

Flagstaff City Council OKs rainwater plan, 7-0

[JOE FERGUSON Sun Staff Reporter](#) | Posted: Thursday, April 5, 2012 9:00 am | [\(2\) Comments](#)

The Flagstaff City Council signed off unanimously on a rainwater harvesting ordinance Tuesday night designed to reduce the amount of potable water used for landscape irrigation.

The law applies only to new residential master-planned communities, multi-family housing and commercial and industrial projects.

The ordinance is seen as a compromise between conservationists, some of whom wanted existing buildings to be covered, and the local development community, which was leery of any new mandates.

The policy essentially offers builders two choices:

-- Use native or drought-resistant plants and use passive water collection techniques.

-- Use an active rainwater harvesting system that includes some type of storage tank to capture rainfall from the roof.

New single-family homes in existing neighborhoods are exempt under the new ordinance.

Marilyn Weissman, the current president of Friends of Flagstaff's Future, called the unanimous Council decision a step in the right direction. But she said she hopes it is only the first step of many to reduce the overall use of potable water in new development.

"We are disappointed that there aren't more recommendations for active rainwater harvesting in residential properties," she said.

Weissman said she wants the city of Flagstaff to consider additional rainwater harvesting requirements when the Council formally adopts a comprehensive water management policy later this year.

Councilmember Scott Overton said he was happy the city could find a compromise on such an important city policy.

Informal estimates suggest building a pipeline from Red Gap Ranch east of Flagstaff to deliver potable water to the city would cost more than \$200 million. The pipeline is considered by city officials one solution to meet future water needs as the city grows over the next few decades.

"This is something we are trying to encourage," Overton said. "I hope that folks take advantage of (the new ordinance) if they so desire."

Councilmember Al White said he believes that developers will embrace active water harvesting techniques.

"It is a great start," White said. "I believe it will become obvious that the savings will justify the investment in more equipment in active rainwater harvesting in the future."

The city of Flagstaff already has one of the lowest per capita consumption rates for potable water in the entire state when measured annually. But during the dry, late-spring months of April, May and June, potable water use in the city is twice the average daily rate, with much of the extra water going to irrigate lawns and gardens.

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Read more: http://azdailysun.com/news/local/govt-and-politics/flagstaff-city-council-oks-rainwater-plan/article_da8dfd68-cede-5d1c-8e9b-d7e89e184cce.html#ixzz1rHQYe6gw