

City and County of Broomfield Water Efficient Landscape Ordinance Development & Community Outreach

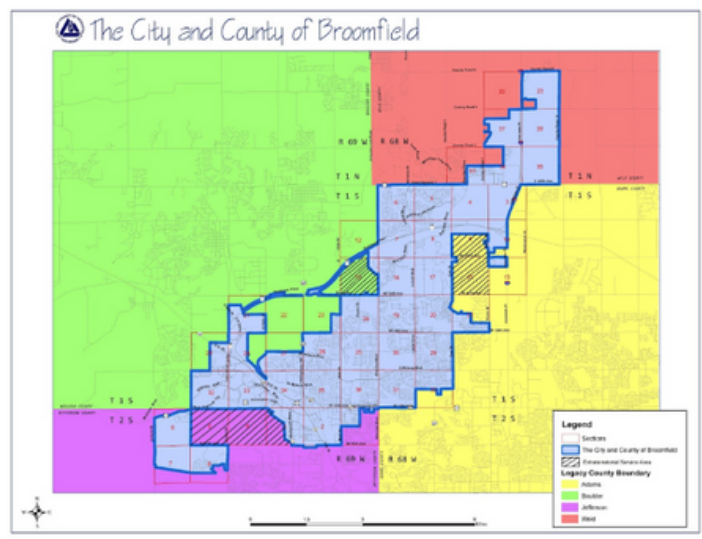


Project at-a-Glance

Community Overview

- Utility/Community: City and County of Broomfield, CO
- Location: Broomfield, CO
- Population served: 76,976
- Service area: 34 square miles

Project Partners



Map of City and County of Broomfield Water Service Area from 2020 Water Efficiency Plan

Project Benefits

- Broomfield's new Water Efficient Landscape Ordinance is one of the strongest waterwise landscaping codes in Colorado, limiting turfgrass to 30% in multi-family, single-family attached, and non-residential properties and 30% of visible side and front yards of single-family detached properties. Only drought tolerant, low water grasses may be used in these areas.
- Broomfield's updated landscape ordinance will be instrumental in meeting their goal of reducing total system water demand by 10% in 2040, outlined in their 2020 Water Efficiency Plan.
- In addition to saving water, Broomfield's water efficient landscape ordinance will lower customers' water bills, support community-wide landscape investments, and benefit local wildlife, pollinators, and the environment.

Project Challenges

Changing Population

Lack of Reliable Water Supply

Climate Change

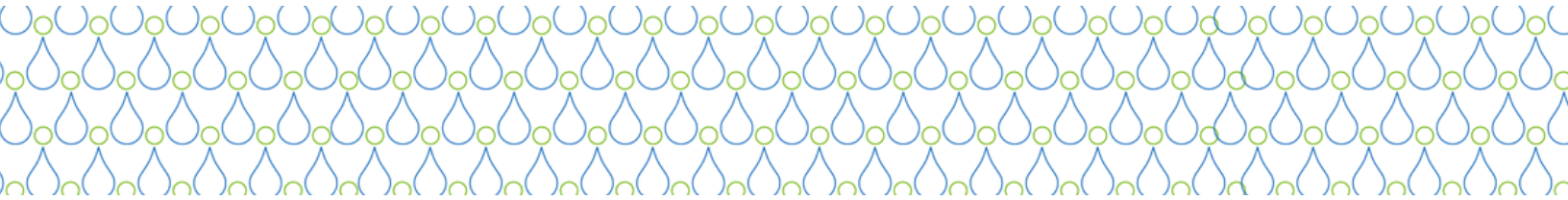
Drought

Overall Challenges

Facing climate change, drought, and rapid population growth, Broomfield's water supply and reliability is at risk, similar to other Front Range communities in Colorado. Future water demand is projected to increase to approximately 19,000 AF by year 2050 due to population growth (an increase of about 7,000 AF from 2022 demand).

Strategies for Success

WaterNow Alliance (WaterNow) and Western Resource Advocates (WRA) worked with Broomfield to develop a water efficient landscape ordinance based on available examples and best practices from other communities, conducted outreach and gathered feedback from key stakeholders and community members on the draft ordinance, created education and outreach materials, and supported Broomfield throughout the City Council approval process.



Project Spotlight

The consolidated City and County of Broomfield, CO, located midway between Denver and Boulder, has a population of approximately 77,000. It is experiencing rapid population growth and anticipates upwards of 50% growth through buildout, particularly in the undeveloped areas of the northeast portion of the county. Sixty to seventy percent of Broomfield's annual water supply is currently dedicated to landscape irrigation. Climate change and prolonged drought are putting additional pressure on Broomfield's limited water resources.

After attending a Growing Water Smart (GWS) workshop in 2022, Broomfield's goal was to focus efforts on water efficient programs and policies that will make the largest and most long-lasting impact. They identified water wise landscaping as a critical water demand reduction tool in their GWS Action Plan. While Broomfield is currently making considerable investments in the replacement of existing cool season turfgrass with waterwise and drought resistant landscaping alternatives, they had minimal municipal code related to water efficient landscape requirements.

WaterNow and WRA, also referred to as "the project team", supported the City and County of Broomfield in creating a new water efficient landscape ordinance to reduce outdoor water demand in new development and redevelopment. The project team reviewed Broomfield's draft landscape ordinance language, providing detailed feedback based on other communities' codes, landscape best practices, and prior, related Project Accelerators

and other research efforts. Additionally, WaterNow and WRA supported Broomfield by researching specific ordinance related topics such as redevelopment thresholds, impact of landscape types on urban heat island effects in parking lots, residential landscape lighting code, landscaping provisions in disturbed riparian areas, and more.



Broomfield's Xeriscape Demonstration Garden. Photo from City and County of Broomfield.

In addition to supporting the language of the landscape ordinance, WaterNow and WRA organized two stakeholder engagement opportunities to gather feedback on the proposed code language for inclusion in the final version of the landscape code. The first stakeholder meeting was virtual and included stakeholders with technical landscape and irrigation expertise such as landscape architects, while the second stakeholder meeting was in-person and open to the general public. Both stakeholder engagement opportunities provided valuable feedback and questions for consideration, enhancing the content in the landscape ordinance and Landscape Reference Manual greatly.

Throughout the project, the project team developed communication and engagement materials for Broomfield related to their Water Efficient Landscape Ordinance. This included compiling a detailed list of landscape transformation resources for Broomfield residents, developing a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) page for their webpage, sharing a robust dataset of turf conversion benefits and outreach examples, and developing public-facing educational materials and fact sheets for Broomfield residents and developers.

Lastly, the project team worked closely with Broomfield staff to support the ordinance through the Council review and adoption process including actively participating in Council meetings and supporting staff to address Council feedback.

In the near-term, the ordinance will further Broomfield's current water conservation efforts requiring water wise landscaping practices in new and re-development. Now and into the future, the ordinance will ensure Broomfield's water supply is more resilient to better withstand future droughts and impacts from climate change.



Project Impacts

On August 22, 2023, the Broomfield City Council unanimously adopted [Ordinance No. 2215](#) which amends the Broomfield Municipal Code to be one of the strongest waterwise landscaping ordinances in the state. The ordinance is supplemented by a [Landscape Reference Manual](#) which contains the necessary guidelines, criteria, maps, plant lists and other provisions. 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 Broomfield. The new ordinance applies to landscape plans approved after January 1, 2024.

Table 1: Broomfield New Landscape Code Compliance Examples

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 10-space parking lot adding 10 new spaces.	Yes

This project serves as an important example to other communities in Colorado and in the West, that strong waterwise landscape ordinances are an achievable and critical step in the suite of tools to connect land use planning with water conservation. Broomfield's Water Efficient Landscape Ordinance will help the City meet their goal of reducing total system water demand by 10% in 2040, outlined in their 2020 Water Efficiency Plan.

For Broomfield community members interested in learning more, and for other communities interested in a similar effort, WaterNow and WRA developed a [Code Explainer](#) for developers and a [FAQ](#) sheet for the public related to Broomfield's new landscape code.

For additional information about the project, see [WaterNow's blog](#), [Colorado Sun News' article](#), and [Colorado WaterWise's article](#).



Lessons Learned

Broomfield's efforts to develop and successfully present a water efficient landscape ordinance to their City Council provides several lessons for communities that wish to undergo a similar process:

- Broomfield attended a Growing Water Smart workshop before pursuing this project, which supported the team to align on a key, critical action. Utility and/or community-wide alignment on goals and actionable steps related to water management projects is key to success.
- It is important to involve both land use planners/community development staff and water department staff on a landscape ordinance effort. In Broomfield, water staff were particularly helpful in sharing the resources and incentives that are being provided for turf replacement to align with the new landscape code and resources.

- Having sufficient staff capacity and expertise to both implement and enforce a new landscape standard is critical. Broomfield brought on a new landscape architect who provided invaluable expertise to the project, especially the City Council presentations and landscape manual.
- Incorporating stakeholder feedback, both from the public and from technical stakeholders, ensures that a landscape ordinance fits the unique needs and values of a community.
- Broomfield’s landscape ordinance efforts occurred on a fast-paced timeline thanks to setting non-negotiable dates from the start, holding regular meetings with the project team to ensure progress towards deliverables, and having sufficient capacity (from both Broomfield and WaterNow and WRA).
- There is no need to reinvent the wheel when embarking on a landscape ordinance effort – draw from existing codes in your region for inspiration. Broomfield’s code incorporated elements from other Colorado community codes, like Aurora and Thornton, among others.