A NEW VISION FOR COMMERCIAL LANDSCAPES

From Outdoor Janitorial to Land Stewardship

How regenerative practices protect property value, reduce operating costs and build tenant loyalty.

LANDSCAPE SUSTAINABILITY FOR PROPERTY MANAGERS

California Focus · Evidence-Based · ROI-Driven

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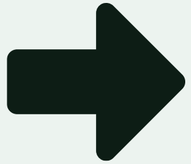
THE PARADIGM SHIFT

Two Ways to See a Landscape

OUTDOOR JANITORIAL

- Mow, blow, and go
- Uniform appearance over function
- "Colonial" aesthetic: lollipop shrubs, squared hedges
- High water, high chemical inputs
- Reactive — fix problems as they appear
- Landscape as liability



LAND STEWARDSHIP

- Design for ecology and resilience
- Plants chosen for climate suitability
- Living soil as the foundation
- Dramatic reduction in water & inputs
- Stormwater Management
- Reduced or eliminated chemical inputs
- Less waste due to natural pruning and reduced mowing
- Landscape as a long-term asset
- Biodiversity and Habitat

WATER MANAGEMENT

California's Landscape Water Challenge

50%

of commercial water use goes to irrigation

30%+

can be wasted through poor scheduling, leaks, or outdated equipment

$500

Penalty per day for AB 1572 (non-functional turf ban) non-compliance

Smart irrigation systems with ET-based controllers can reduce outdoor water use by 15–30% · CalWater, EBMUD, Valley Water & others offer rebates

TURF CONVERSION

The Single Highest-Impact Landscape Change

What changes...

High-water turf is replaced with:

- California native and adapted plants
- Clustered plant communities
- Decomposed granite or mulch pathways
- Drip irrigation to provide consistent water right where it is needed

The result is a managed landscape that looks intentional — not neglected.

40–70%

water reduction after conversion

$2–3

rebate per sq ft (varies by utility)

3–5 yrs

typical payback period

Many CA water districts now require conversions for commercial properties over a certain irrigation threshold.

Turf conversions

Real examples

Parking strips and sidewalk lanes

Turf conversions

Real examples

Community gardens

Turf conversions

Real examples

Campuses and Communities

PLANT SELECTION

Native & Drought-Tolerant Landscaping

Low Maintenance

California natives evolved here. Once established, they need minimal irrigation, pruning, or fertilization — reducing labor costs significantly.

Water Resilience

Deeply rooted natives access subsurface moisture unavailable to turf. They thrive in drought conditions that stress conventional plantings.

Better Aesthetics

Seasonal color, texture, and wildlife activity create a dynamic, attractive environment year-round — without the static "green carpet" look.

Well-designed native plantings are indistinguishable from traditional ornamental landscapes — and often more visually interesting.

SUSTAINABLE MAINTENANCE

What Stewardship Looks Like in Practice

Electric Equipment

- Zero on-site emissions
- No gas fumes for tenants
- Quieter during business hours
- Increasing incentives from California air quality programs

Soil Health First

- Builds living soil (compost, reduced tillage, mycorrhizae)
- Improves water retention
- Enhances pest resistance
- Supports healthier plants
- Reduces long-term input needs

Reduce or Eliminate Chemicals

- Prevention-first pest management (IPM)
- Targets specific issues vs. broad chemicals
- Reduces liability
- Minimizes tenant complaints
- Lowers regulatory risk

Smart Irrigation

- Smart irrigation (ET controllers, moisture sensors, leak detection)
- Reduces water bills
- Improves efficiency and monitoring
- Supports compliance with Prop 218 tiered pricing
- Aligns with California utility requirements

FINANCIAL IMPACT

Cost Savings, Rebates & Long-Term ROI

Water Utility Bills 40–70% reduction after turf conversion + smart irrigation	~50%
Maintenance Labor Native landscapes require on average 25% fewer site visits per year	~25%
Chemical & Fertilizer Up to 80% reduction through soil-health-based management	~80%
Equipment Fuel & Repairs Electric equipment eliminates fuel costs and reduces breakdowns	~55%

Available California Rebates: Turf removal ($1–$3/sq ft) · Smart controllers ($40–$80 each) · Weather sensors · Mulch programs

ESG & COMMERCIAL REAL ESTATE

Landscape as a Strategic Asset

LEED & WELL Certifications

Sustainable landscaping contributes directly to water efficiency credits and biophilic design credits in both rating systems.

Tenant Attraction & Retention

Studies show that biophilic environments — natural plantings, visual greenery — reduce tenant turnover and increase satisfaction scores.

Investor & Lender Appeal

ESG-aligned assets are increasingly preferred by institutional investors. Documented sustainability practices strengthen property valuations.

Regulatory Compliance

California's Model Water Efficient Landscape Ordinance (MWELO) applies to new and rehabilitated commercial landscapes. Proactive compliance avoids costly retrofits.

By the Numbers

7–8%

higher rents in green-certified buildings

16%

lower vacancy in LEED-certified offices

34%

of tenants rank sustainability as a key lease factor

MOVING FORWARD

Questions That Shift the Conversation

1. Is our current irrigation schedule based on real ET data, or set-and-forget?

   Why it matters: ET-based scheduling alone often reveals 20–40% over-watering.

2. What percentage of our landscape footprint is irrigated (potable water) turf?

   Why it matters: This is the single biggest lever for water savings and rebate eligibility, and AB 1572 will impact your budget.

3. Does our maintenance contract include a soil health component?

   Why it matters: Healthy soil reduces water and fertilizer needs, pest pressure, and long-term costs.

4. Are we capturing available rebates from our water utility?

   Why it matters: Many properties leave significant money unclaimed each year.

5. How does our landscape align with our ESG and sustainability reporting?

   Why it matters: Landscape data is increasingly requested by institutional investors and tenants, and is now required in large corps.

THE OPPORTUNITY

Your landscape is already working. Is it working for you?

Every commercial landscape holds unrealized potential — for lower operating costs, stronger tenant relationships, regulatory compliance, and ESG performance.

The shift from maintenance to stewardship doesn't require a complete overhaul. It starts with asking better questions.

Key Takeaways

- Soil Testing
- Mulch
- Smart Controllers
- Budgets for Turf Conversions

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