

Water Neutrality Ordinance FAQ

What is water neutrality?

A code that caps water use for new developments to the historical use for the individual parcel being developed (the baseline is set to the five-year average water use for the parcel in question).

When will it go into effect?

On May 23, 2017, City Council adopted the ordinance, and it was implemented on July 1, 2017.

Why is the City doing this?

Santa Monica is committed to eliminating imported water to achieve water self-sufficiency by 2020. Water neutrality for new developments and water conservation measures, when combined with local sources of water from groundwater and alternative water supplies (graywater, rainwater, recycled water) make up a strategy for meeting the city's water needs without imports.

Who is affected by this rule?

Only new developments (residential and commercial) will need to comply with this ordinance. New developments, in this case, are defined as new buildings with plumbing fixtures, existing buildings that demolish 50% or more the exterior walls/structural support, and new or enlarged pools, spas, ponds, water features.



How do I comply?

Make your new development project as water-efficient as possible so that it will not use more water than the historical use of the development site. The new development will calculate how much water it is projected to use each year. The difference between the baseline and the projected water use is called the "new water demand." If the projected water demand is equal to or less than the baseline, then the project is successfully water neutral. If the projected water demand is greater than the baseline, the new development is encouraged to rethink its design to use less water. Maybe higher efficiency toilets, showerheads, clothes washers will lower the projected use? Or perhaps advanced technologies should be considered like graywater, rainwater or recycled water systems?

What If my project will use more than the historical usage for the site?

If the final design shows the projected water demand of the new development to be greater than the historical usage for the site, then the project applicant must offset the increased amount somewhere else in the city. The options for offsets are the following:

- **City Direct Install Option** – Your project can offset water elsewhere. The Direct Install option is a turn-key solution administered by the City that retrofits water saving toilets, showerheads, and faucet aerators for a fee at other existing properties in the city. The City locates and verifies the properties, takes care of permits, and manages the retrofit installations.
- **Developer Installation Option** – The applicant offsets demand for their project but on their own; identify existing properties in the City to retrofit, determine the water saving calculations, pay for the installations and permit fee for each device installed, and have each device inspected by the City.

How much will this cost?

It will depend on many factors. How much water can be offset onsite? What are the different technologies and how much do they cost to install and maintain?

For the City's Direct Install Program to achieve the offset savings, the applicant will pay fees to cover the costs of the City's contractor. If the applicant performs the

retrofits, the applicant pays for all the necessary costs.

Who was involved in creating this ordinance?

A Water Neutrality Stakeholder Committee developed the ordinance. It is comprised of representatives of residents, water agencies, non-governmental organizations, sustainability consultants, architects, developers, manufacturers, engineers, plumbers, The County of Los Angeles; the City's Water Advisory Committee; and staff from the Public Works Department, Planning and Community Development Department, and the City Attorney's Office.

How does my existing property participate in the Direct Install Option?

The City is creating a list of existing properties that want to have new toilets, showerheads, and faucet aerators installed as part of the Direct Install Option. These participating properties will receive these water-saving products free of charge.



To participate or for information:

email: savewater@smgov.net

phone: (310) 458-8972 x2

web: www.sustainablesm.org/water