

Model Language for HOAs in the Texas Hill Country

A practical guide for protecting and preserving water resources, native landscapes, and night skies



Created in partnership with water conservation experts and utility leaders from Central Texas, this new resource offers practical tools for implementing sustainable Homeowners Association (HOA) policies that help ensure that the Hill Country remains a thriving, livable region for generations to come.

Whether you are a developer establishing CC&Rs for a new subdivision or a board member of an existing HOA looking to update your HOA's Landscape Guidelines, we hope this guide provides the practical tools you need to drive meaningful change.

The Role of HOAs in Protecting the Texas Hill Country

Most of the Hill Country's land lies in unincorporated areas where counties have little authority to manage growth. However, Homeowners Associations (HOAs) have a powerful tool at their disposal—Covenants, Conditions, and Restrictions (CC&Rs). These governing documents, along with community Landscape Guidelines, allow HOAs to influence residential construction, landscape choices, and home maintenance standards.

By adopting and enforcing CC&Rs and Landscape Guidelines that promote **water conservation**, **native landscapes**, and **night sky-friendly lighting**, HOAs can play a critical role in **safeguarding natural resources**, **enhancing community resilience**, and **preserving property values**.

Thoughtful guidelines can:

- **Reduce water consumption** through native, drought-tolerant landscaping
- **Provide ecological benefits** for local wildlife and pollinators and migratory species
- **Maintain the beauty of the night sky** with responsible outdoor lighting policies
- **Enhance community resilience** against increasing heat and drought conditions
- **Increase property values** by increasing curb appeal



GROWTH & NATURAL RESOURCES AT-A-GLANCE

The population of the unincorporated area within the Hill Country more than doubled between 1990-2020.

The Hill Country sits on the edge of night. As population growth expands westward, unshielded outdoor lighting risks taking away our view of the night sky.

The 2022 State Water Plan shows current water resources are not sufficient for future needs.

Hill Country water managers estimate 60-70% of potable water is used for outdoor irrigation in the summer.

Following is a preview of what you'll find in each section of the model language guide:

Section 1:

CC&R best practices to promote water-wise and low-impact landscaping

This section outlines best practices for CC&Rs tailored to preserve Hill Country natural resources. You will find clear, enforceable guidelines that balance homeowner desires for aesthetic appeal with conservation imperatives. Sample language addresses water conservation, native plant landscaping, and outdoor lighting.

Section 2:

Landscape Guidelines for the Hill Country: Model language for new and existing developments

CC&Rs often delegate residential landscape control to Architectural Control Committees (ACCs) or Landscape Design Committees (LDCs). These committees can promote Landscape Guidelines that conserve water on residential landscapes and HOA common areas. This section provides model Landscape Guidelines to reduce outdoor water use, help protect water supplies, promote native Texas wildlife, and enhance the aesthetic appeal of Hill Country communities.

Section 3:

Implementation guide

Implementing CC&R best practices and model Landscape Guidelines requires collaboration between developers, HOAs, homeowners, cities, counties and sometimes even local groundwater districts. This section offers practical steps for integrating these guidelines into both new developments and established neighborhoods. It emphasizes education, community engagement, and phased implementation to facilitate smooth transitions and maximize compliance.



Photos courtesy San Antonio Water System



Before and after native landscaping was used to replace turfgrass—adding water conservation, beauty, and an attraction for pollinators.

The full version of this guide
is available at:

hillcountryalliance.org/HOAGuide

