

Harbor Bay Parkway Medians Project – 75% Water Savings from Turf Removal!

The Harbor Bay Business Park, located in Alameda adjacent to the Oakland International Airport, will have a whole new look. Beginning after Labor Day the median islands along Harbor Bay Parkway will be transformed from the long stretches of turf you currently see – to an appealing, water-saving display of plants and various mow-free grasses. The plants selected for this project will perform well in the coastal climate and emphasize a ‘windswept’ effect to accentuate the shoreline setting. The 1½ mile strip of medians to be converted on Harbor Bay Parkway begins at Ron Cowan Parkway and ends at Bay Edge Road.

Harbor Bay Business Park Association, The City of Alameda, Landscape Architect April Philips Design Works, and Landscape Contractor Cagwin & Dorward are excited to collaborate on this project.

The project will include Bay Friendly Landscape Principles, created by Stopwaste.org of Alameda County. To renovate the turf, a process called sheet mulching will be used. This process involves placing cardboard, water, compost and organic mulch on top of the existing turf so it will biodegrade instead of hauling the plant material offsite, thus reducing the carbon footprint of the project and developing the Soil Foodweb.

Converting turf to low-water use plants and converting existing spray irrigation to drip irrigation will dramatically decrease the water used. Currently these medians use 3.6 million gallons of water per year. After completion, the project is projected to reduce water-use by a minimum of 75%! East Bay Municipal Utilities District is also collaborating on the project to issue rebates for the reduced water-use.

Renovating the landscape with low-water use plants will eliminate the need for the mowing on a weekly basis, resulting in reduced noise pollution and the carbon footprint. Eliminating mowing reduces green waste transportation to the landfill for further greenhouse gas reductions.

Another element of this project is nurturing the soil. By using organic mulch, compost tea – a mixture of beneficial organisms to encourage a healthy, living soil – organic fertilizer, and bio-stimulants; this project will also reduce the amount of synthetic chemicals entering the watershed from this landscape.

The first phase of the project will be completed near the end of December. There will be a community event to celebrate the project and to show the sheet mulching turf-conversion in action. Please look for details about the community event coming soon!

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