



 Broomfield, CO

NEW LANDSCAPE CODE REDUCES WATER DEMAND WHILE SUPPORTING LOCAL WILDLIFE & POLLINATORS





OUR APPROACH

WaterNow Alliance and Western Resource Advocates (WRA) partnered with the City and County of Broomfield to develop and pass an ordinance addressing water efficient landscapes and irrigation in new and redevelopment projects. The team researched other municipal codes, best practices, and technical elements to draft ordinance language, then refined it after organizing and receiving community feedback. WaterNow and WRA also created communication, engagement, and educational materials, and supported Broomfield staff in developing a supplemental Landscape Reference Manual to help implement the ordinance.

IMPACT

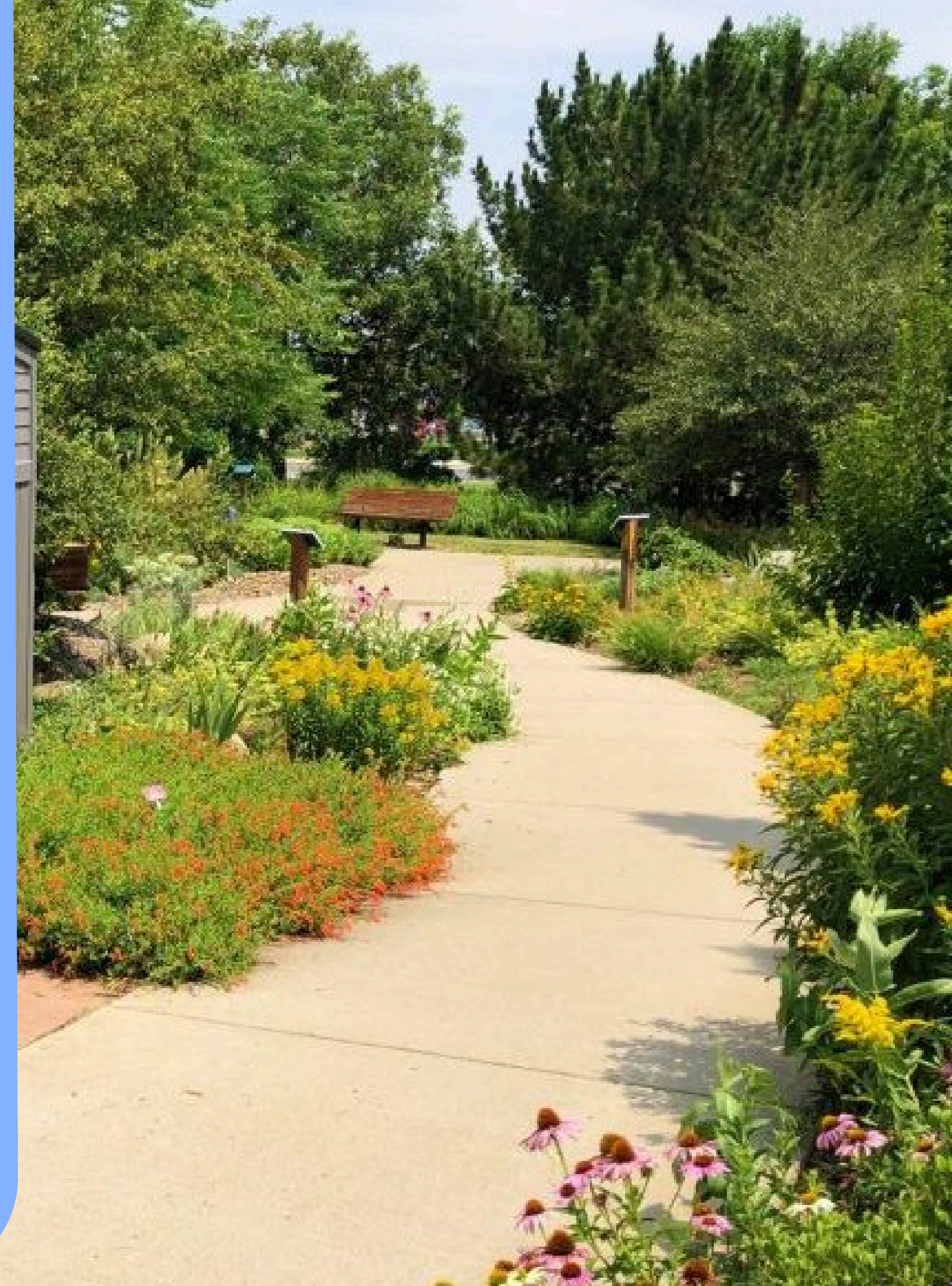
Broomfield's new ordinance—among one of the strongest in Colorado—limits high-water use turf to 30% of the total landscaped area and seed mix blends to less than 20% cool-season turf species in most new and redevelopment projects. Unanimously adopted in August 2023, this ordinance will help Broomfield meet its 2040 goal of reducing system-wide water demand by 10%, while lowering customer water bills, supporting resilient landscapes, and benefiting local wildlife, pollinators, and the environment.

KEY DRIVERS

Facing rapid growth and increasing water demand, Broomfield identified outdoor water use—60–70% of its annual water supply—as a major opportunity for conservation. With climate change and drought threatening future supplies, Broomfield prioritized waterwise landscaping a key sustainability strategy. Having little existing code that addressed this, Broomfield aimed to reduce irrigation demand in new and redevelopment projects by promoting low water, climate-appropriate landscapes and efficient irrigation – boosting long term resilience and supporting its 2040 water efficiency goals.

HOW IT WORKS

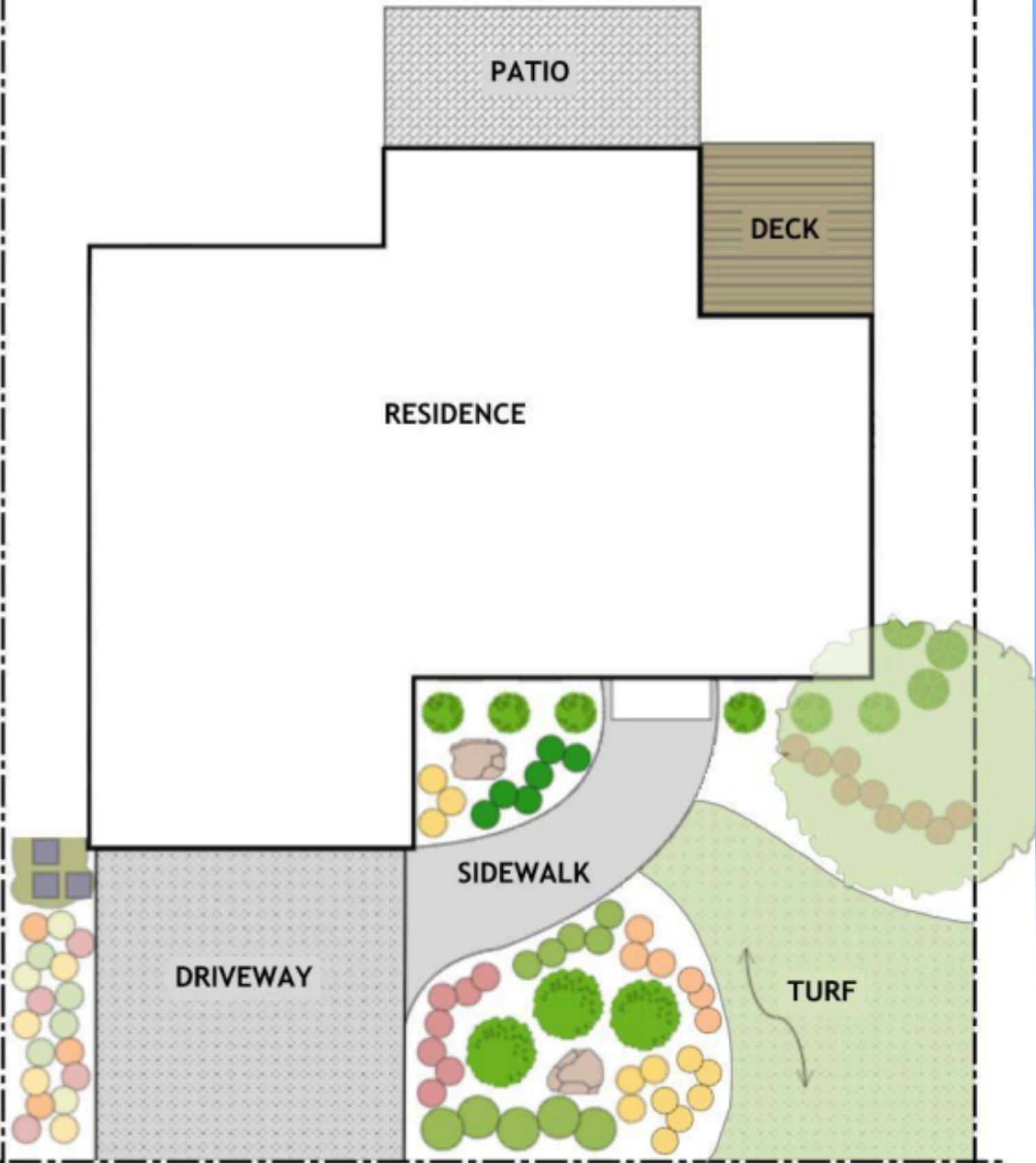
As of January 1, 2024, all new development and redevelopment projects in Broomfield must comply with the new landscape ordinance ([Chapter 17-70](#)). The code includes some of Colorado's most stringent turfgrass limits, capping turf at 30% of the total landscaped area and prohibiting grass blends with more than 20% cool-season grass species, like Kentucky Bluegrass. It also bans turfgrass in parking lots, requires EPA [WaterSense](#)-certified irrigation systems with rain sensors, and mandates low-water plants from an approved list. A [Landscape Reference Manual](#) supports compliance with clear design criteria, plant lists, and water budgeting tools.



HOW IT WORKS

New Ordinance Applicability	Must Comply with New Ordinance/Code?
Homeowner without proposed renovations/redevelopment	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

Single-Family Individual Lot Landscape



HOW IT WORKS

Example: Single-family individual lot landscape with 7,000 square feet (sq ft) of total residential property area and 1,222 sq ft of visible front and side yards:

Calculating Maximum Turfgrass (sq ft):

visible front and side yard (sqft)	1222
<u>max proportion of turf grass (30%)</u>	<u>× 0.30</u>
max total turf grass (sq ft)	367

Calculating Maximum Non-Living Plant Materials (sq ft):

visible front and side yard (sqft)	1222
<u>max proportion of non-living plant materials (25%)</u>	<u>× 0.25</u>
max total non-living plant materials (sq ft)	306

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**I WOULD TOUT [THE NEW ORDINANCE] AS ONE OF THE MOST
RESTRICTIVE ALONG THE FRONT RANGE, BROOMFIELD
DEFINITELY GOT AHEAD OF THAT CURVE.**

– Judy Hammer, Broomfield’s Principal Planner

THE PATH FORWARD

Broomfield's water efficient landscape ordinance laid the foundation for additional conservation efforts—like another ordinance that set an outdoor watering schedule—and supports the community's broader strategy to reduce system-wide water demand. It also positions Broomfield as a statewide leader in sustainable, climate-resilient development.



KEY TAKEAWAYS

Broomfield adapted code language from neighboring municipalities like Aurora and Thornton, showing the value of building on regional examples.

Involving both land use planners and water department staff ensured the ordinance aligned with conservation goals and development trends.

Gathering input from experts and the general public helped tailor the ordinance to Broomfield's unique needs and values.

SOURCES

Becky Anderson & Victoria Arling, *WaterNow Alliance & Western Resource Advocates Support the Passing of Broomfield's New Water Efficient Landscape Ordinance!*, WaterNow Alliance (Sept 26, 2023), <https://waternow.org/2023/09/26/waternow-alliance-and-western-resource-advocates-support-the-passing-of-broomfields-new-water-efficient-landscape-ordinance/>.

City & County of Broomfield, *Broomfield Landscape Code*, <https://www.broomfieldvoice.com/landscape-code-rewrite>.

City & County of Broomfield, *Landscape Reference Manual* (2023), <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1hqcgBZIZh-moVEUcJGJNWFw7TZvBiQJ5psgRw3qmWow/edit>.

City & County of Broomfield, *Native Landscape Conversions - FAQ & Helpful Resources*, <https://www.broomfield.org/4105/Native-Landscape-Conversions---FAQ-and-H>.

City & County of Broomfield Public Works Department, *Water Efficiency Plan 2020* (2020), https://drive.google.com/file/d/12HWeNIFlob4ob_mRG40UvNONWVpQK2Bt/view.

WaterNow Alliance & Western Resource Advocates, *Understanding Broomfield's New Landscape Code* (Oct. 2023), https://waternow.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/Broomfield-Code-Explainer_Formatted.pdf.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

WATER USE AND DROUGHT RESTRICTIONS

Information on Broomfield's new Water Use Ordinance that went into effect just one year after this collaboration!

BROOMFIELD, CO PROJECT ACCELERATOR SUMMARY

Additional information on the Broomfield Accelerator Project

BROOMFIELD LANDSCAPE ORDINANCE FAQ SHEET

COLORADO SUN NEWS ARTICLE: COLORADO CITIES ACCELERATE TURF WARS WITH NEW CONSTRUCTION BANS, PUBLIC MEDIAN RIP-OUTS

BROOMFIELD LANDSCAPE CODE EXPLAINER

CWW ARTICLE: BROOMFIELD PASSES NEW WATER EFFICIENT LANDSCAPE ORDINANCE

CWCB WATER PLAN GRANT ANNUAL REPORT FY22-23

BROOMFIELD ENTERPRISE ARTICLE: BROOMFIELD 'GOT AHEAD OF THAT CURVE,' TO CHANGE CONCEPT OF A CLASSIC LAWN

TURF CONVERSION DATABASE

RELATED PROJECTS



ERIE, CO

Water Efficient Landscape Ordinance Development to reduce outdoor water demand in new development and redevelopment



MOAB, UT

Water Wise Landscaping Code for New Development to increase water supply resilience in new development and redevelopment



FORT LUPTON, CO

Integrating WaterWise Principles into Land Use Planning

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