



Quality, Value, Reliability - In Every Drop!

Guidelines for City of San Diego Grass Replacement Rebate

Effective April 15, 2015



Residential Customers:

Up to **\$1.50** per square foot (up to 2,400 square feet and \$3,600 per site, front, side or back yards)

Commercial and Multi-Family (over 4 units) Customers:

Up to **\$1.50** per square foot (up to 10,000 square feet and \$15,000 per site)

- Additional rebates may be available through the regional [SoCal Water Smart](#) Rebate Program.
- Completed projects and projects that have already been started are not eligible for this rebate. Projects need to be pre-approved for rebates before work can begin.

About Sustainable Landscaping and the Grass Replacement Rebate

Sustainable landscapes are intended to be in balance with the local climate and environment and designed to require few added resources, thereby reducing waste and minimizing air, water and soil pollution. Turf grass is one of the thirstiest plant materials used in our landscapes. The Grass Replacement Rebate Program is intended to encourage use of ornamental plant material that thrives with little to moderate amounts of water during the extended dry periods that characterize San Diego's semi-arid climate. The scaled use of turf grass, with emphasis on the use of water wise plant material, abundant mulch, efficient irrigation and reduced runoff are all components of sustainable landscaping.

The objective of the City of San Diego's Grass Replacement Rebate Program is to encourage a reduction in water use through the conversion of grass to water wise plant material, while maintaining a high level of living landscape to benefit the environment. A switch from turf grass and conventional, high precipitation rate sprinklers to water wise plant material and low precipitation rate irrigation systems can save up to **44** gallons of water annually for each square foot of landscape area converted.



City of San Diego Grass Replacement Rebate Process:

1. **Read and understand the Grass Replacement Rebate Guidelines:** Please read these requirements prior to submitting your application to the City of San Diego.
2. **Complete and submit the Grass Replacement Rebate Application.** *This is not an approval to begin your project.* You may stop watering but do not remove the turf grass before you have had a pre-site inspection/approval to begin your project.
3. **Have a pre-site visit:** Once your application is deemed complete by the City, a scheduler will contact you to set up a pre-site visit (must occur before you begin your project). Qualification to participate in the rebate program will be determined at this site visit. If you qualify, you will be given a project start date. Project must be completed within 120 days of the project start date.
4. **Submit Plant Coverage Worksheet:** Send completed [plant coverage worksheet](#) via email to mail to: waterconservationrebates@sandiego.gov within 45 days of project start date. Note: A minimum of 25% plant coverage is required based on the full maturity of the plants.
5. **Have a post-site visit:** Once your project is complete, call (619) 533-6661 or (619) 533-4126 to schedule your post-site inspection appointment.

Program Parameters and Requirements:

For Residential Customers:

- ✓ City of San Diego Public Utilities residential customers served by an individual water meter can receive a rebate for grass replacement.
- ✓ Rebate amount - up to \$1.50 per square foot to replace grass with water wise landscape (up to 2,400 square feet and \$3,600 per site).
- ✓ Multiple applications submitted over time for a property are acceptable, so long as total square footage of grass replacement that is rebated does not exceed 2,400 square feet.
- ✓ Minimum conversion per application is 400 square feet. If less than 400 square feet, must be 100% of front yard or backyard grass areas.

For Commercial, Irrigation and Multi Family Customers:

- ✓ City of San Diego Public Utilities customers served by a commercial, irrigation or multi-family water meter can receive a rebate for grass replacement. This includes HOAs.
 - ✓ Rebate amount - up to \$1.50 per square foot to replace grass with water wise landscape (up to 10,000 square feet and \$15,000 per site).
 - ✓ Multiple applications submitted over time for a site are acceptable, so long as total square footage of grass replacement that is rebated does not exceed 15,000 square feet per City fiscal year and as long as funding is available and rebate program requirements remain the same.
 - ✓ Minimum conversion per application is 1,000 square feet.
- Customer must agree to and sign the application agreement before rebate is issued. A pre-site visit by City of San Diego staff is required before work begins. A post-site visit is also required.
 - Increases in project square footage will not be allowed once the application has been received. Make sure you measure carefully. If the inspector finds that the project area is smaller than stated on the application, the project square footage may be reduced.
 - To be eligible for rebate, property must have or recently have had a recognizably established lawn. Brown or dead grass is acceptable (in response to the current drought in California).
 - Replace grass with plants that are recognized as moderate, low, to very low water use type plants. The [WUCOLs reference guide](#) can be a useful resource to identify plant watering requirements.
 - Ensure new plants will cover at least **25%** of the project area once fully mature. All customers must submit a [plant coverage worksheet](#) via email to waterconservationrebates@sandiego.gov within 45 days of project start date. Once the City has reviewed and approved the plant list, you may start planting and completing your project.



- Artificial turf is allowed for a maximum of 75% of the project area(s).
 - ✓ To minimize the potential environmental impact, it is highly recommended that the artificial turf does not include crumb rubber infill.
 - ✓ Artificial turf must have a properly installed drainage system to minimize runoff. Professionally installed turf includes a drainage system.
 - ✓ A simple overlay of artificial turf on bare soil is not allowed.
 - ✓ Naturally landscaped areas around the edges of artificial turf is recommended so runoff can percolate naturally and help absorb any pollutants.

Trees clean our water and air, cool the environment and improve property values. Trees are encouraged, although do not count towards the 25% coverage requirement.

- Mulch must be spread at least 3 inches deep, except where groundcover, gravel or decomposed granite is used.
- Pervious hardscape in which water can permeate is acceptable, such as decomposed granite and flagstone that is not mortared into place. Concrete, plastic sheeting and other impermeable surfaces do not qualify.
- Permeable weed barrier is not required but highly recommended in open areas.
- Site changes made related to rebate program must comply with all applicable laws, codes, policies, covenants, conditions, and restrictions. This applies to parkway areas adjacent to streets.
- Applicant's water account must be in good standing.

Irrigation:

- One or more of the following changes or upgrades must be made to the existing irrigation system at the project site:
 - ✓ The irrigation systems must incorporate low-volume irrigation (e.g., micro-irrigation, drip, high efficiency nozzles such as rotating nozzles, etc.) within conversion area. The newly converted area must be on a separate irrigation valve from any remaining turf. System must be capped if improved area will not have irrigation. Note: All irrigation systems should have a backflow prevention device. Customer must provide evidence of a backflow prevention device for all converted valves at the time of the post-site inspection. Costs for the backflow prevention device can be included with project invoices/receipts. For drip and micro-irrigation systems a filter is also required either at the valve or at each individual head that is retrofitted with a micro-irrigation emitter. Most low-volume systems will require a pressure regulator to perform properly. To reduce the pressure of the new low-volume irrigation system, entire valve must be converted and fitted with a pressure regulator at the individual valve, or a pressure regulating device must be included at each retrofitted sprinkler head
 - ✓ Capping and hand watering.
 - ✓ Keeping existing system and capping some heads as appropriate for new landscape.
- The water wise landscape at project site must be maintained for a minimum of five (5) years or for the duration of ownership of the property (whichever is the shortest). Failure to meet this requirement may require customer to refund all or portion of the rebate.
- Project site shall be available for inspection and monitoring (up to five years) by Public Utilities.
- Photos of the project site may be taken by City staff to illustrate transitions from high water using landscapes to attractive water wise landscapes.
- The City may request customer (at customer's discretion) to add some signage for their project areas to help promote water conservation and the rebate program.

Documentation/Invoices:

- **Original Paid** receipts and/or **Paid** invoices must be submitted to receive a rebate. The paid receipts/invoices must include transaction date(s), name, address, and telephone number of the service provider/retailer, and payment method. To determine paid invoice/receipt authenticity, the City may request additional invoice/receipt payment method documentation such as copies of canceled checks and/or credit card statements. The City may also contact the contractor/landscaper directly to verify project costs and payment methods used.
- Invoices/Receipts must separate costs into the following categories:
 - ✓ Material and eligible labor costs - can be combined as long they are linked with the grass replacement project areas. Charges may also include delivery charges, refuse disposal and design fees.
 - ✓ To be eligible to receive an additional (\$.30 per SF) rebate for micro-irrigation for other than the grass replacement areas, separate costs need to be listed for the labor and materials expenses.
 - ✓ Taxes and tariffs are not eligible for rebate.



- Estimated rebate shown on the Rebate Application is based on information entered by the customer. Actual final rebate amount will be determined by supporting documents provided including but not limited to: verified square footage of the grass area, cost of device(s), project materials and labor costs, and available funding. Rebate will be the lower of the two: total eligible costs for the project or device or the stated maximum total dollar amount per customer rebate (*square footage of the project area*).
- Rebate check will be sent to the customer of record 6-10 weeks after post-site visit is successfully completed and the application and supporting documentation are deemed correct and complete by the City.
- Please consult with a tax advisor if you have questions regarding any potential tax implications of your rebate.

What does *not* qualify for a Grass Replacement Rebate:

- Project areas where new plant material has already been installed prior to gaining approval to participate in the Grass Replacement Rebate Program
- Project areas that use recycled water
- Vegetable gardens
- Water features or fountains
- High water use plants as classified by [WUCOLS](#), the plant label, or other plant reference source.
- Exposed soil surfaces (exceptions made to accommodate specific garden design motifs)
- Impervious surfaces such as concrete or asphalt that does not allow water to permeate into the ground directly under that surface.
- Planting of invasive species. For a list of invasive species go to the [California Invasive Plant Council](#) website or the [San Diego County Invasive Ornamental Plant Guide](#).
- Expenses associated with fences, retaining walls, tools, lighting, outdoor/garden furniture and decorative items
- Taxes or tariffs associated with purchase of rebate-related device/product or work performed.

Funding for a limited number of rebates is available through the City of San Diego Public Utilities, the Transportation & Storm Water Departments and State of California Integrated Regional Watershed Management grants. Funds will be distributed on a first come, first served basis until exhausted. This program is subject to change without prior notification.

Additional rebates may be available through the regional [SoCalWaterSmart](#) Rebate Program. Unlike the City’s Grass Replacement Rebate Program, customers can participate in the SoCal Water Smart Rebate Program only once. An artificial turf discount may be available through San Diego County Water Authority’s [Artificial-turf-discount-program](#).

If you have questions after reading these guidelines, please call **619-533-4126** or e-mail waterconservationrebates@sandiego.gov. Include your project reference number if you have one and your phone number. Paper Rebate applications and Guidelines are available upon request.

