



Understanding Broomfield's New Landscape Code

Background

On August 22, 2023, the Broomfield City Council unanimously adopted Ordinance No. 2215 amending certain sections of Titles 2 and 17 of the Broomfield Municipal Code regarding the Residential Landscape Code, and repealing and replacing Chapter 17-70 Landscape Code in its entirety. The ordinance is supplemented by a Landscape Reference Manual which contains the necessary guidelines, criteria, maps, plant lists and other provisions to implement the Chapter 17-70 Landscape Requirements. The primary intent of the new landscape regulations - which now applies to residential, commercial, and industrial development - is to reduce outdoor water consumption and improve the visual quality of the City and County of Broomfield. The new ordinance applies to landscape plans approved after January 1, 2024.

This document provides a brief overview of Broomfield's new Landscape Requirements. It is intended as a summary of the code for developers, landscape architects, and contractors doing business in Broomfield, and property owners undertaking redevelopment projects. It is not intended to replace the thorough review of Broomfield Municipal Code Chapter 17-70 and Broomfield's Landscape Reference Manual.

Applicability

The landscape code applies to the following types of projects:

- All new construction, including residential and non-residential;
- Any total redevelopment of a parcel that includes demolition and new construction;
- All construction projects that cumulatively increase the gross floor area of a property by 65% or more; and
- Construction of parking lots containing 10 or more spaces, or expansion of an existing parking lot by more than either 10 spaces or 50% of the existing parking lot area, whichever is greater.

The landscape plan requirements do not apply to modifications by a property owner or homeowner's association to existing landscaping only.

Sample modifications for code compliance	Code compliance required?
No changes to a given property.	No
Property owner replaces all front and backyard landscaping.	No
HOA replaces common area landscaping.	No
Property owner adds an uncovered porch.	No
Property owner adds a small garage, expanding gross floor area by 20%.	No
Homeowner adds a second floor, expanding gross floor area by more than 65%.	Yes
Business owner adds an addition, expanding gross floor area by 65%.	Yes
The primary building on a property is completely demolished and rebuilt.	Yes
A new mixed-use neighborhood is built.	Yes
A business owner expands their existing 8-space parking lot adding 8 new spaces.	Yes

See Section 17-70-020

General Landscaping Standards

General landscaping standards include requirements for:

- Plant Materials;
- Minimum Plant Sizes;
- Tree and Shrub Diversity;
- Prohibited Plant Species;
- Living Materials;
- Plant Quality;
- Plant Beds;
- Thorny or Spiny Plants and Shrubs;
- Artificial Turf or Non-Vegetative Turfgrass; and,
- Turfgrass.

General landscape standards include plant material requirements for planting cool-season turfgrasses, planting drought tolerant and climate adapted plant materials, area of landscape materials, percentage of plant material selected from the water-wise plant list, distance from street edge, and seeding/sodding. Specifically, a minimum of 75% of annuals and trees and 100% of shrubs, perennials, groundcovers, and ornamental grasses must be selected from Broomfield’s water-wise plant list. Landscaped areas are required to have no more than 25% stone, masonry, wood, or steel.

Living materials in landscapes include requirements for yards visible from right-of-ways, weeds, and areas within and immediately adjacent to right-of-ways. Specifically, weeds are not considered living plant material and yards visible from the right-of-way cannot be only non-living materials.

Areas within and adjacent to right-of-ways with no reasonable means of proving an underground automatic irrigation system shall have a minimum of 40% of the total landscaped area permeable material, half of which is required to be plant material.

Plant beds in general landscapes include requirements for edging and mulching. More specifically,

- Shrubs, ornamental grasses, perennials, and groundcovers are required to be in plant beds.
- Plant beds are required to be separated by metal edging or another approved material.
- All plant beds are required to be mulched to a depth of 3 inches, except beds with perennials and groundcovers which require 2 inches of mulch. When rock mulch is chosen, weed barrier fabric is required and the plant material must tolerate heat exposure. Trees and shrubs can be mulched with either rock or wood mulch.

Artificial turf and other non-vegetative turfgrass landscapes include requirements for allowed use, materials, installation, and general appearance. More specifically:

- Artificial turf is prohibited in curbside or median landscapes and it cannot be used to satisfy the living plant requirements listed above.
- Artificial turf is required to be a cut pile infill type and manufactured from polypropylene, polyethylene, or a blend. The use of indoor or outdoor plastic or nylon carpeting as a replacement for artificial turf is prohibited.
- Installation of artificial turf should be done based on the manufacturer's recommendations. Additional underground drainage is required and installation on slopes greater than 6.6% require a consultation with the manufacturer.

Turfgrass in landscapes include requirements for residential yards and all other development areas except multi-purpose fields and golf courses. More specifically:

- For development sites other than multi-purpose fields and golf courses, turfgrass is limited to 30% of the total landscaped area and must be contiguous.
- Use of turfgrass, sod, or seed mixes with more than 20% cool-season grass species is prohibited.

See Section 17-70-050

Curbside and Urban Street Frontage Landscaping Standards

Curbside and urban street frontage landscapes include requirements for street tree type, amount and spacing, allowable plant material, and mulches. More specifically:

- Curbside Landscaping Detached Walks prohibit cool-season turfgrass, specify required mulches and plant material depending on the width of the landscape area, and require one tree per 40 linear feet of street frontage in areas wider than 6'.

- Curbside Landscaping Attached Walks require one tree per 20 linear feet of street frontage.
- Urban Street Frontages specify street trees, landscape design options, and other plant material requirements based on the functional area or zone including: Edge zones, Furnishings zones, Pedestrian zones, and Front Zones. One street tree is required for every 35 linear feet of street frontage in the Furnishings Zone.

See Section 17-70-070

Parking Lot Landscaping Standards

Parking Lot landscapes must include on-site stormwater drainage features, trees, ornamental grasses or shrubs, screening and other design requirements. Cool-season turfgrass is not permitted.

In particular:

- Parking lot medians must be landscaped with one shade tree per 30 linear feet of median length and interior parking lot islands must have one canopy shade tree per nine by 19 foot island and two canopy shade trees per nine foot by 38 foot double island.
- Landscaped islands must be protected by raised concrete curbs with openings at-grade to allow storm water to flow into any below grade landscaped swales.
- Parking lot perimeters must include a minimum four foot buffer for visual screening with either a berm, a landscaped hedge, or a decorative masonry wall that's accented by shrub species and at least one tree per 40 linear feet of parking lot perimeter.

See Section 17-70-080

Detention & Water Quality Ponds Landscaping.

Detention and Water Quality ponds should be integrated physically, functionally and aesthetically into the total landscaped area. The code includes requirements for slopes, pond grading, landscaping within the tract surrounding a pond, and recommendations for low impact drainage features like grass swales and permeable pavement.

See Section 17-70-090

Additional Landscape & Irrigation Requirements for Single-Family Detached or Manufactured Homes on Individual Lots

All areas of single-family detached dwellings not occupied by driveways, sidewalks, patios, decks or buildings are required to be landscaped or mulched and are not allowed to exceed the moderate water-demand landscape standard. Areas designated for planting with annual flowers, vegetables, or similar plants are required to be maintained free of weeds year-round. All turfgrass, sod, and seed mixes must be in conformance with Table 1.

Other specific requirements include:

- The property owner adjacent to a public street is responsible for right-of-way landscape maintenance adjacent to the front yard and side yard unless otherwise specified.
- A minimum of 75% of visible front and side yards are required to have a ground cover of living plant materials, with foliage crowns not included in calculations.
- A maximum of 25% of visible front and side yards can be covered in mulch, pavers, or other materials. The plant material located in the rock, mulch, pavers, or decorative concrete is required to have low water demand or be classified as xeric.
- Property owners adjacent to roads or detached sidewalks must install landscaping and irrigation within 12 months of the issuance of a certificate of occupancy. Landscape in visible front yards and side yards must install a landscape and automatic irrigation system also within 12 months. Non-visible side yards and rear yards are required to be landscaped, mulched, and an automatic irrigation system installed within 18 months of the issuance of the certificate of occupancy.
- Additional requirements for an estate district or agricultural district are included.

Excerpt from Table 1. Landscaping requirements for Single Family Detached or Manufactured Homes:

Type of Development	Turf	Plantings	Mulch	Coverage
Single-Family Dwelling (detached)	Turf up to a maximum of 30% of the total landscape area. Turfgrass or sod, seed and seed mixtures that contain more than 20% mixture of cool-season grass species shall be prohibited.	Trees/Shrubs/ Ornamental Grasses/ Native Plants. Not to exceed moderate water-demand	Mulch Rock/Woodchip/ pavers/ decorative concrete up to a maximum of 25% of the total landscape area	Area required to be landscaped living plant material: Minimum of 75%* (of the total landscape area)

See Section 17-70-100

Additional Landscape & Irrigation Requirements for Non-Residential, Multi-Family, Single-Family Attached, and Mobile Home Park Development Standards

All areas of non-residential, multi-family, single-family attached properties and manufactured home parks not covered by structures, water bodies, surfaced by streets, roads, driveways, sidewalks, parking areas, other vehicle use areas, or city approved trails are required to be landscaped with plant material that does not require more than a moderate level of irrigation. These areas are required to be maintained and free of weeds. Any turf grass, sod, or seed mixtures must comply with Table 1.

Other specific requirements include:

- For properties adjacent to roads with detached sidewalks, the property owner shall install landscaping and irrigation within the area between the sidewalk and curb within 12 months of the issuance of a certificate of occupancy.
- The city shall not be responsible for constructing or maintaining landscaped areas within a development that incorporates publicly owned and accessible trails, parks, detention areas or drainage channels unless otherwise specified.
- Development projects adjacent to an arterial or collector street shall be required to landscape the right-of-way adjoining the development site and the nearest one-half of the median.
- Any landscaping around a fire hydrant shall be designed with a three-foot clear zone of mulch or ground cover height plant material.
- Unless otherwise specified, there shall be a landscape buffer of 25 feet.
- Drive-through businesses next to a frontage street require a wall between 42 and 48 inches in height to mitigate noise and minimize visual impacts.

See Section 17-70-110

Excerpt from Table 1. Landscaping requirements for Single Family Attached, Manufactured Home Parks, and Multi-Family properties:

Type of Development	Turf	Plantings	Mulch	Coverage
Single-Family Dwelling (attached) & Manufactured Home Park	Turf up to a maximum of 30% of the total landscape area. Turfgrass or sod, seed and seed mixtures that contain more than a 20% mixture of cool-season grass species shall be prohibited.	Trees/Shrubs/ Ornamental Grasses/ Native Plants. Not to exceed moderate water-demand	Optional	N/A
Multi-Family	Turf up to a maximum of 30% of the total landscape area. Turfgrass or sod, seed and seed mixtures that contain more than a 20% mixture of cool-season grass species shall be prohibited.	Trees/Shrubs/ Ornamental Grasses/ Native Plants. Not to exceed moderate water-demand	Optional	N/A

Maintenance of Landscaping

The property owner is expected to keep all landscaping in a well maintained and healthy growing condition. Unless otherwise specified, the property owner is also expected to maintain landscaping in the right-of-way adjacent to their property. Maintenance standards apply to new development, redevelopment, and existing landscapes.

See Section 17-70-140

Special Exceptions from Zoning for Landscaping Requirements.

The Neighborhood Board of Adjustment, Land Use Review Commission or City Council may hear and decide requests for special exceptions from the landscaping requirements. The applicant for a special exception shall submit an application to Community Development signed by the applicant and submitted with the Special Exception Review Fee.

See Section 17-70-160

Landscape Reference Manual

The landscape reference manual contains the necessary guidelines and resources to comply with the Landscape Requirements of Chapter 17-70. This includes:

- Landscape Review Process Details
- Landscape Plan & Landscape Tables Submittal Requirements
- Sample Landscape Tables & Figures for various property types
- Instructions for completing a Water Budget Chart
- Legends, Plant List Formatting, Index Map, and Plant Diversity Requirement instructions to include in Landscape Plan
- Street Tree Planting Distance/Spacing & Recommended Plant Material Separations
- Appendix A: Approved Water-Wise Plant List
- Appendix B: Landscape Details for Tree, Shrub, Grass and Perennial Planting

Resources

- [Approved Ordinance No. 2215: Chapter 17-70 Landscape Code](#)
- [Broomfield's Landscape Reference Manual](#)
- [Broomfield 2023 Water-Wise Plant List](#)

Contacts

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- General questions regarding the development review process: planning@broomfield.org
- Technical questions regarding landscaping may be directed to Kate Mack, PLA, Broomfield Landscape Architect at landscape@broomfield.org
- Questions related to water budgets should be directed to Broomfield Water Resources at waterresources@broomfield.org