

# **City Council Agenda Item Memo**

**From:** City of Brookings Sustainability Council

**Council Meeting:** February 11, 2025 / February 25, 2025

**Subject:** Ordinance 25-004: Remove the Designation of "No Mow May"

**Presenter:** Albert Patin, Sustainability Council Vice Chair

## **Summary and Recommended Action:**

The Brookings Sustainability Council recommends the City Council repeal the "No Mow May" initiative due to concerns about its effectiveness and unintended challenges.

## **Item Details:**

"No Mow May" was introduced as a voluntary initiative to support pollinator populations by encouraging residents to delay lawn mowing during the month of May. The goal was to allow flowering plants in lawns to provide nectar and habitat for pollinators during a critical time of year.

While the initiative has raised awareness about pollinator conservation, it has also generated mixed results and unintended challenges. Feedback from residents and City staff has highlighted issues such as:

- Proliferation of invasive plant species in unmanaged lawns.
- Potential negative impacts on neighborhood aesthetics and property values.
- Increased complaints about overgrown and unsightly lawns.
- Difficulty in enforcing existing lawn maintenance ordinances.

By repealing the "No Mow May" initiative and focusing on alternative strategies, the city will:

1. **Restore Lawn Maintenance Standards:** Reaffirming the city's existing lawn maintenance ordinances to ensure consistency and curb appeal.
2. **Invasive Species:** Reduce the risk of invasive species spreading due to unmanaged lawns.
3. **Promote Alternative Pollinator-Friendly Practices:** Encouraging residents to adopt year-round practices such as planting native flowers, reducing pesticide use, and creating pollinator gardens.
4. **Provide Education and Resources:** Collaborating with local organizations to educate residents about effective ways to support pollinators without compromising community standards.
5. **Evaluate Long-Term Strategies:** Exploring other sustainable approaches to pollinator conservation that balance ecological goals with community needs.

Preliminary discussions are underway for developing a communication plan to inform residents of the change and promote alternative pollinator-friendly practices. The Sustainability Council will work to partner with local organizations to offer future workshops and resources on pollinator conservation. In addition, the City's current vegetation management practices allow lawn heights up to 15 inches. The only two exceptions to this are "No-Mow" areas designated by the Parks, Recreation, and Forestry Department and the current "No Mow May" provision.

In conclusion, the Sustainability Council believes while well-intentioned, the "No Mow May" initiative has presented challenges that outweigh its benefits. By repealing this program and focusing on more effective, year-round pollinator-friendly practices, the city can better support pollinator conservation while addressing community concerns. The Brookings Sustainability Council recommend the City Council approve the repeal of "No Mow May" and prioritize alternative strategies to promote ecological sustainability.

**Legal Consideration:**

None.

**Strategic Plan Consideration:**

- Service and Innovation Excellence – The City of Brookings will provide an accessible environment committed to ongoing innovation and outstanding service through listening and engagement.
- Sustainability – The City of Brookings will meet environmental, community and economic desires and needs without compromising future generations' quality of life by strategically planning, implementing and maintaining infrastructure and facilities.

**Financial Consideration:**

None.

**Supporting Documentation:**

Ordinance

Presentation