



# City of Galveston

## PRESS RELEASE

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### City Council approves updated ‘planned natural landscape exemption’

**GALVESTON, TX – January 29, 2024** – The Galveston City Council on Thursday approved changes to the city’s wildflower exemption process that would extend the period in which people may apply for the permit, among other changes.

Property owners, per city ordinance, are required to keep their yards maintained, and vegetation located outside of a cultivated bed and exceeding 9 inches in height is considered a high weeds and grass violation. Residents may apply for an exemption to this requirement for planned gardens. Previously, residents could apply for a “wildflower exemption” before the end of January each calendar year to be exempt from this requirement. Last year, residents expressed a desire to revisit and improve upon the permitting process.

Since August, members of the City of Galveston’s Tree Committee worked with city staff to gather public input and discuss and develop the proposed changes. The wildflower subcommittee identified issues with the existing “wildflower exemption” and proposed the following changes to the ordinance: a change of the permit name to encompass more plant types; better defined terms and changes to the width of required buffers; and an extension to the time-period in which property owners may apply for permits.

On Thursday, City Council adopted these changes to the ordinance. The adopted ordinance changes the name of the exemption to the “Planned Natural Landscape Exemption” and allows for plant growth greater than 9 inches in height outside of cultivated beds. The ordinance also extends the permitting period through the end of February and allows new property owners to apply within 60 days of purchase.

The Planned Natural Landscape Exemption is free for residents to acquire; however, properties with an active “high weeds and grass” violation in municipal court are required to pay a \$250 permit fee.

The exemption is intended for residents who wish to cultivate a natural garden. Residents must comply with the requirements of the permit, which include mowing or maintaining an 18-inch buffer adjacent to the property structures and other privately and publicly owned property. Access must be maintained for utility service providers to their respective meters or outside house hookups and the postal service, as well as access for emergency responders. The annual permit is valid from the date the permit is obtained and shall expire on the last day of February each year.

To apply for a permit, residents may contact the Development Services Department at [planning@galvestontx.gov](mailto:planning@galvestontx.gov) or 409-797-3660. The Planned Natural Landscape application is also available on the City’s website: [galvestontx.gov](http://galvestontx.gov).

