and processes of the landscape are able to maintain themselves into the future. The following principles and related practices shall serve as a foundation for the recommendations under this policy:



- Landscape Locally
- Landscape for Less to the Landfill
- Nurture the Soil
- Conserve Water
- Conserve Energy
- Protect Water & Air Quality
- Create & Protect Wildlife Habitat

Purpose

This policy sets forth goals and strategies for County operations to achieve sustainable outcomes rather than specifying prescriptive solutions and technology. Decisions regarding the design, construction and maintenance of sustainable landscapes on property under County government jurisdiction can provide an opportunity to positively impact urban forestry; open space, parks, and trails; water conservation and quality; air quality and climate change; recycling and waste reduction; energy conservation and greenhouse gas emissions; mobility and transportation; community health and safety; food production and nutrition; disaster and emergency resilience, and strengthen the vitality and livability of the communities in which County facilities are located.

Scope (Applicability) of Policy

This policy applies to all County departments, agencies, offices, officers, and employees for landscape practices and activities when constructing new, or rehabilitating existing County-owned land or space, or when landscaping improvements are otherwise planned on existing landscapes. This policy does not supersede the requirements contained in applicable County, State, or Federal law or regulations that may be more specific and/or more stringent.



All County departments, agencies, offices, officers, and employees should strive to balance natural resource management priorities with development needs (energy, security, infrastructure) while considering cultural, recreational, and environmental resources inherent in the landscape. This policy and associated Sustainable Landscaping Guidelines (Guidelines) are intended to enhance, not inhibit, County planning, operations and maintenance.

This policy shall be applied in a manner that achieves the maximum consistency with the landscaping performance standards contained in the "Sustainable Landscaping Principles, Practices and Standards" identified below. These best practices and performance goals for the design, construction, and maintenance of sustainable landscapes described in this document are drawn from the Bay Friendly Landscape Guidelines prepared by the Bay Friendly Landscaping Coalition and Stopwaste.org, and from Guidance for Federal Agencies on Sustainable Practices for Designed Landscapes issued by the Council on Environmental Quality.

This policy reflects the intent of the Board of Supervisors, and establishes a structure for planning, designing, installing, maintaining and managing water efficient landscapes in new construction and rehabilitated projects; establishes provisions for water management practices and water waste prevention for existing landscapes by utilizing sustainable landscaping, a whole systems approach to the design, construction and maintenance of the landscape.

Sustainable Landscaping Principles, Practices and Standards

Sustainable landscaping is a whole systems approach to the design, construction, and management of the landscape in order to support the integrity of the regional watershed. The following principles serve as a foundation for the recommendations that are to be contained in the



Guidelines on the best practices and performance goals for the design, construction, and maintenance of sustainable landscapes:

- (1) Landscape in harmony with the natural conditions of the local watershed
 - (2) Reduce waste and recycling materials
 - (3) Nurture healthy soils while reducing fertilizer use
 - (4) Conserve water, energy and topsoil
 - (5) Use integrated pest management to minimize chemical use
 - (6) Reduce stormwater runoff and air pollution
 - (7) Protect and enhance wildlife habitat and biodiversity

These principals are intended to inspire flexibility, innovation, and a culture change. They apply equally to new construction, major renovations and, to a lesser extent, alterations to existing small scale landscaping efforts. The recommendations can be adapted to support the County's diverse environmental stewardship and sustainability missions and policies.

A well-designed and maintained sustainable landscape can cost less to maintain in the long run, as well as lead to increased customer satisfaction. By being proactive, the County can be part of the environmental solution rather than reacting to more severe water conservation and pollution controls that are increasingly likely due to our region's growing population and local changes in climate.

Related Policies

- Green Building Policy for County Government Buildings - Board Policy 7.14 - <https://saecommon.sccgov.org/countypolicy/Board-Policy-7.14-Green-Building-Policy-for-County-Government-Buildings.pdf>
- Zero Waste Policy For County Facilities and Operations - Board Policy 8.4 - <https://saecommon.sccgov.org/countypolicy/Board-Policy-8.4-Zero-Waste-Policy-For-County-Facilitites-and-Operations.pdf>



Related Forms and Information

- Bay-Friendly Landscape Guidelines -
[url]/sites/policies/FormsrelatedtoPolicies/Bay-Friendly-Landscape-Guidelines.pdf

History

Date	Changes Made
4/18/2016	Policy Uploaded. (David Bruno)
3/22/2016	Policy Adopted. View legislative file.