AUG 24 2026 PM 2:24

RULE NO. R161-26.28

NOTICE OF PROPOSED RULE **POSTING DATE: August 24, 2026**

The Directors of Austin Water and Austin Development Services propose to adopt the following rule on October 1, 2026.

EFFECTIVE DATE OF PROPOSED RULE

A rule proposed in this notice may not become effective before the effective date established by a separate notice of rule adoption. A notice of rule adoption may not be posted before September 25, 2026, or after November 2, 2026 (the 70th day after the date of this notice).

If a proposed rule is not adopted on or before November 2, 2026, it is automatically withdrawn and cannot be adopted without first posting a new notice of a proposed rule.

REQUEST FOR COMMENTS ON PROPOSED RULES

The City requests comments from the public with respect to the proposed rule included in this Notice. Comments must be submitted in writing to the contact person below no later than September 24, 2026. A summary of the written comments received will be included in the notice of rule adoption that must be posted for the rule to become effective.

Contact Person:

Kevin Kluge
Water Conservation Manager
Austin Water
Kevin.kluge@austintexas.gov
512-972-0073

TEXT OF PROPOSED RULE

The text of the proposed rule indicating changes from the current text is attached to this notice.

BRIEF EXPLANATION OF PROPOSED RULE

R161-26.28: Proposed addition to Building Criteria Manual, Section 4.8
Rule 1 – Addition of Building Criteria Manual Section 4.8

1. SECTION 4.8.0 – Information about the requirements for new residential landscape irrigation systems
2. SECTION 4.8.1 – New residential irrigation system inspection to be conducted as part of an irrigation permit
3. SECTION 4.8.2 –State of Texas irrigation requirements
4. SECTION 4.8.3 –City of Austin irrigation requirements, as part of the Uniform Plumbing Code, Landscape Irrigation

5. SECTION 4.8.4 – Limitation of residential landscape irrigation, as part of the Uniform Plumbing Code, Landscape Irrigation

An affordability impact statement regarding the proposed rule is available by contacting Kevin Kluge at kevin.kluge@austintexas.gov or 512-972-0400.

AUTHORITY FOR ADOPTION OF PROPOSED RULE

The authority and procedure for adoption of a rule to assist in the implementation, administration, or enforcement of a provision of the City Code is provided in City Code Chapter 1-2 (*Adoption of Rules*). The authority to adopt this rule is established in City Code Section 15-9-9 (*Criteria Manuals*).

CERTIFICATION BY CITY ATTORNEY

By signing this Notice of Proposed Rule R161-26.28, the City Attorney certifies the City Attorney has reviewed the rule and finds that adoption of the rule is a valid exercise of the Director's administrative authority.

REVIEWED AND APPROVED:

Daniel Word, Asst. Director, acting for Date: 8/20/2026

Keith Marrs, Director
Austin Development Services

Date: 8/19/2026

Shay Ralls-Roalson, Director
Austin Water

Date: 8/24/26

Deborah Thomas
City Attorney

4.8.0 – RESIDENTIAL LANDSCAPE IRRIGATION

This section provides inspection requirements for automatic landscape irrigation systems installed in residential lots.

4.8.1 – Irrigation Inspections

A property owner that has installed a new landscape irrigation system constructed under an irrigation permit application shall have a residential irrigation inspection conducted by the City prior to irrigation permit approval.

4.8.2 – State Irrigation Requirements

In addition to City of Austin requirements, property owners shall comply with State of Texas landscape irrigation requirements in Title 30, Texas Administrative Code, Chapter 344: Rules for Landscape Irrigation.

4.8.3 – City of Austin Irrigation Requirements

Property owners shall comply with City of Austin requirements for automatic irrigation installation which are included in the Uniform Plumbing Code local amendments for §25-12-151, 614 Landscape Irrigation.

4.8.4 – Restriction of Landscape Irrigation Installation

Property owners, builders, and irrigation system installers shall comply with the limitation on the area of automatic landscape irrigation as described herein.

4.8.4.1 – Definitions

a) BACK BUILDING LINE means a line that is parallel to the rear lot line and that intersects the principal residential structure at the point where the structure is closest to the rear lot line, including any allowed projections into the back yard setback.

b) FRONT BUILDING LINE means a line that is parallel to the front lot line and that intersects the principal residential structure at the point where the structure is closest to the front lot line, including any allowed projections into the front yard setback.

c) FRONT LOT LINE means: for an interior lot, the lot line abutting the street; for a corner lot, the lot line designated as the front lot line by a subdivision or parcel map, or, if none, the shorter lot line abutting a street; for a through lot, the lot line abutting the street that provides the primary access to the lot; and for a flag lot, the lot line designated as the front lot line by a subdivision or parcel map, or if none, the line determined by the building official to be the front lot line. (See section §25-1-21(44)).

d) REAR LOT LINE means the lot line that does not intersect the front lot line, or that is determined in accordance with Section 25-1-22 (*Measurements*). (See section §25-1-21(92).

e) LANDSCAPED AREA means an area devoted to plant material, planters, brick, stone, water, aggregate, and other landscape features, excepting smooth concrete or asphalt, where the use of inorganic materials does not predominate over the use of plants. (Land Development Code §25-1-21(61)).

f) LOT means (a) a parcel of real property with a unique designation shown on a plat, record of survey, parcel map, or subdivision map recorded in the office of the County Clerk; or (b) a parcel of real property established under zoning or subdivision regulations. (Land Development Code §25-1-21(65)).

4.8.4.2 – Basic Requirements

a) Property owners installing new irrigation systems must comply with Uniform Plumbing Code (UPC) local amendment §25-12-153, 614.1.1 which specifies:

> *A new irrigation system for a one- or two-family dwellings permitted must be designed and installed to cover no more than 50 percent of the total landscaped area, including the front and side yard or the back and side yard.*

b) Property owners installing new irrigation systems must demonstrate compliance with this UPC limitation during the City's inspection of new landscape irrigation systems. Any such inspected irrigation system determined to be out of compliance with the UPC irritation system limitation shall fail the irrigation inspection.

c) If, at the time of an inspection of landscape irrigation for an applicable residential lot, the installed automatic irrigation system is greater than 50 percent of the landscaped area, per the three methods of compliance (4.8.4.4), the portion of the irrigation system above 50 percent must be physically removed from the ground in order to pass the irrigation inspection.

4.8.4.3 – Applicability of Restriction

a) One- or two-family residential dwellings on a lot served by Austin Water and subject to the current Uniform Plumbing Code are subject to the UPC limitation for new automatic landscape irrigation systems to 50 percent of the landscaped area.

b) If the building permit application for the dwelling was submitted on or after July 10, 2025, the dwelling and any new irrigation system serving the lot must comply with the 2024 Uniform Plumbing Code which includes the UPC limitation to new irrigation systems cited in 4.8.4.2. If the application was submitted before July 10, 2025, the 2021 Uniform Plumbing Code applies, which did not include the above cited irrigation limitation. A residential lot with more than two dwellings is not subject to this restriction.

A residential lot with two dwellings on the lot is subject to these restrictions and must utilize the Custom Method of compliance described in 4.8.4.4.

4.8.4.4 – Methods of Compliance

a) A property owner when installing a new irrigation system shall follow an appropriate method of compliance as listed below. Further a property owner that has failed the new irrigation system inspection must demonstrate compliance by conforming their irrigation system to one of these methods below that is applicable to their lot to achieve compliance.

b) Front yard and side yard compliance method

1. Must meet lot size specification in 4.8.4.5.

2. Irrigation may be installed within an area from the front lot line to the back building line, including areas to the front and sides of the dwelling but not exceed 50 percent of the landscaped area.

c) Back yard and side yard compliance method

1. Must meet lot size specification in 4.8.4.5.

2. Irrigation may be installed within an area from the rear lot line to the front building line, including area to the back and sides of the dwelling but not exceed 50 percent of the landscaped area.

d) Custom compliance method

1. Irrigation may be installed anywhere in the lot but not exceed 50 percent of the landscaped area. The following information must be clearly shown on the As-Built Irrigation Plan (meeting all State and City of Austin requirements) or on a Custom Irrigation Design Worksheet provided by Austin Water:

a. The total landscaped area of the lot (total area minus area of impervious cover).

b. The square footage of each irrigation zone and the total irrigation area.

c. The percent of landscaped area with automatic landscape irrigation (total landscaped area divided by total irrigation area), not-to-exceed 50 percent.

d. Calculation of irrigated areas as follows:

1) Spray zones:

Square/triangle zone: measured from head-to-head perimeter from outermost corner heads of zones

Circular zone:

Full circle $\pi(r)^2$

Half circle $\frac{\pi(r)^2}{2}$

2) Drip irrigation: area of a zone with the zone perimeter measure ~~at least~~ 12 inches from the drip line or as recommended by the manufacturer.

3) Micro drip or micro spray emitters at each plant: flow rate of maximum of 5 gallons per hour, each emitter is calculated at 1 square foot of irrigated area.

2. Lot size dimensions that exceed the lot size specifications in 4.8.4.5 are required to follow the Custom Compliance Method.

3. If the irrigation plan is submitted in advance to Austin Water Conservation Division inspection email AWIrrigationInspections@austintexas.gov, staff will conduct an unofficial review of the plan and identify any problems before the installation and inspections.

4.8.4.5 – Lot Size Specifications Required For Front/Side and Back/Side Compliance

a) For the Front/Side and Back/Side methods of 50 percent compliance to be used, the lot must meet the following specifications:

b) Lot must be smaller than 80 feet wide (front and back) and 150 feet deep.

c) The deviation of the lot width from the front of the lot and the back of the lot is 10 feet. For example, if the front lot line is 55 feet wide, in order to follow the Front/Side or Back/Side method, the back lot line must be between 65 and 45 feet wide.

d) Maximum irrigated distance from the foundation of the dwelling to the side lot line shall not exceed 15 feet. For properties where the driveway is installed between the side of the building and the side lot line, the distance of the irrigated area may not exceed 15 feet.

e) For lots that do not meet these specifications, the Custom Compliance Method must be used.

4.8.4.6 – Irrigation Restriction Exemptions

Irrigation zones described below will not count towards the maximum allowable irrigated area. The City irrigation inspector will confirm that irrigation is installed in compliance with all other applicable state and local irrigation regulations.

a) Right of Way - A landscaped right of way area does not count towards the limitation on irrigatable area.

b) Trees - New trees of a species listed in Environmental Criteria Manual Appendix F, or approved by the City Arborist, are not included in the 50 percent irrigated area if they are irrigated with a single bubbler per tree and are on a controller zone that only provides water to new trees.

c) Foundation watering – A single-zone drip irrigation line can be used around the exterior of the house for the watering of the foundation and are not considered to be part the 50 percent area, unless also irrigated by other means.