

# Temecula council takes steps toward 'green'

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Environmental issues took center stage at the Temecula City Council meeting Tuesday night.

The council voted 5-0 to pass stricter water-efficiency standards for new landscaping. The changes are meant to satisfy new state requirements for water-saving landscaping which take effect July 1, 2010.

Major changes include requiring the use of "smart" irrigation controllers that adjust water flow based on the weather.

New landscaping must use drought-tolerant plants, and new or rehabilitated commercial landscapes greater than 5,000 square feet must have a separate water meter.

The meter will be checked at least once every five years to make sure the landscaped areas are not using too much water.

The stricter standards come as city planners try to set new goals for energy efficiency and water conservation.

Rising energy prices and the state's eight-year drought are two reasons for the push, said Associate Planner Dale West.

"When that window comes and that opportunity's there, you've got to jump through it," West said. "More and more developers and builders are starting to realize, 'Wow, we can save a lot of money in terms of energy and water' " by going green.

In an effort to lead by example, the council voted to use a rating system when building new city facilities.

Created by the U.S. Green Building Council, the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design system tries to ensure that new buildings have earth-friendly features.

The costs associated with Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design-certified buildings typically do not exceed 1 percent of a project's overall costs, a city staff report says.

The new City Hall, scheduled to break ground around the end of the year, is being designed with those standards, West said.

The council endorsed voluntary green-building standards for new single-family homes. Developers who take part in the California Green Builder Program could have their houses certified as green homes.

City planners are crafting a sustainability plan to guide future growth. The plan would focus on conserving water, preserving air quality and open space, and other matters.

Measurable goals would be set for each category.

West said a draft plan could come before the council next July.

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