

Long-Range Landscape Development Project FAQs and FHCs (Frequently Heard Comments)

I live here because I love the greenery and trees. I don't want it to look like a desert.

There is a highly mistaken notion that water-reducing and eco-friendly landscape is synonymous with desert landscape. Cactus and other desert landscape are not native to this area. Drought tolerant landscape in the Sacramento Valley includes many colorful, green, and beautiful native plants, trees, and grasses. The Holdridge bioclimatic system classifies Sacramento as a warm temperate dry forest biome, not a desert. Desert landscape would not be appropriate or healthy here.

I purchased my condo because of the existing nature.

Much of our landscape is in poor condition and in need of work and has undergone much unregulated change without regard to appropriate planting and locations. Much of the infrastructure is aging and in need of replacement. This requires permits and code changes which will require changes to be in compliance with current codes. This does not necessarily mean that everything must change; much may be able to be done without completely changing the feel of the current landscape.

I don't believe there will be a democratic process for decision making.

This project was initiated with the guiding principle that decisions will be made based on homeowners' input. While the elected Board of Directors will make the final decisions, those decisions will be made with strong consideration of the recommendations from the project committee, based upon homeowner input. This is why it is so important for homeowners to participate in the process by responding to requests and complete surveys and questionnaires, attend workshops, and consent to interviews.

The committee has already made up its mind, our comments are pointless.

This is patently false. Homeowners can expect requests for input through workshops, surveys, questionnaires, and interviews as the project progresses which will be the basis of all committee recommendations. The committees working on this project are serving as researchers and data (i.e., homeowner responses) analysts, not decision-makers.

We don't have a choice, whatever the committee wants will be shoved down our throats.

There is no basis for this claim and is also patently false. As previously stated, the committees that will be executing this project will make their recommendations based upon the input received from those homeowners that choose to participate. This process will be transparent and while the committee's recommendations may not be what certain individuals want, they will be based upon the majority opinion and regulatory constraints. It would be impossible to give everyone what they want as there is certain to be conflicting desires.

I don't feel welcome to participate in the process. I was told the committee didn't need more members or help.

There was a general call for committee participation. As stated, the committees are researchers and the need for committee members is not unlimited. There will be new committees for the different phases, so there will be additional opportunities to be on a committee.

Where will the money come from to pay for the project?

This is unknown at this point. Until we reach the design phase and understand what the project will look like and what will be involved, we cannot determine an estimated cost, nor the financing aspects. However, the board members responsible for the finances, are already looking at various alternatives for how the project may be funded.

I heard the changes are required by law – what does the law say?

There are various state and local ordinances and codes, and they are difficult to navigate. At this time there are no changes required by law as the existing landscape is grandfathered in as far as codes are concerned. However, regulations change frequently and there may or may not come a time when compliance with regulations becomes mandatory. Additionally, compliance may be mandatory if certain changes are made. If there is a major repair needed that requires a permit, that may force compliance to certain regulations. This is why, in Phase 3 (Design), it will be necessary to contract with a landscape architect or other professional that has thorough knowledge of the regulations, which ones apply to our situation, and what needs to be done to ensure that we are in full compliance.

Why are we doing this project at all? What's wrong with the landscape the way it is?

The existing landscape and infrastructure are in excess of 40 years old. While the landscape looks green and lush, under any more than a cursory look, much of the plants, lawn, bushes and other growth is far from lush and healthy. Closer scrutiny will show that the green belts are thin and mostly weeds and crabgrass. Many plants and bushes are thin and unhealthy. Over the years, dead plants have been replaced with random and varied plants so that there is little rhyme or reason to the landscape visually. Some of these have been planted in inappropriate places with regard to their sun and water needs (for example, plants needing shade are planted in direct sunlight), or in places that can cause damage to structures or cause safety hazards.

Since the original landscape installation, due to California's water crisis and other environmental concerns, the building and construction codes with respect to landscaping have changed. The current landscape does not meet current standards. Although Village 4 is not required to bring the landscape up to code unless we choose to make material modifications, it is not an unrealistic assumption that at some point the regulations may become mandatory and "grandfathering" could be eliminated. It is far better to stay ahead of such regulatory action which may impose additional constraints. Current standards can provide for beautiful grounds, with color, interest, and variety while consuming far less water, maintenance, and chemicals such as fertilizers and pesticides.

Residents are concerned with security. Landscape design can play an impactful role in safety and security. The right plants and bushes planted in the appropriate areas can deter intruders, eliminate cover for burglars or attackers, and generally make Village 4 less attractive to criminal elements. Our current landscape provides hiding places and easy access to home entry points.

Many residents have concerns about pests. Our current landscape, particularly the large patches of ivy, attracts undesirable insects, rodents, and their predators. Updated landscaping can be designed to reduce the desirability to such pests yet attract desirable wildlife such as birds and pollinators.

Upgrading the landscape will provide opportunities to leverage the efforts—and associated costs—by doing work that will likely be necessary as parts of our village infrastructure are nearing the end of their serviceable life. For example, it is likely that many of the sewer lines are in need of replacement. The original clay sewer pipe is prone to tree root intrusion—many lines are probably already partially blocked. Our lighting is very old, many walkways are uneven, cracked, and difficult to navigate, and in need of replacement. In addition, the irrigation system is old and needs attention.

Trying to solve these problems one at a time could exacerbate the current landscaping issues and will likely cost far more than to do it with an organized and strategic plan. Best practices show that having a complete plan will show the most efficient, from both an effectiveness and cost perspective, way to bring everything up to date, code, and standards.