

LDCT-2024-7
Business Impact Estimate
(prepared in compliance with F.S Chapter 125.66)

Summary of the proposed ordinance:

An LDC text amendment to Chapter 2, Section 226, Irrigation Systems, to implement uniform procedures that promote water conservation through more efficient landscape and irrigation systems and methods; amending Section 720.E, Water-Efficient Landscaping, to recognize requirements of Section 226; amending Chapter 10, Definitions, to add, modify, and delete definitions for consistency with proposed amendment and the Florida Water Star program; providing for severability; providing an effective date.

Public purpose to be served by the proposed ordinance:

The Upper Floridan Aquifer has been an inexpensive water source for Polk County residence since populations first arrived. However, like all resources it too has its physical limits. Growth in the County has reached the point where further drawdown of the Upper Floridan Aquifer will jeopardize the safety of many residents of both Polk County and others. The County is coming to the end of its ability to draw more water from the Upper Floridan Aquifer and must seek alternatives. But the cost of alternative water supplies is much higher which will inevitably increase the cost of water to consumers. The cost of conservation is far less than these alternatives. If the public uses less water, it will hold down the average cost of water in the near future.

Estimate of the direct economic impact of the proposed ordinance businesses in the county:

There will be higher upfront costs to the consumer to contract with a licensed professional skilled in water efficient irrigation design. Some irrigation spray emitters called for in the ordinance are slightly more expensive and there is the expense of installing an automated system. However, in the end this will save the consumer money on their irrigation costs. Automated systems will be required. This can increase the cost of the system, installation, and maintenance, but the contractor will likely pass this cost on to the consumer who will reap the benefit of lower water costs over the life of the system.

Estimate of direct compliance costs:

The most direct cost to the consumer is that all irrigation systems must be automated. Much of the impact of this amendment is to encourage less irrigated areas. Smaller irrigated areas require less materials and labor to install as well as less money to operate.

New charge or fee:

No new charges or fees are estimated. The Building Division will require the permit applicant (either homeowner or contractor) to self-certify that the design meets the Water Star standards adopted in the ordinance.

Estimate of the county's regulatory costs:

The County estimates no changes in the way they review and inspect irrigation permits because the Building Division will require the permit applicant (either homeowner or contractor) to self-certify that the design meets the Water Star standards adopted in the ordinance.

Estimate of the number of businesses likely to be impacted:

There are 42 registered landscape irrigation contractors that serve Polk County, according to Angie's List. There are 21 registered Landscape Architects in Polk County, according to the Florida Department of Business and Professional Regulations.