



BROOMFIELD
Colorado

Landscape Ordinance Update FAQs

Q: Who does this impact?

A: The updated landscape ordinance will only apply to new development and redevelopment in Broomfield. Development includes new residential, mixed-use, and non-residential primary structures. Only redevelopment that involves replacing an entire structure or the expansion of a building's area by more than 65% percent will be required to comply with the ordinance. Also, construction of new parking lots containing 10 or more parking spaces or expansion of an existing parking lot by more than 50% percent are required to follow the ordinance. Existing landscapes are not required to comply with the updated landscape ordinance.

Q: Why is the city doing this?

A: Water conservation is one of the City and County of Broomfield's top sustainability initiatives. In Broomfield, 60-70% of the water supply is dedicated to outdoor water use each year, and much of this water is being used to irrigate high water use turfgrass. As Broomfield grows, installing low-water plant alternatives with efficient irrigation systems in new development and redevelopment, is one of the community's biggest opportunities to improve water supply resilience in the face of a hotter and drier future. And water wise landscapes don't just save water, they also help us lower our water bills, drought-proof our landscape investments and support local wildlife, pollinators, and the environment while better reflecting the landscapes around them.

Q: How will this impact city aesthetics?

A: As mentioned above, established landscapes on properties not undergoing redevelopment will remain unchanged. New water-wise landscapes will incorporate a variety of xeriscape principles, including the use of mulch, native plants, and low-water trees in the landscape. Contrary to popular belief, xeriscaping is not desertscaping. For example, in new single-family residential development, 75% of the landscaped area must consist of living plant material with a limit of 30% turfgrass, and non-living materials such as mulch or rock will be limited to 25% of a landscape. The ordinance promotes flexibility and will create diverse, colorful, lush, and multipurpose outdoor spaces in Broomfield.



Q: Will this make new homes more expensive?

A: Xeriscaped landscapes are more expensive for a developer or homeowner to install than traditional cool season turf grass lawns. This can initially increase new home prices. However, xeriscape landscaped homes have been shown to have higher property values than those with traditional lawn landscapes, and equate to much lower water bills over the lifetime of the property.

Q: Will less grass mean a hotter Broomfield?

A: No. Many people think of desert landscaping when they hear the term xeriscaping – all rock and cacti. In Colorado, we focus on landscaping that uses native Colorado plants to reduce water use and provide environmental benefits. One of those benefits is cooling the surrounding environment. A study conducted by the Desert Research Institute found that if a low water landscape includes living plant material and shade trees, cooling during the daytime can be equivalent to the cooling benefits of cool season turfgrass.

Q: What will stop people from ripping out xeriscape landscapes and planting cool season turfgrass instead?

A: Cities in Colorado have found water budget pricing to be an effective tool against reconversion – residents are priced at a lower water rate tier for low water usage on water-wise landscapes, and at a higher tier if more water is used to maintain cool season turf grass. There is a financial disincentive against reconverting xeriscape landscapes in Broomfield, and as the landscape ordinance primarily applies to landscapes in new development, a landscape will be limited to 30% turf grass which will lead to significantly lower water use than past standards.



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