

Native Plant Ordinance – Meeting Notes

Community Workshop 2

June 23, 2025, 6:00 – 8:00 p.m.

Poinsettia Room, Encinitas City Hall

In Attendance:

Sara Cadona, City of Encinitas

Patty Anders, City of Encinitas

Meagan Openshaw, City of Encinitas

Jennifer Montgomery, Schmidt Design Group

Patrick Montgomery, Native West Nursery

Lindsay Teunis, SWCA

Shirley Innecken, SWCA

Carrie Alidaee, SWCA

Sara Cadona presented the Agenda, Introductions, Background.

Lindsay Teunis presented a Calscape Update and the Revisions to Ordinance.

Shirley Innecken presented an Update to the Incentive Program.

Public Comment.

Jeryl Ann Kessler – development taking out trees and shrubs in the neighborhood and that’s what got her involved in public meetings, would like Oak Crest Park to turn into a refuge or preserve as there are many recorded birds. The goal is to protect the area either through ordinance or any other means possible. Could this be a dedicated open space preserve. Shirley noted that it is part of the protected open spaces of Encinitas.

Camille Perkins – Fire issues concerns. Now native plants are being mapped as a fire safety hazards and are making fire insurance a problem. Lindsay pointed out that this ordinance is intended for new and re-development and under Subsection F.5 it discusses that properties shall meet all fire safety requirements. Safety and fire management will always supersede the ordinance. Patty points out that planting palettes/landscape plans have to be approved by Fire Department reviews management before installation. The ordinance will help address the concern. Camille says that she still has concerns that this will worsen fire safety and fire

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insurance. Patty added that a maintenance component has been added into the ordinance under Subsection I.1.b.

Mark Wisniewski, Cottonwood Creek Conservancy – Subsection F.3, where it discusses setback requirements for 100% southern California native plant, it will be the fire departments job to review the landscaping plan and fire protection plan, does the fire department have trained botanists or horticulturists? Patty said no we do not but that is why we have a landscape architect stamp and verify that the plant palette is complying with the ordinance. Lindsay added that the fire department has a “do not plant list”, which they will be checking for during their review. Mark then followed up discussing the definition of a UC Verde Buffalo Grass not on the approved list, should be added and have its own definition. Turf substitute, cultivar developed at UC Davis. Lindsay stated that we will discuss the implications of adding this to the ordinance and having this grass being able to count toward 100% native in buffer zone.

Patrick – Says it’s a nice plant, but there are other local native meadow alternatives.

Robin Reed-Anderson – Worry about that type of plant as it takes a lot of water and fertilizer and if 50 feet from the sensitive areas would this cause runoff into these natural areas?

Lindsay – There are native/native adjacent grass alternatives to invasive turf, and those would address issues of water use, fertilizer, and herbicides. Possibly an option for educational materials.

Lindsay – There are great alternatives to invasive turf that are native. We’ll bring more alternatives into the resource list. Native Plants for Encinitas may be a great resource and figuring out what resources are out there and what is most helpful for the community.

Lindsay – Resource statements/materials about turf alternatives and fire adjacent conversations. Perhaps put on list that can be shared.

Daniel Hans – Worked with many local groups, hybridization is a concern; within the southern California native plant definition of ecoregions, example of the Catalina Island holly leaf cherry as example of hybridization with local holly leaf cherry. A lot of populations may become over populated if a certain plant that is native to a specific ecoregion gets brought into another ecoregion. Suggestion is to have an even more narrow ecoregion definition within the 50-foot buffer from environmentally sensitive areas or open spaces.

Lindsay – Great point, this is something we can consider. This is really about development and not restoration. Worth talking about more and considering in buffer/adjacent zones.

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Patrick – In areas considered restoration, that holds true. This is a landscape ordinance that is meant to control landscaped areas; it is difficult to draw the line. We understand the concerns.

Patty – Private property owners/commercial developments might be hard to regulate/enforce.

Lindsay – We may add an encouraging statement. Suggestions to developers, acknowledge the possibility of hybridization, and suggest a more local palette near environmentally sensitive areas or open space.

Camille Perkins – Worried that these plants will spread to neighboring properties/hybridize with neighboring spaces.

Lindsay – Very hard to control. Points out that non-natives have been proven to be more dangerous and invasive.

Joy Lyndes, Deputy Mayor – Has diversity of plant palettes been addressed and expectation of diversity of plant palette? Suggestion to discourage monoculture and be clear that we want to encourage diversity.

Lindsay – In Subsection F.9, the ordinance encourages diversity of plants and diversity of form and function.

Joy Lyndes, Deputy Mayor – When we do installation details, the city has standards of what we want to see for standard landscapes, were there discussions around natives and will there be installation detail requirements incorporated into the ordinance.

Patty – There are so many different installation requirements depending on the type of native plant that our suggestion is to defer to the landscape architects expertise and utilize standardized best practices. We will be able to utilize educational materials to address specific best practices and highlight existing guiding resources.

Ed Drobnicki – Parks Department – There are a lot more native plants in our local parks and it is critical to manage irrigation zones and systems, educating contractors on best practices to watering and pruning.

Patty – Typical installation/soil specs for native planting?

Ed Drobnicki – Lots of different factors that go into it, depending on the soil type, this determines which plant types would best be suitable, analyzing their microclimates. Another factor is water, are we using reclaimed water or potable water. Water seepage and where we are at as it relates to the coast, this can impact the amount of salt that is in soil, air and water.

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The City currently utilizes Calscape as the main resource and utilize the SD County Firewise plants list.

Patty – Does our City hire professional landscape architects to draw the plans and put together the plant palette.

Ed Drobnicki – The City sometimes hires a professional landscape architect to draw the plans depending on the project and scope of work. Other times, parks staff are certified landscape architects/professionals and utilize their own resources to draw the plans and assemble the plant palette.

Patty – Due to the City having so many different microclimates, we should utilize our work in the educational materials and provide guidance.

Lindsay – There is not a one size that fits all, some rules are universal, but others are going to be dependent on the existing conditions and climate and goal you want to achieve.

Shirley – There are free and paid workshops and trainings for maintenance workers that we are going to want to highlight in the educational documents.

Patty – City is already training their workers/ consultants in native plants.

Lindsay – We've had to train some landscape contractors, look at what resources we can provide and continue to talk through the incentive program space.

Joy Lyndes, Deputy Mayor – Suggestion for incentive program is to create labels for the nurseries for plants that they say "NPO compliant", so shoppers can easily identify which plants are complying with ordinance in nursery.

Lindsay – Labels, signs, QR codes have been discussed and will be explored further during incentive program build out.

Patrick – CNPS California Bloom campaign provided resources to nurseries to identify native plants, the goal of the campaign was to see if sales increased with more identifiers on these native plants, which it did.

Lindsay – Anything that would simplify and make it easier for people to identify, should be explored.

Mark Wisniewski, Native Plants for Encinitas – Subsection F.7, states that seed mixes are not allowed to satisfy the requirements of this ordinance. What about slope stability and landscaping – hydroseeding in optimal.

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Lindsay – We will take a look at this a little closer and revisit the language about seed mix statement and adding in a provision that addresses slopes.

Patrick – Struggle with measuring success and the reason we had this provision is that we did not want people to use this as a cheat code to satisfy the requirements.

Mark Wisniewski – Take a look and reach out to Caltrans as they have hydroseeded areas along the freeway, specifically on the steeper slopes.

Shirley – They would still be required to utilize Calscape, and custom hydroseed mixes may be created that comply, will look into this more.

Jenn – If the mix was 100% native seeds and they met all the other requirements of the ordinance, that should qualify. We will circle back on this how we could incorporate this into the ordinance.

Joan Herskowitz, Encinitas Native Plant Group – NPO will be approved by Council, but the Incentive program depends on third party participation. How do we lock that in? Who approves and who administers this program.

Patty – We want to highlight the work that is already existing. We don't want to duplicate efforts, identify what is already out there: Water District and Authority programs and rebates. What's the most bang for our buck and any programs that have financial obligations associated with them will need to get authorization from Council to be incorporated into the budget. What incentives do you think would be most effective?

Joy Lyndes, Deputy Mayor – Waterwise program, Water Authority has been ongoing for 12 or so years. Those who were interested in being water conscious and converting have already done so. Resulting in fewer being involved. Is there a way to change the objectives to focus on pollinators, the environment as a whole, or the diversity of the plants to create habitat for wildlife.

Patty – How do we engage those people?

Shirley – Make it become a trend, grassroots, social media, movement, local presence.

Lindsay – Who, what, how is pending question that will have to be addressed after the ordinance is put in place, direction from City Council but we will give them options and ideas. Ongoing conversation about the incentive program.

Patty – Build out list of incentives, community engagement, grants, competitions.

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Jeryl Ann Kessler – Getting kids at elementary level, Ocean Knoll is a great example of native plant gardens at schools encourage students and parents to become involved. Option to get teachers (Mr. Shaffer at SDA) and students involves.

Joy Lyndes, Deputy Mayor – Are there possible opportunities for funding or grants for being a part of Bee City USA?

Patrick – Asked himself what the most effective way is to do incentivize, is to give them money. People aren't aware that financial incentives are available, they just don't know about it. There is a native garden contest, and the winner gets a \$250 gift card but only one person entered last year, making it seem like people are not aware. Education and awareness of what existing programs are out there is an important part of this effort.

Shirley – Identified grant for HOA's; HOAs want low water, low fire landscaping and low maintenance, essentially what is going to cost them the least. Great incentive to install. Identify grants and available money that HOA's can utilize.

Lindsay – This ordinance will help to change public perception of native plants. If we celebrate it, inform, educate, engage, the public will likely replicate it. Create a series of goals and objectives around the incentive program to help us shape programs.

Patty – The demonstration garden is being completed by Parks and Rec, they will have educational signage that will be a learning opportunity for the community.

Sara – David Norgard from Parks and Rec stated that there will be signage and short educational videos that are a part of the demonstration garden work.

Tanya Bredehoft, Native Plants for Encinitas and CNPS – working on the demo garden, signage has to be built into the budget.

Dana Pearce, Native Plants for Encinitas – Started outreach program and had a booth at EcoFest. At the booth there were native plants and educational materials for children which created engagement across all ages. The two big questions that were received people want to know “where to get native plants?, who are landscape architects that are experienced in native plant installation and maintenance?”. At the booth they also gave away plants and encouraged people to just start with one plant.

Tanya Bredehoft – Make the information as simple and digestible as possible because most people don't know much about natives. Make the information accessible to the public and have a presence at community gatherings.

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Patty – We will collaborate with local groups, so efforts aren't duplicated.

No Name – Went through a landscape program at Mira Costa College 18 years ago. Incentivize community colleges to have native plant programs, nursery experts, and teach landscapers. Nurseries and landscape designers are either not educated themselves or have the staff that is educated to help with the implementation of this. Having local volunteers, experts, and college courses to help educate nursery staff, landscape designers, architects, gardeners, and maintenance workers by hosting an educational series.

Dana Pearce – Encinitas high schools are teaching their students about native plants, and utilizing their existing gardens as educational opportunities. Conservancy, lagoon, SDBG are also providing educational materials and workshops.

Tanya Bredehoft – SDA had a great program and garden. Would like to utilize the students and teachers, their work, and knowledge to help prepare some of the educational materials for the demonstration garden.

Hansen Sinclair, City Arborist – Difficult to make a native garden look good year-round and may be daunting to some. The demonstration garden is great initiative. An option for an incentive program is to hire a designer to create pre-set designs with seasonality. Another suggestion would be similar to the heritage tree program and having a sign (with QR code) in your garden that could be a part of a City map or garden tour that would show example gardens and highlight what pollinator each plant attracts.

Lindsay – Need to be honest about what the hurdles are and suggestions to overcome. Just start small, good introduction to help it not feel so overwhelming.

Daniel – A City in Spain is known for their hanging gardens and the City has sponsored landscaping with tours. Having a website of where it has been done.

Patrick – City-owned properties could do that, might not be as popular with private residences.

Sara – Has had conversations with David Norgard about creating a website that emphasizes the sites of native landscapes in our parks, right-of-ways, and schools and linking plant palettes to see what was planted. An incentive program idea could be a GIS story map of garden/park tour of our parks, right-of-ways, and schools.

Lindsay – At the last meeting there were discussions and frustrations of why certain plants were or were not chosen in City streetscape projects. A possibility is to create a learning lesson information sheet to provide context about the decisions that were made and why.

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Shirley – At Ocean Knoll, there is a voluntary bird count that happens every year, this helps educate people of the habitat that is around us and the diversity.

Mark Wisniewski – There is a growing national movement, called the Home-Grown National Park System, helping to regenerate biodiversity one yard at a time with a simple science base and measurable solution and you get your pin on a map. You can zoom in to see who in Encinitas is participating and this could generate a competition between neighbors. Started by Doug Tallamy and there is a book.

Basey Klopp, Native Plants for Encinitas – A part of a group in Bend, OR that created the local pollinator pathway nonprofit. An event started that was a native plant giveaway, as they were curious to why people were not planting native plants. A group of volunteers raised plants (over 500 just them), asked for donations of plants from nurseries, partnered with Bend's Waterwise program. Received some grant money from the City and bought additional plants from the nurseries. The outreach was focused on people who did not know anything about natives and people to put in containers. Advertised widely and there were a high demand for plants. People like free stuff, suggestion to add to an incentive program.

Dana Pierce – Stated that native plants were handed out at EcoFest. These plants were not bought but grown by many members of the Native Plants for Encinitas Group.

Sara Cadona presented Next Steps.

Meeting Adjourned.