Landscape Transformation Activities

Water & Wastewater Commission | June 12, 2024

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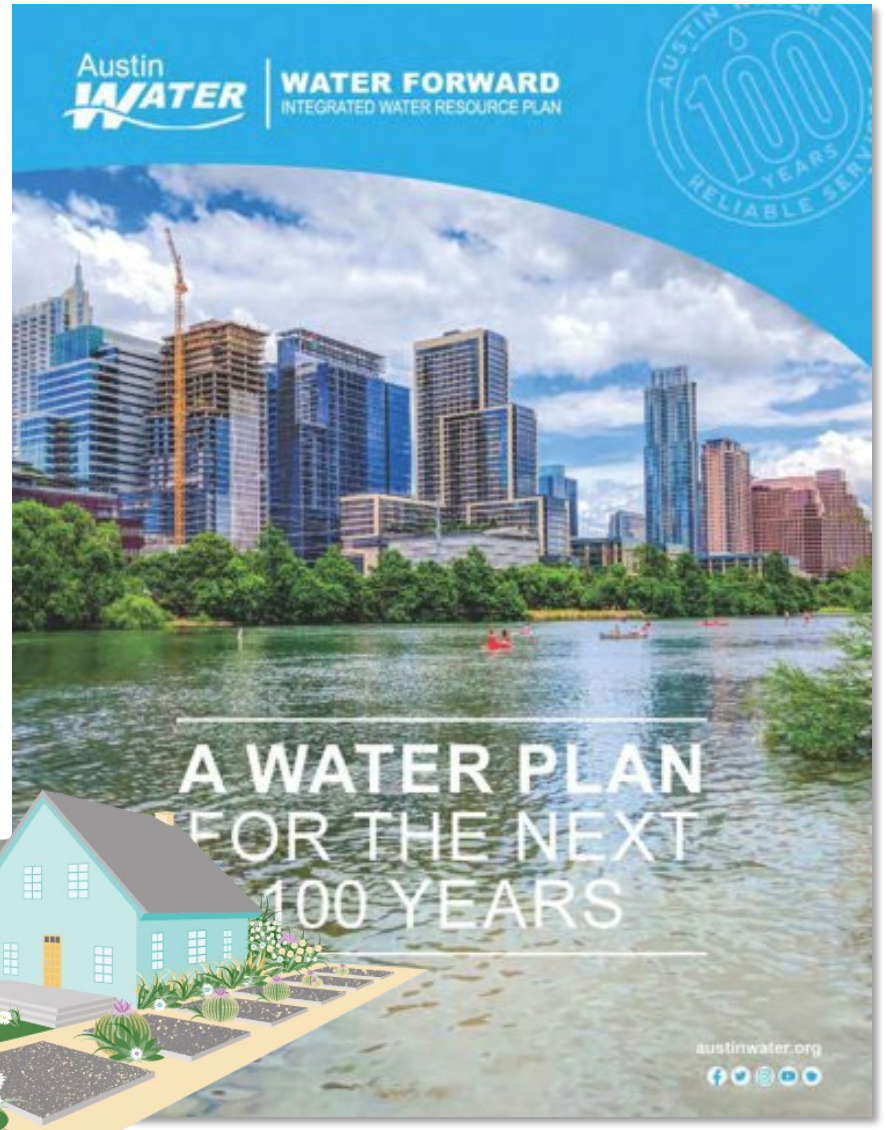
Austin WATER

Why New Water Conservation Measures?

- Lakes are 50% full
- Highland Lakes inflow
  - 2022 - record low
  - 2023 – 4th lowest
- El Niño will shift to La Niña
- Drought Stage 2 restrictions
- Per-person use has declined but plateaued

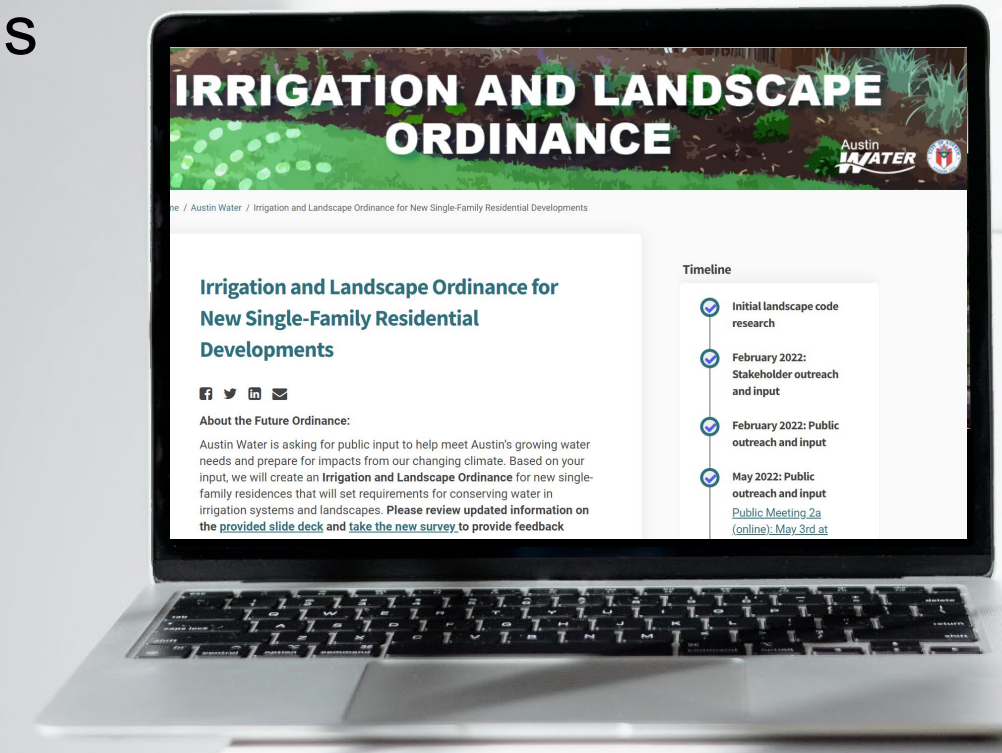
Landscape Transformation Strategy

- From traditional landscaping to plants with reduced water needs
- New single-family residential
- Potential limits on turf and irrigation
- Savings goal of 2,490 AF (811 MG) by 2040



Public Engagement & Input

- Public and stakeholder meetings
  - February, May, June, & November 2022
  - August 2023
- Smaller stakeholder group meetings
- Speak Up Austin! page
  - 2 surveys (256 and 303 responses)
  - Majority of local responses favored regulating landscape transformation



Internal City Stakeholders

- Watershed Protection Department (WPD)
- Development Services Department (DSD)
- Austin Energy (AE) – Green Building
- Office of Sustainability
- Equity Office
- Planning and Housing Department
- Wildlife Austin (PARD)
- Austin Fire Department – (Wildland-Urban Interface)

Stakeholder Meetings

- Home Builders Association of Greater Austin (HBA)
  - Concern about project delays
- Central Texas Professional Irrigation Association - (CTPIA)
  - Supported increased enforcement
  - Supported high-efficiency irrigation system components
- Association of Professional Landscape Architects (ASLA)
- Texas Nursery and Landscape Assoc. (TNLA – Region 8)

Additional Meetings

- Other utilities in Texas
  - New Braunfels
    - Model homes with 50% turf reduction
  - City of Frisco
    - Post-installation inspections (within 1-2 days)
    - Irrigation check-up
  - Georgetown
    - Residential landscape ordinance

Steps to Transform Landscapes

Build with savings

Set customers up for success

Encourage alternative water

Build with Savings

- Enhanced Soil Inspections
  - A minimum of 6 inches of topsoil
  - Topsoil mix composed of 20% compost
  - Estimated Water Savings: 10% reduction

- Required residential plant list
  - Apply commercial plant requirements to residential
  - Grow Green Plant Guide as a model

Build with Savings

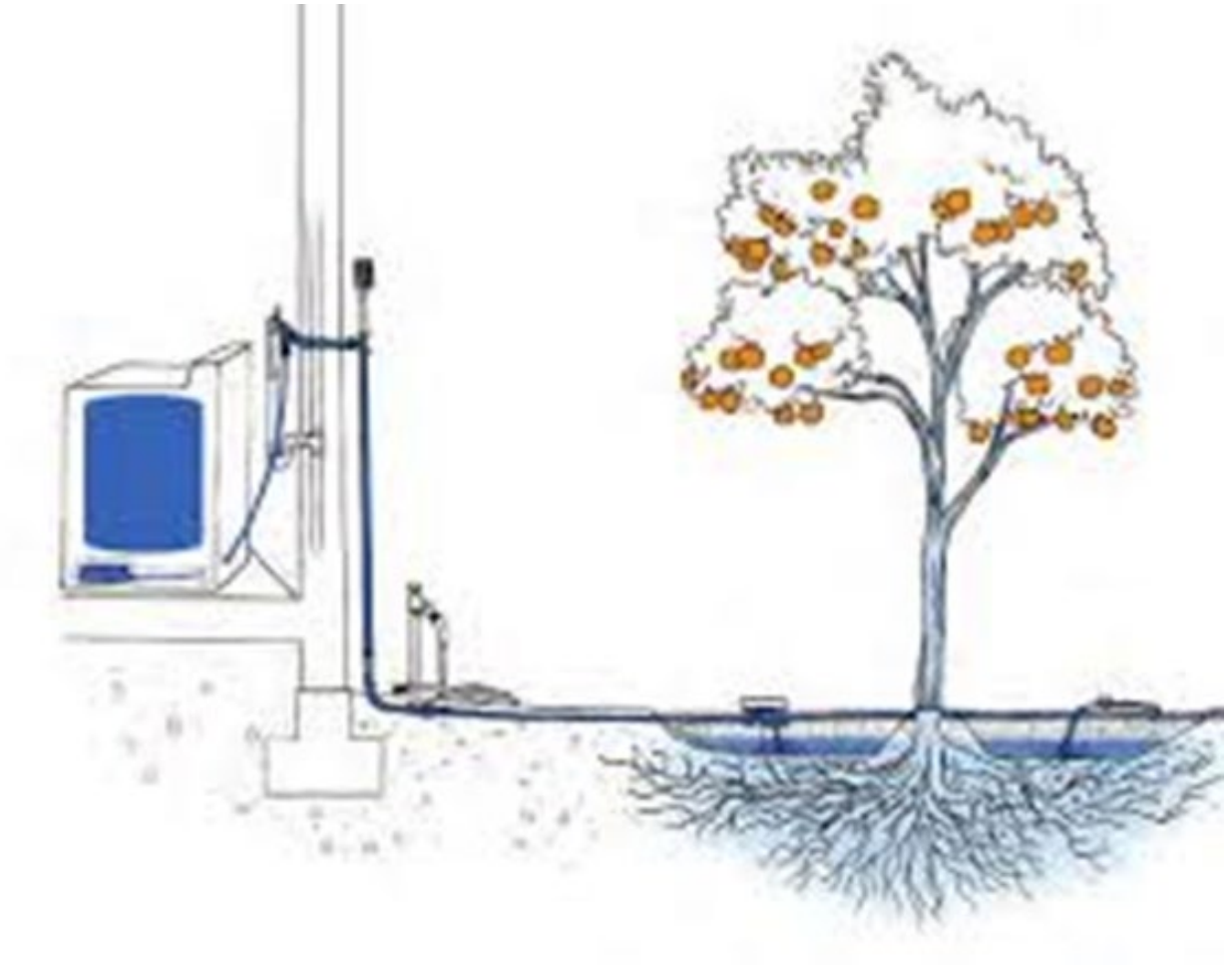
- Limit irrigation area
  - Up to 50% of landscape area; front yard or back
  - Estimated Water Savings: 35% annually per home

Set Customers Up for Success

	Est. Water Savings	Potential Cost
Require pressure reduction devices (new irrigation systems)	22% savings	$543 plus labor
Require post-installation inspection (new irrigation systems)	10% savings	Austin Water inspection
Offer new home irrigation check-ups within 90 days	5% savings	Austin Water staff time

Encourage Alternative Water

- Required plumbing for laundry to landscape
  - New homes with laundry on exterior wall
  - Estimated water supply: 3,500 gallons/year
  - Potential cost: $109 plus labor



Encourage Alternative Water

- Incentivize builders to add rainwater harvesting
  - Incentivize building homes with 500-gallon tanks/systems
  - Estimated water supply: 5,000 gallons/year
  - Estimated cost: No required costs

Summary

Activity	Potential Savings or *Supply* (gal/yr/home)	Anticipated Implementation
Soil and compost requirements in new homes (existing code)	1,800	June 2023
Inspection of new irrigation systems	800	Summer 2024
Require irrigation pressure devices for new irrigation systems (2024 Uniform Plumbing Code)	1,800	January 2025
Limit irrigation area in new homes (2024 Uniform Plumbing Code)	9,800	January 2025
Require laundry to landscape-ready plumbing in new homes (2024 Uniform Plumbing Code)	*3,500*	January 2025
Required plant list in new homes	Undetermined	To be determined
Irrigation check ups for new irrigation systems (pending inspection implementation)	400	To be determined
Builder-scale rainwater harvesting rebate for new homes	*5,000*	To be determined

Questions?
Austin
WATER
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