



Utilities
222 Laporte Ave.
PO Box 580, Fort Collins, CO 80522

970-212-2900
utilities@fcgov.com

MEMORANDUM

Date: July 25, 2024

To: Mayor and City Councilmembers

Through: Kelly DiMartino, City Manager ^{DS}
 Tyler Marr, Deputy City Manager ^{DS}

From: Katie Collins, Water Conservation Specialist ^{DS}

Subject: Update and Timing for Soil Standards and Landscape Code Revisions

BOTTOM LINE

The purpose of this memo is to provide City Council with an update and timeframe for soil and landscape code amendments and associated program improvements.

- First reading of code ordinances are scheduled for a regular City Council meeting on Sept. 3, 2024.
- Budget offers, for full-time employees (FTEs) to implement and enforce these programs, were proposed within the 2025-2026 Budget (Offer # 7.34 and 74.2).

BACKGROUND

Environmental Regulatory Affairs, Water Conservation and Forestry staff collaborated on code amendments that address three 2021-2023 Council Priorities including #14 Effective soil amendment policies and compliance (water usage), #19 Xeriscape – Increase rebates and education, less green lawns with new development, and #28 Improving tree policies.

The proposed code amendments were initially scheduled for a regular Council meeting in early 2024. Staff postponed these items to align with both the new format of Land Use Code adopted in May 2024 and Senate Bill 24-005, signed into law on March 15, 2024. Senate Bill 24-005 imposes significant restrictions of artificial turf and high-water grass on new and redevelopment after Jan. 1, 2026. Specific to high-water grass, the law prohibits its installation in locations where it serves no function. The law also lists areas where high-water grass cannot be installed, including streetscapes. While the intent behind the law and the City’s proposal are the same – to reduce the amount of high-water grass in development – the scope and language presented in the state law differs enough that revisions to the City’s initial proposal were required. While unfortunate to delay an already delayed effort, this revision avoids subsequent code amendments needed to align with the state law ahead of 2026.

Staff revised code to define functional uses for grass which are used to determine where turf may be installed. Given the subjectivity of how turf may or may not be used after a development is complete, an additional control to limit turf is needed. Council supported staff's original recommendation to limit turf to no more than 30% of the landscaped area of a property, not to exceed 10,000 square feet (SF). However, it was revealed during code testing that the percentage requirement was confusing, challenging to track and lacked appropriate flexibility. For this reason, staff now proposes replacing the 30% control with an average water budget not to exceed 11 gallons per SF. Based on case studies of recent development projects, it is estimated this approach will result in comparable if not greater water savings. It also provides developments design flexibility (e.g., new parks with an allowable use of grass that exceeds 10,000 SF would not need to request an exception to the code).

Considering Senate Bill 24-005 requirements, feedback from Council, Boards and Commissions, staff, and community members, the following summarizes significant adjustments and additional considerations since Council last discussed these items at the Oct. 10, 2023, Council Work Session.

- Code amendments related to improving tree policies will come later to align with the pending adoption of the Urban Forest Strategic Plan, *Rooted in Community*, and to allow for further evaluation of incentives for tree preservation.
- Day time watering limitations will focus on voluntary compliance through education and outreach rather than restrictions in code.
- Revised landscape standards in Land Use Code will not apply to detached houses.
- The proposed Land Use Code amendments are formatted to match the new code format adopted May 17, 2024 and:
 - Align with Senate Bill 24-005 requirements, defining where high-water grass can be installed based on its intended use.
 - Reduces the average water budget requirement from 15 to 11 gallons per SF.

Code changes are one piece of program improvements. There is also the need to verify and enforce compliance with new standards. Both soil and landscape standards would need additional staff resources for plan review, site inspections, and enforcement to enact and enforce these enhanced standards. Within the 2025-2026 Budget cycle two offers for FTEs were submitted:

- 7.34 Utilities: ERA 1.0 FTE – Stormwater Inspector for Soils
- 74.2 Senior Inspector, Zoning/Water Conservation – 1.0 FTE

Table 1. Summary of Proposed Code Amendments	
<p>Land Use Code</p> <p>Applicable to new commercial, industrial, institutional developments and redevelopments including multi-family housing, homeowners' association common spaces and other irrigation-only areas.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restricts installing high-water grass for nonfunctional purposes and identifies specific purposes where grass is allowed • Requires no more than 11 gallons per square foot of landscape • Restricts installing artificial turf except for athletic sports fields • Requires dedicated surface or subsurface irrigation to all trees • Reorganizes the existing section to be more concise and predictable
<p>Municipal Code, Chapter 12</p> <p>Applicable to residential accounts seeking Certificate of Occupancy or non-residential accounts requiring development review when landscape area impacted is greater than 1,000 SF.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarifies applicability • Sets soil compaction thresholds • Removes barriers to soil amendments in a manner that is best for vegetation establishment

NEXT STEPS

- These code amendment ordinances are scheduled for first reading on Sept. 3, 2024.
- Soon, staff will begin updating City Streetscape Standards to reflect the state law prohibiting “nonfunctional turf” in streetscapes. Because Streetscape Standards are an appendix in Larimer County Urban Street Standards, it’s unlikely Fort Collins Land Use Code will be impacted by the update.

ATTACHMENTS

Colorado Senate Bill 24-005

cc: Gretchen Stanford, Utilities Deputy Director
 Mariel Miller, Water Conservation Manager
 Jill Oropeza, Interim Water Director
 Kathyne Marko, Environmental Regulatory Affairs Manager

Utilities

electric · stormwater · wastewater · water
222 Laporte Ave.
PO Box 580
Fort Collins, CO 80522-0580

970.212.2900

V/TDD: 711

utilities@fcgov.com


fcgov.com/utilities






MEMORANDUM

DATE: January 25, 2024

TO: Mayor and City Councilmembers

FROM: Katie Collins, Water Conservation Specialist 
 Mariel Miller, Water Conservation Manager
 Jen Dial, Water Resources Manager

THROUGH: Kelly DiMartino, City Manager 
 Tyler Marr, Deputy City Manager 
 Gretchen Stanford, Utilities Deputy Director 

RE: Council Work Session Follow-up to October 10, 2023 Landscape Standard Improvements including Xeriscape, Soil Amendments and Trees Item

Bottom Line

The purpose of this memo is to respond to Council’s discussion during the Landscape Standard Improvements item at the October 10 work session around the cost to conserve water relative to Fort Collins Utilities’ water rights portfolio, water storage needs, and water supply and demand assumptions. The work leading up to and following that work session is in response to 2021-2023 Council Priority 19 “Xeriscape – Increase rebates and education, less green lawns with new development.”

Background

Fort Collins Utilities (“Utilities”) owns a robust portfolio of water rights. Historically, during average and wet precipitation years, these water rights have yielded more water than what is used by our customers. During hot and dry years, current supplies are not adequate to meet demands while also maintaining a stored reserve of water for emergencies.¹ Furthermore, we anticipate a future where climate impacts and population growth increase demands. For these reasons, Utilities uses a multi-faceted approach to ensure a reliable and flexible water supply now and in the future.

This approach includes:

¹ Section 2.1.3 of the City of Fort Collins Water Supply and Demand Management Policy states the water supply planning criteria will include a storage reserve that equates to 20% of annual demand in storage through a 1-in-50-year drought, which is meant to address emergency situations such as pipeline failures or wildfire impacts. The reserve equates to about 3.7 months of average winter demand and about 1.5 months of average summer (July) demand.



- **Planning and modeling** - Population growth trends, climate change models, and demand forecasts inform the development and updates of action-oriented strategic plans such as the Water Supply and Demand Management Policy, Water Efficiency Plan, and the Water Shortage Action Plan.
- **Water supply storage** - Storage infrastructure is critical to reliably supply and deliver water. In addition to the storage available in Joe Wright and Horsetooth reservoirs, the enlargement of Halligan reservoir through the Halligan Water Supply Project will increase firm yield to provide additional municipal and industrial water supply.² Without an enlarged Halligan Reservoir, Utilities cannot meet projected future demands without frequent restrictions.
- **Conservation and efficiency** – Even with an enlarged Halligan reservoir on-line, climate modeling predicting a hotter, drier future indicates that water restrictions are likely to become a more regular occurrence in the future. A suite of programs and strategies, guided by Utilities’ Water Efficiency Plan and aimed at reducing water demand, allows us to do more with the supplies we have and, in the long-term, has the potential to offset a portion of future water supply needs and minimize the frequency and severity of future water restrictions.³ Actions like xeriscaping can increase the resilience of community members by lowering their bills and reducing the impact of mandatory water shortage restrictions.

Utilities’ Water Conservation Program

Utilities’ Water Conservation team develops and implements planning, programs, and policies for the efficient use of water, indoors and outdoors, on residential, commercial, and multi-family properties. When water conservation and efficiency is adopted at a large scale, it helps us more precisely predict water use and demand. Current programs largely focus on incentives and education around reducing water use on existing properties. For new construction, Water Conservation has more recently focused on developing efficiency-related development standards and codes.

At what cost should we be managing water demands?

Conservation and efficiency incentives and requirements are long-term, cost-effective investments that can help Utilities and its customers adapt to the implications of a hotter, drier future. In 2022, the cost of Utilities’ Water Conservation offerings reduced demands at an approximate average cost of \$1,800 per acre-foot saved.⁴ It is important to note that across all

² Firm yield is the amount of demand Utilities can meet through the 1-in-50-year drought and is the metric Utilities uses in its water supply system planning per the Water Supply and Demand Management Policy.

³ Utilities is updating the City’s current Water Efficiency Plan. The updated plan will guide how we all use water and set fresh goals to reduce the amount we use as a community. The update process includes developing a new water modeling tool that looks at water demand and potential savings from various efficiency and conservation strategies. Staff is scheduled to present the Water Efficiency Plan update project for Council input at the Council work session on February 13, 2024.

⁴ Estimated cost to reduce future demands through water conservation based on Water Conservation’s 2022 expenses of \$977,240 (this includes personnel) and 173,000,000 gallons (531-acre feet; 2% of annual demand) of estimated savings from various Water Conservation programs and services. Not all 531-acre feet can be considered permanent reductions, however. Factors of influence include behavior change, weather, and state-wide product efficiency requirements.



Water Conservation program and service offerings, not all savings attributed to the Water Conservation program can be considered permanent demand reductions. It's also realistic to assume that as our customers become more efficient with water use, there is a diminishing return on that \$1,800 per acre-foot price tag. But when the current cost to acquire additional units from the Colorado-Big Thompson Project or shares from the North Poudre Irrigation Company is valued at well over \$100,000 per acre-foot of firm yield, it still makes sense to pursue conservation and efficiency measures to offset a portion of future water supply needs.

Although water conservation can help reduce the need for additional water supplies, additional water storage, like the Halligan Water Supply Project, is still needed to provide a place to store our conserved water for use during drought or other water short years.

Short-term water restrictions vs. long-term demand management

Our current understanding of how climate-driven changes might impact water use in Utilities' water service area is informed by the Utilities Water Supply Vulnerability Study (2019). The study indicates that even with additional storage in an enlarged Halligan Reservoir, a hotter, drier climate will require Utilities to impose water restrictions more frequently.

Restrictions work well in infrequent and severe situations and Utilities customers have quickly and actively responded to the three water restrictions we have had since 2000. However, frequent restrictions can impact water dependent businesses, quality of life, and the community aesthetic. Our living landscapes, especially those with a high-water requirement, cannot be sustained with limited or no irrigation for prolonged periods. Codifying standards that require low-water landscapes from the start, for example, help reduce water demand long-term and ensure that landscapes are more resilient and adapted to hotter, drier conditions. It also ensures we do not continue to install excessive turf grass in new developments while simultaneously providing rebates to remove it in existing properties. Staff considered these factors in the proposed Land Use Code standards for new landscapes and believe the recommended standards coming forward in Spring 2024 stand to make progress toward 2021-2023 Council Priority 19. "Xeriscape – Increase rebates and education, less green lawns with new development."

Attachments: Fort Collins Water Supply Vulnerability Study (2019)

cc: Jason Graham, Director of Water Utilities
Jill Oropeza, Senior Director of Integrated Sciences and Planning
Eric Potyondy, Assistant City Attorney
Donnie Dustin, Water Resources Engineer
Kathryne Marko, ERA Manager

Utilities

electric • stormwater • wastewater • water
222 Laporte Ave.
PO Box 580
Fort Collins, CO 80522-0580

970.212.2900

V/TDD: 711



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




MEMORANDUM

Date: November 1, 2023

To: Mayor Arndt and City Councilmembers

Through: Kelly DiMartino, City Manager 
Tyler Marr, Deputy City Manager 

Kendall Minor, Utilities Executive Director 
Dean Klingner, Community Services Director 

From: Katie Collins, Water Conservation Specialist 

Kendra Boot, City Forester 

Kathryne Marko, Environmental Regulatory Affairs Manager

Subject: October 10, 2023, Work Session Summary: Council Priorities for Landscape Standard Improvements including Xeriscape, Soil Amendments, and Trees

The purpose of this memo is to summarize discussions during the October 10, 2023 Work Session. All Councilmembers were present. Staff members present were Katie Collins, Mariel Miller, Kendra Boot, Mike Calhoon, Kathryne Marko and Jill Oropeza.

Staff presented key proposed program improvements, anticipated resource needs, and path forward for three council priorities related to xeriscape, soil, and trees.

Bottom line:

- General support for the intent to increase protection and mitigation for trees; updated landscapes standards for commercial and multi-family development; soil inspection program; education and outreach for all landscape and irrigation efficiency efforts.
- While supportive of the goals of preserving mature tree canopy, shared concerns related to competing values and tradeoffs associated with cost, specifically small business and infill projects. Staff will be doing more work to present options that try to balance these tradeoffs.



- There was not support to continue with single-family xeriscape requirements at this time. Councilmembers requested that staff continue to work on topics into the future, such as parkways, incentivizing conservation-oriented development, collaboration with other water providers, and the Urban Forest Strategic Plan that is scheduled for work session in Q1 2024.

Feedback:

- Prefer voluntary action city-wide through education and outreach related to irrigation scheduling rather than enforcement of a daytime watering restriction.
- On landscape standards for single-unit front yards, focus on making xeriscape the easy choice through voluntary action. Evaluate how to incentivize, remove barriers, and improve cost effectiveness.
- Review and adjust as appropriate tree mitigation for impacts to small businesses, greenfield vs infill differences, and voluntary trees species – especially those that are high water consuming and/or invasive.

Next steps:

- Staff will schedule a hearing in Q1 2024 for code changes necessary for the soil amendments and commercial/multifamily landscape requirements. A supporting staffing appropriation will also be presented at that time.
- Staff will work with leadership and Leadership Planning Team to determine next action steps (such as a potential work session) and associated timeframes related to trees including commercial/multifamily mitigation requirements, Russian-olives, etc.
- Utilities will provide a memo to Council related to xeriscape, water and water conservation with information on estimated water savings, including acre-foot units, and water portfolio information.
- During the work session, staff showed a presentation with formatting that differed from the copy of the presentation included in the council packet. Staff also acknowledged an error on the *Xeriscape Standards – Cost Comparison* table. A revised presentation with all changes noted is attached.

Attachment:

Updated Presentation: *Landscape Standards_Council Work Session_Updated.pdf*

Cc

Maril Miller, Water Conservation Manager
John Phelan, Acting Deputy Director, Customer Connections
Mike Calhoon, Director of Parks
Jason Graham, Director of Water Utilities
Jill Oropeza, Senior Director of Integrated Sciences and Planning
Heather Jarvis, Assistant City Attorney



Eric Potyondy, Assistant City Attorney



Utilities

electric · stormwater · wastewater · water
PO Box 580
Fort Collins, CO 80522

970.212.2900

V/TDD: Dial 711 for Relay Colorado
utilities@fcgov.com
fcgov.com/utilities

MEMORANDUM

DATE: June 27, 2023

TO: Mayor Arndt and Councilmembers

THROUGH: Kelly DiMartino, City Manager 

Gretchen Stanford, Utilities Deputy Director, Customer Connections 

Jason Graham, Director of Water Utilities 

FROM: Kathyne Marko, Environmental Regulatory Affairs Manager 

Katie Collins, Water Conservation Specialist 

RE: Council Priorities Update: Additional Details for Soil Amendment Inspections and Artificial Turf

Bottom Line

The purpose of this memo is to provide additional background for the current and proposed soil amendment compliance program and the proposed restriction of artificial turf on all new development. These topics relate to a larger code update project that originated from two City Council priorities:

14. Effective soil amendment policies and compliance (water usage)

19. Xeriscape – Increase rebates and education, less green lawns with new development

Background

On November 21, 2023, Council will consider adoption of landscape-related codes, that promote water conservation, stormwater quality, and resilient urban landscapes. Staff will present a preview of the ordinance to discuss final direction of the proposal at the October 10, 2023 Council Work Session. The package of proposals will include artificial turf and soil amendment standards as well as standards related to general soil health, limits on irrigated grass, irrigation efficiency, and tree canopy protections. These items were discussed at the January 10, 2023 Council work session. Up to date details for these other proposals may be found in the most recent Council Priority Update.

Soil Amendment

The Soil Amendment Program is currently implemented via an administrative review process using site knowledge gained from other required field inspections for erosion control. The ability to resource and scale-up soil amendment inspections from an administrative review process to onsite inspections is dependent on numerous variables, including availability, existing workload, and timing of soil amendment submittals. A qualitative analysis of different scalability options is provided in this memo; this initial



evaluation indicates that to increase inspections with any significance, additional staffing/funding would be needed.

Soil amendment information is provided to address two questions from the January 10, 2023, Work Session: Land Use Code Changes to Address Xeriscape and Soil Amendment:

- How does the city enforce current soil amendment code?
- Resource analysis to scale up soil amendment inspections

Enforcement of Current Soil Amendment Program

The Soil Amendment Program is run through the Environmental Regulatory Affairs (ERA) Erosion Program staff. Staff consists of three FTE's – Two Senior Inspectors and one Senior Specialist. The core function of this work group is to manage the City's Erosion Control Program which is mandated by the City's Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) Permit. Typically, construction sites that disturb over 10,000 ft² are inspected every two weeks during active construction for adequate erosion control. The following table is an overview of the activities performed by the Erosion Program staff.

Activity	2022 Statistics
Soil Amendment Certifications	350 Soil Certifications 127 Temporary Waivers
Soil Amendment Site Inspections	<10 sites
Development Review	566 Projects
Erosion Control Inspections	170 sites 2115 routine inspections
Permanent Stormwater Quality Feature Inspections (SWQF)	58 sites 67 SWQF Inspections
Vegetation / Site Stabilization Inspections	65 sites 283 Vegetation Inspections
Other Responsibilities	– Spill response – Fugitive dust complaints – Construction site complaints – Erosion enforcement

The review and approval process consists of reviewing a certification form along with amendment receipts. During winter, when soil conditions do not allow for tilling, a temporary waiver is issued and staff tracks completion of the soil amendment the following Spring. In most cases, knowledge of the site from erosion control inspections feeds into review of the soil amendment certification review. Soil amendment verification site inspections are performed based on indicators such as:

- Delivery dates not consistent with certification date
- No Area to Amend Certification
- New compost supplier
- Inconsistent ratio of cubic yards to lot size (3 yds / 1,000 SF)
- Timing of soil amendment not consistent with phase of construction



If field verification determines soil amendment was not consistent with the requirements, staff will not sign off for a Certificate of Occupancy (CO). If a CO has been issued, as is the case for Temporary Waivers, other building permits can be put on hold.

Resource Analysis to Scale Up Soil Amendment Inspections

Qualitative analysis for scaling up soil amendment inspections is summarized in the following table.

Inspection Type	Considerations/Limitations	Feasibility/Needs
Investigative Inspect if indicators of deficiencies	– Solely reactive, based on indicators	– Status Quo
Sporadic Inspect as time allows	– Likely would not occur during busy construction season	– Without additional resources, a significant increase would not be likely with the existing workload.
Seasonal Focus inspections during busy landscape season	– Increase existing staff time for hiring and/or training. – Likely based on grouping of submittals and available staff time.	– Additional resources/funding needed. – Consider the use of temporary hourly employees or consultant
Percentage Inspect a certain percentage of sites	– Likely based on grouping of submittals and available staff time.	– Additional resources/funding is needed to ensure consistent coverage. – Resource and funding needs dependent on percentage.
Full with adjusted thresholds Inspect all except Single Family Residential (SFR) landscape renovations	– SFR landscape renovations currently do not get permitted and survey results show existing homeowners do amend soil. – Could evaluate other thresholds	– Need higher additional resources/funding to ensure consistent coverage.
Full Inspect all vegetated landscape projects	– Requires significant process changes to add SFR landscape renovations to permit and inspection procedures.	– Highest increase of additional resources/funding needed to address both inspections and process change for SFR.

To conduct a full evaluation of selected alternatives, the following topics will need to be considered for a sustainable soil amendment inspection program:

- **Timing of certification submittal** related to when soil amendments occur and/or when CO is requested and staff's availability to perform a site inspection on short notice.
- **Staffing to ensure consistent coverage** for all work and avoid conflicting priorities with other regulatory permit requirements, while also considering coverage for all work throughout vacations, sick leave, and seasonal workload changes. Staffing considerations may also include use of 3rd Party consultants.
- **Software** improvements can help with efficiency and documentation. Both new and expanded capabilities of current systems are being explored, some being part of the City's digital transformation efforts.



- **Consider results from the *Assessment of Compliance with Local Environmental Policy* project which** will evaluate how various city workgroups address compliance with local environmental policy and provide recommendations to improve our approach.

Artificial Turf

Current Policy in Land Use Code

Land Use Code 3.2.1 restricts the use of artificial plants as a “Landscape Area Treatment.” Except for single-family detached dwellings, all development and building permit applications are subject to review by this standard. Historically, a few projects have been approved for artificial turf installation given that the area proposed for installation was not considered landscape area by the code’s definition.

During the “Land Use Code Changes” discussion at the January 10, 2023, work session, Council responded to a proposal that would have allowed the use of artificial turf in the city by exception if installed to high-standard specifications. Council overwhelmingly opposed the proposal, preferring not to allow artificial turf in Fort Collins.

While the benefits of artificial turf can include reduced water use, maintenance and chemical inputs, a growing body of research suggests the negative impacts of artificial turf to human health and the environment may outweigh the benefits. Potential risks include chemical exposures and contamination from the materials themselves, such as the release of per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (known as PFAS) and carcinogens, and non-chemical impacts such as increased heat and heat island and waste-stream implications.

Proposed Policy Changes in Land Use Code

On November 21, Council will consider an ordinance that clearly restricts the use and installation of artificial turf on all new development and major redevelopment including non-residential and multi-family properties and single-family residential front yards. The artificial turf restriction ordinance will be packaged with additional landscape standards.

Impact

The restriction of artificial turf on single-family residential front yards will require review of landscape plans for new single-family residential development, a process that does not currently exist. This process would also serve the other landscape standards discussed at the January 10 work session for new single-family residential properties. The added review will impact the development review process and require additional staffing needs, which are being considered and will be discussed further during the October 10, 2023 Council Work Session. There will be an impact on owners challenged with finding suitable alternatives for high-traffic, low-water ground cover. Staff will continue to engage with landscape professionals and the community to identify and promote suitable alternatives.

Attachments

January 10 Council Work Session Materials

cc: Kendall Minor, Utilities Executive Director
Jill Oropeza, Sr. Director, Integrated Sciences & Planning
Mariel Miller, Water Conservation Manager
Eric Potyondy, Assistant City Attorney

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PO Box 580
Fort Collins, CO 80522-0580

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V/TDD: 711

utilities@fcgov.com

fcgov.com/utilities



MEMORANDUM

DATE: January 13, 2023

TO: Mayor Arndt and City Councilmembers

FROM: Katie Collins, Water Conservation Specialist ^{DS} KC
 Mariel Miller, Water Conservation Manager ^{DS} MM

THROUGH: Kelly DiMartino, City Manager ^{DS} KD
 Kendall Minor, Utilities Executive Director ^{DS} KM

RE: January 10, 2023, Work Session Summary: Land Use Code Changes to Address Xeriscape and Soil Amendment

Mayor Arndt, Mayor Pro Tem Francis, and Councilmembers Canonico, Pignataro, Gutowsky, and Ohlson were present. Staff members present were Katie Collins, Mariel Miller, Danielle Reimanis, Gretchen Stanford, Kathryne Marko and Jesse Schlam.

The purpose of this item was to seek Council feedback on four proposed code update opportunities that support water-wise landscaping in Fort Collins. The four proposals presented were:

1. Less turf in new development and redevelopment (three options)
2. Allow synthetic turf in some scenarios
3. Expand irrigation standards and residential equipment efficiency
4. Increase flexibility in soil amendment policy

Summary

Overall: Councilmembers expressed general support for proposals 1, 3, and 4. Councilmembers were not in support of proposal 2.

- All Councilmembers indicated support for a turf limit between 15 – 30% maximum of the landscape area of new and redeveloped residential and commercial properties. Several councilmembers request more exploration of turf minimums and maximums across all property types.
- All Councilmembers expressed significant concern for updating code to allow the installation of synthetic turf in Fort Collins. Of most concern is the PFAS content of synthetic turf material.
- Council indicated support for an update to irrigation efficiency standards. Councilmembers are in favor of proposed soil amendment code changes related to smaller, more “micro” landscape changes and best practices. Council requests additional evaluation of current inspection and enforcement processes, and of opportunities for improvement on larger, more “macro” landscape changes (e.g. new development).

Questions

- *How are front yards and recreation defined and identified?*



- *How would larger, estate lots be evaluated and are there incentives to keep some area more natural?*
- *Would landscape standards override HOA rules?*
- *Will properties irrigated with hose-end sprinklers be subject to the proposed watering window?*
- *How does the city enforce current soil amendment code?*
- *Has Utilities considered adjusting the top tier water rate for those that use the most water?*
- *Can the Xeriscape Incentive Program be expanded to include other water districts?*
- *What additional costs are associated with proposed landscape and irrigation standards?*

Next Steps

- Q1-Q3 2023: Continue internal/external outreach and engagement and identify, communicate additional resource needs (i.e. budget, education campaigns)
- Q2 2023: provide answers to the above questions via a memo to Council, which will include detail on the following:
 - cost impact analysis for landscape and irrigation proposals
 - soil amendment program information and cost and resource analysis to scale up soil amendment inspections
- Q3 2023: Incorporate feedback and draft code updates for first reading, scheduled for September 19, 2023



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222 Laporte Ave.
PO Box 580
Fort Collins, CO 80522-0580
970.212.2900
V/TDD: 711
utilities@fcgov.com
fcgov.com/utilities

MEMORANDUM

DATE: March 28, 2022
TO: Mayor Arndt and City Councilmembers
FROM: Katie Collins, Water Conservation Coordinator [Signature] 3/29/2022
Jesse Schlam, Senior Environmental Regulatory Specialist [Signature] 3/29/2022
Abbye Neel, Interim Water Conservation Manager [Signature] 3/29/2022
Gretchen Stanford, Customer Connection Deputy Director [Signature] 3/29/2022
THROUGH: Kelly DiMartino, Interim City Manager [Signature] 3/30/2022
Kendall Minor, Utilities Executive Director [Signature] 3/30/2022
RE: Xeriscape and Soil Amendment Council Priorities Update

Bottom Line

Utilities staff take pride in delivering exceptional services and continue to look for opportunities to further promote water-wise principles. The purpose of this memo is to:

- 1) Provide an update on work that supports the three topic areas included in the 2021-23 Xeriscape Council priority: increase rebates, increase education, and less green lawns with new development.
2) Provide an update on work that supports the 2021-23 Soil Amendment Council priority that calls for effective soil amendment policies and compliance.

Xeriscape Rebates

Since 2016, the Xeriscape Incentive Program (XIP) has reduced outdoor water use by providing rebates to Utilities water customers who convert from high-water (i.e., Kentucky bluegrass) to low-water landscapes, such as shrub beds, water-wise turfgrasses, permeable hardscaping and more. Nearly 300 projects have been completed and 350,000+ square feet of high-water landscape have turned water-wise through the program.

In 2020, the commercial XIP incentive was added with the help of outside grant funding to serve Utilities commercial water customers. Since inception, 19 commercial projects have been installed across 650,000 square feet. Another 12 projects are scheduled to be completed by the end of the year.

Participants of XIP are required to certify loosening of soil and incorporation of a soil amendment with a notarized soil amendment certificate, pursuant to Ordinance No. 084, 2003.



An example of a 2021 Xeriscape Incentive Program project in midtown.

XIP continues to be funded by the Water Conservation budget, state, and federal grant funding, and a 2021 awarded BFO enhancement offer.

In partnership with Nature in the City, successful Xeriscape projects can be found by using the self-guided Fort Collins [Garden Tour](#) via an interactive story map. Garden ‘tourists’ are also encouraged to check out the gardens onsite.

[Garden In A Box](#) helps take the guesswork out of landscape design for XIP and non-XIP residents alike. Utilities, Nature in the City and Fort Collins-Loveland Water District partner with Resource Central to offer discounts on do-it-yourself perennial garden kits allowing residents to easily save water and beautify their landscape. New in 2022, Utilities has offered a limited number of \$100 discounts to income-qualified water customers.

Xeriscape Education

Utilities provides and supports numerous xeriscape education opportunities each year:

- **XIP Basics** – XIP participants are required to attend this class to learn how to efficiently water landscapes. Class content has changed over the years, but customer feedback remains overwhelmingly positive. Since 2016, over 500 people have joined us for XIP classes.
- [Xeriscape Garden Party](#) – This June marks the 20th annual event, and we will be celebrating all month long - both in-person on June 18 at the Xeriscape Demonstration Garden and online via webinars and virtual resources. This event typically welcomes approximately 400+ people in-person. In 2021, during the first ever virtual Garden Party, over 7,000 people engaged with content throughout the monthlong event.
- [Xeriscape Demonstration Garden](#) – In recent years, nearly 50 new species were planted, and educational signage was updated. The garden has a history – at the time of installation, it was only the second Xeriscape Garden in the world! Today, it continues to be an important resource showcasing the methods, plants, and materials for low-water gardening.
- [City of Fort Collins Plant List](#) – Published in May 2021, this educational tool was developed through a collaboration of several City departments. The plant list resource is now the most



comprehensive and information-rich list of Fort Collins native plants to date and is intended for a wide audience - from the small plot gardener to the large-scale developer.

- [Gardens on Spring Creek Adult Education](#) – Utilities continues to partner with the Gardens on Spring Creek to subsidize courses focused on water-wise landscapes and irrigation.

Less green lawns with new development

Effective January 1, 2022, [Water Supply Requirements](#) are helping to move new development toward low-water landscapes. The new fee structure is more closely tied to landscape water requirements such that development fees are less for landscapes that use less water.

Soil Amendments

In addition to over 250 soil amendment certificates received through the Xeriscape Incentive Program, Utilities has inspected and collected over 2,300 soil amendment certificates on development projects over the past five years. The soil amendment program has been providing online resources and guidance to developers, builders, landscapers, and residential customers online since June 2012 welcoming 3,542 unique visitors. To spread awareness and compliance of the soil amendment ordinance, the program provides brochures in the field and at the building department.

Next Steps

Staff continues to be focused on identifying program efficiencies that reduce barriers to participation. A new pilot of the Xeriscape Incentive Program aimed at getting more rebates to businesses and households will be offered this fall. A continuing enhancement offer for the Xeriscape Incentive Program will be submitted for the 2023-2024 budget cycle.

Staff is working towards providing an **update to xeriscape and soil amendment regulations**. Land-use consultant Clarion Associates has been hired to research and benchmark the City's current xeriscape and soil amendment codes against peer communities to help understand gaps and opportunities. Public outreach on proposed changes, including discussions with the other major water districts, is scheduled for summer 2022. Staff will present proposed regulations to Council for comment at the Oct. 11 work session.

Coming Up

- **XIP Basics** - April 5 and May 7 - Register at fcgov.com/xip
- **Xeriscape Garden Party** – June 18, from 9 a.m.-noon at 300 Laporte Ave. - fcgov.com/garden-party
- **Oct. 11 work session** - Council will be asked to weigh in on proposed xeriscape and soil amendment regulations.