

*City of Winter Park  
Save Our Lakes  
Program*

# City proposing law to restrict rainwater runoff

By Sara Isaac

OF THE SENTINEL STAFF

WINTER PARK — City officials are proposing a sweeping stormwater management ordinance that would require all businesses and homes on lots bigger than a half-acre to keep rainwater from running off their land.

Although other area cities have similar laws, the ordinance proposed in Winter Park is unusual because it would apply to existing as well as new development.

Every office building, business, apartment complex, condominium, subdivision and large home would have five years to build the grassy swales, berms, retention ponds or other stormwater management systems required by the law.

Under current law, only new commercial construction and parking lots must include retention areas for stormwater.

Winter Park's proposal also differs from those in surrounding cities because it would apply to single-family homes. But the half-acre size requirement would exempt most houses in the city.

The ordinance would allow downtown businesses with little room for stormwater management to pay a fee instead of capturing rainwater on-site. The city would use the money generated by the fees to build large, off-site retention ponds that would filter rainwater before it flows into area lakes.

The stormwater law, which will be discussed when the city commission meets Tuesday, is an important

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part of the Save Our Lakes program, city officials said.

Rainwater pollutes by washing oil, gas residues, leaves, trash and other debris directly into the city's waterways. But capturing rainwater and filtering it through soil purifies the water before it flows into the water table, lakes or streams.

"It's crucial to the health of our lakes," said Barbara Durkin, chairwoman of the city's environmental review board.

"Winter Park's lakes are in serious trouble, and all our studies show that one of the main reasons is because of stormwater runoff," she said.

The city commission will discuss the proposed stormwater management ordinance when it meets at 4:30 p.m. Tuesday in the city hall.