



## **City Converting Selected Turf Areas to Drought Tolerant Landscaping**

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In early May the City of Oakley Parks and Landscape Division presented to the City Council a Water Conservation/Management Strategies report that provided the framework on how the Division would address the mandated drought restrictions. One aspect of the action plan for long-term water conservation included reducing the amount of unnecessary turf in landscaped areas that are irrigated with potable water.

The Division has begun the turf conversion process which will involve various locations throughout the City of Oakley. City Manager Bryan Montgomery said, "Grass looks nice, but often requires significant amounts of water and is more costly to maintain. Removing/eliminating ornamental turf grass in unused and unsuitable areas will save water immediately and money the over time."

Grass that is in narrow strips along the streets or turf that is not used for recreation activities in parks were the prime choices the City established for priorities of conversion, while also assessing the practicality and affordability of the change.

The City has also applied to the Contra Costa Water District's turf conversion rebate program and is anticipating some reimbursement to its investment.

The landscape transforming process involves removing the grass, modifying the irrigation to individual bubblers with low volume nozzles, installing attractive low maintenance and low water-use drought tolerant plants, and adding bark/mulch. The end result is the new landscape uses 40-50% less water than turf, requires less labor and cost to maintain, and the plants have the added benefit of offering habitat to beneficial insects, birds, and microorganisms, which contributes to the health of our whole ecosystem..

Parks and Landscape Foreman Jesse Dela Cruz stated, "The initial step is to shut the water off to the turf grass and allow it to die. Over the coming weeks residents may observe strips of grass next to streets turning brown." "It's the first phase of the conversion process", he noted.

The first turf conversion project is the grass landscape found around the perimeter of the Oakley Town Center Shopping Center (pictured). The water was shut off several weeks ago and removal of the turf is occurring now.

With few exceptions, the shopping center perimeter being one, the installation of the plants will be delayed until early fall, when less water will be needed for the plant establishment. In the interim, bark/mulch will be installed and seen over the area being transformed.

Some of the areas targeted for conversion include grass strips along Main Street near Shady Oak Drive, Ponderosa Way, Simoni Ranch Road, Lavender Way at Neroly Road, Rose Avenue, O'Hara Avenue and Brownstone Road on the perimeter of the Riata subdivision, walkways on Gullview Court, Merganzer Court and Snowy Egret Court, Ponderosa Way. Additionally, some small areas of unused turf in Summer Lake Park, Civic Center Park, Lakewood Park, Marsh Creek Glenn Park, Heartwood Park, and Novarina Park will receive turf conversion.