

## Chapter 20.36 - LANDSCAPING

### Sections:

**20.36.010 Purpose**

**20.36.020 Applicability**

**20.36.030 Water Efficient Landscaping Ordinance**

**20.36.040 Landscape and Sprinkler Plans**

**20.36.050 Required Landscape Areas**

**20.36.060 Landscape Standards**

### **20.36.010 Purpose**

The landscaping standards contained in this chapter are intended to enhance the aesthetic appearance of developed areas within Merced and to promote the efficient use of water resources.

### **20.36.020 Applicability**

This chapter applies to all new development with landscape areas as follows:

- A. Greater than 500 square feet; or,
- B. Rehabilitated landscape projects with an aggregated landscape area equal to or greater than 2,500 square feet.



### **20.36.030 Water Efficient Landscaping Ordinance**

In addition to the standards contained in this chapter, all applicable development in Merced shall also comply with Municipal Code Chapter 17.60 (Water Efficient Landscaping and Irrigation) and any subsequent amendments or emergency drought regulations. Chapter 17.60 implements the California Water Conservation in Landscaping Act (Government Code Section 65591 et seq.). In the event of a conflict, Chapter 17.60 or State regulations will prevail, whichever is more stringent.

### 20.36.040 Landscape and Sprinkler Plans

**A. Landscape and Sprinkler Plan Required.** Projects subject to the requirements of this chapter and Chapter 17.60 shall submit a landscape and sprinkler plan as part of applications for all permits as required by the Zoning Ordinance and as part of subsequent Building Permit applications.

**B. Required Contents.** Landscape plans shall include the following features and information:



1. Site boundaries.
2. Existing structures on the property.
3. Structures immediately adjacent to the property.
4. All new structures and improvements proposed as part of the development project.
5. Existing landscaping, trees, and vegetation to be retained.

6. All new landscaping proposed, including parking lot and street trees, as part of the development project specifying plant location, species, and size.

7. Irrigation plan specifying the location, type, and size of all components of the irrigation system, including backflow prevention devices.

8. Water efficient landscape calculations, including hydrozone information table, water budget calculations, maximum applied water allowance, estimated total water use, and soil management and grading plans per Chapter 17.60.

9. Any additional information as determined by the Director of Development Services to demonstrate compliance with the requirements of this chapter.



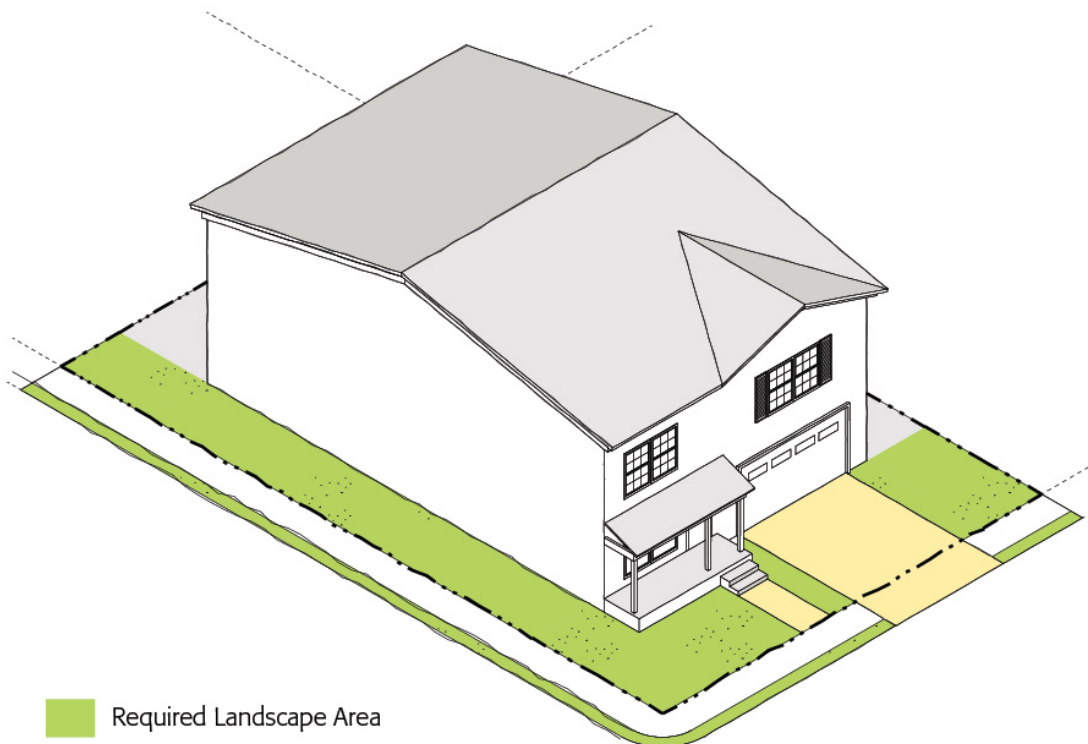
**C. Review and Approval.** The Development Services Department shall review all landscape plans to verify compliance with the requirements of this chapter. Landscape plans shall be approved by the review authority acting upon the permit application for the proposed new development.

**D. Changes to Approved Landscape Plans.**

1. Substantial modifications to an approved landscape plan shall be made only by the review authority which approved the landscape plan.
2. The Director of Development Services may approve minor modifications to a landscape plan previously approved by the Planning Commission or City Council. Minor modifications are defined as changes to a landscape plan that bring the plans into conformance with State Law (including emergency drought regulations), do not significantly decrease the total amount of landscaped area, alter the general design character or water conservation of the landscaped area, or alter a feature of the landscaped area specifically required by the decision-making authority, unless as otherwise required by State law.

**20.36.050 Required Landscape Areas****A. Residential Zoning Districts.**

1. All required exterior setback areas, excluding areas required for access to the property, shall be landscaped. See Figure 20.36-1.

**FIGURE 20.36-1 REQUIRED LANDSCAPE AREA FOR RESIDENTIAL ZONING DISTRICTS**

2. Landscaping may consist of any combination of living plants such as trees, shrubs and turf; related natural features such as rock, stone or bark chips; or artificial turf that meets acceptable standards as determined by the Department of Development Services. Decorative hardscape featuring pervious materials are permitted within required landscaping areas. Drought tolerant landscape materials are required, unless otherwise approved with a Minor Use Permit.
3. Street trees per City standards.

**B. Non-Residential Zoning Districts.**

1. The minimum landscaped area on a site shall be as shown in Table 20.36-1. Outdoor dining areas and other similar quasi-public outdoor seating areas do not count toward landscaping requirements.
2. All required exterior setback areas excluding areas required for access to the property and public or quasi-public open space such as courtyards and outdoor seating shall be landscaped.

**TABLE 20.36-1 MINIMUM LANDSCAPED AREA IN NON-RESIDENTIAL ZONING DISTRICTS**

Zoning Districts	Minimum Landscaped Area
D-COR, D-O, D-CM, P-PK	10%
C-G, C-T, C-N, C-SC, C-O, P-F, C-V	15%
I-L, I-H, A-G, U-T	None
B-P	15%
P-OS, P-D	As determined by the permit approval process

**20.36.060 Landscape Standards**

**A. General Standards.** The following standards apply within all zoning districts.

1. **Plant Selection.** A minimum of 90 percent of plants and trees shall be selected drought-tolerant, non-invasive species, unless otherwise approved with a Minor Use Permit.

## 2. Turf Lawns.

- a. Natural turf areas shall be limited to no more than 50 percent of the landscaped area. The Planning Commission may approve larger areas if the lawn area provides functional open space for ballfields, etc.



- b. Drought-resistant grass species shall be used exclusively.

- c. Turf shall not be used on berms, slopes greater than 25 percent, street median, or park strips less than 10 feet wide unless sub-surface irrigation is used.

- d. Artificial turf may be used in all areas if it meets the minimum standards as established by the Development Services Department.

3. **Plant Groupings.** Where irrigation is proposed, plants shall be grouped in separate hydrozones (i.e., plants within each irrigation valve area shall have the same watering requirements).
4. **Water Features.** Decorative water features (e.g., fountains, ponds, waterfalls) shall have recirculating water systems.
5. **Public Safety.** Plant species shall be selected and located so that at maturity they do not interfere with pedestrian, bicycle, or vehicular circulation and do not conflict with overhead lights, or utility lines.

## B. Irrigation and Water Efficiency.

Landscaped areas shall comply with the following irrigation and water efficiency.

1. **Irrigation System.** Water-efficient irrigation systems (e.g., bubbler type, drip, mini-spray) shall be required. Irrigation systems shall include check valves to prevent low head drainage, appropriate nozzles to prevent overspray, and automatic and self-adjusting irrigation controllers that include moisture and/or rain sensor shutoff; or other systems meeting minimum standards as established by the Development Services Department.





## 2. Irrigation Schedule.

Landscape irrigation hours shall be in compliance with Section 15.42 (Water Shortage Regulations).

## C. Timing of Installation.

Landscaping systems shall be installed prior to final building permit inspection or certification of occupancy.

## D. Maintenance.

1. **General.** Landscape areas shall be maintained in a neat and healthful condition at all times, except in times of an official drought declaration by the Merced City Council.
2. **Replacement of Dead or Dying Plants.** Within 90 days of a determination by the Director of Public Works that a plant is dead or severely damaged or diseased, the plant shall be replaced by the property owner in accordance with the standards specified in this chapter.

3. **Removal of Landscaping.** Any removed mature landscaping shall be replaced with landscaping of similar size and maturity as that which was removed. Mature trees shall be replaced with a 24 inch-box tree at minimum.



4. **Irrigation Systems.**

Irrigation systems shall be maintained in a fully functional manner as approved by the City and required by this chapter.