

## AGENDA ITEM SUMMARY

City Council



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### STAFF

Dana Hornkohl, Capital Projects Manager

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### SUBJECT

**Public Hearing and First Reading of Ordinance No. 202, 2025, Adopting an Update to Appendix C of the Larimer County Urban Area Street Standards Pertaining to "Streetscape Standards" for the City of Fort Collins.**

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### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this item is to seek City Council adoption of Ordinance No. 202, 2025, which replaces the "City of Fort Collins Streetscape Standards" document that is Appendix C to the Larimer County Urban Area Street Standards (LCUASS). The current version was last adopted by City Council on February 26, 2013. The newly adopted version will have the same title.

The Streetscape Standards relate to the treatment of parkways (between the curb and sidewalk), medians, intersections, roundabouts, and key gateway intersections. The update primarily involves addressing requirements of Senate Bill 24-005 (Prohibit Landscaping Practices for Water Conservation), concerns for City maintenance staff and public safety, and concerns about increasing maintenance costs.

Policy revisions to the LCUASS require a public hearing process for their adoption (LCUASS Section 1.6.2.A). Under Section 2(g) of the Council's Rules of Meeting Procedures adopted in Resolution 2024-148, "[i]tems for which a public hearing is required may be considered as part of the Consent Calendar, and if any item is not pulled from the Consent Calendar for individual consideration and is adopted as part of the Consent Calendar, it will be deemed to have been the subject of a public hearing as required by any applicable Code or other legal requirements." Comments on a Public Hearing item on the Consent Calendar may be made during general public comment or the item may be withdrawn for individual consideration by a Councilmember or the City Manager.

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### STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends adoption of the Ordinance on First Reading.

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### BACKGROUND / DISCUSSION

The Streetscape Standards are currently Appendix C of the (LCUASS) and were adopted by City Council in 2013. The previous version of these standards (the Streetscape Design Standards & Guidelines) document was adopted in 2001. The proposed update to the Streetscape Standards is Exhibit A to the Ordinance (attached to this AIS as **Attachment 1** in a version that shows the changes being proposed).

The Streetscape Standards document sets forth a whole approach toward streets as landscaped public spaces that contribute to Fort Collins's identity. It is used by staff in designing City capital projects, operations, and budgets, as well as by developers and property owners providing landscaping in the City right-of-way as part of new development and redevelopment. Staff from Planning, Parks (including Forestry and Parks Planning and Development, Utilities, Engineering, and Streets) evaluated and proposed updates. This mimics the interdepartmental "Streetscape Team" convened for the 2013 update who envisioned that these standards would be routinely updated.

In March 2024, the Governor approved Colorado General Assembly Senate Bill 24-005, Prohibit Landscaping Practices for Water Conservation (**Attachment 2**). The bill addresses climate change, water supply, nonnative grasses, and turf usage. It identifies "functional turf" as the type of high-water-need grass, composed of non-native grasses or those not hybridized for arid conditions, which are regularly mowed and which is only allowed in certain recreational and community spaces and prohibits nonfunctional turf (installing functional turf in areas where it is not allowed), artificial turf, and invasive plant species. The bill applies to local entities and regulations must comply with the law on or before January 1, 2026. A team of City staff began meeting in August 2024 with the goal of updating the Streetscape Standards and identified the following priorities.

- Compliance with Senate Bill 24-005
- City maintenance staff and traveling public safety
- Escalating maintenance costs
- Conflicts between infrastructure, trees, vegetation, and utilities
- Setting up streetscapes for success (trees and vegetation)
- City staff responsibilities related to the standards
- Low Impact Development practices in the right-of-way
- Consistency with the new Land Use Code
- Consistency between streetscapes constructed by development and City capital projects
- References to external standards rather than embedded standards

These updates intend to further City policies including the Strategic Plan, Transportation and Mobility Objective #1 to make significant progress toward the City's Vision Zero goal to have no serious injury or fatal crashes for people walking, biking, rolling or driving in Fort Collins; Our Climate Future, Big Move #3 for a climate resilient community; and the Water Efficiency Plan goal to improve efficiency and resilience on public landscapes.

To meet the deadline imposed by the Senate bill, the team opted to take a phased approach to the updates. Phase 1 changes would focus on critical updates. The Planning and Zoning Commission would review these changes in advance of City Council consideration before the end of 2025. Phase 2 changes would focus on less critical updates that required discussion with City boards and commissions as well as the development and construction communities and the public. Phase 2 changes would advance through various boards and commissions as well as public outreach in 2026 and 2027. Funding will need to be identified to prepare the various illustrations needed for the Phase 2 updates.

## Streetscape Standards Update Priorities

| Phase 1                                                            | Phase 2                                                           |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Compliance with Senate Bill 24-005                                 | Corrections and fine tuning of Phase 1 work                       |
| Remove static plant list and refer to online City list             | Update all photos and figures (which were removed during Phase 1) |
| Remove irrigation standards and refer to City irrigation standards | Additional safety improvements                                    |
| Locate irrigation backflow preventers and controllers in parkways  | Administrative, technical, and operational topics                 |
| Reduce maintenance where traffic control is challenging            |                                                                   |
| Establish minimum widths for landscaping and trees                 |                                                                   |
| Encourage parking pull-offs for medians and roundabouts            |                                                                   |

Below is a selected list of Phase 1 Streetscape Standards changes. The “text only” update to Streetscape Standards is included as **Attachment 1**.

- Define turf-type grasses
  - “...continuous plant coverage that is native or hybridized for arid conditions, with a low water requirement.”
  - “Once established, such low-water turf-type grass typically requires approximately one watering per week during the average growing season. Turf-type grasses allowed in Fort Collins streetscapes must not exceed an average of 11 gallons of water per square foot per year. Any turf-type grass installed must meet hydrozone requirements in the Fort Collins Land Use Code.”
- Reduce maintenance where traffic control is challenging
- Establish minimum widths for landscaping and trees
- Encourage parking pull-offs for medians and roundabouts
- Remove static plant list and refer to online City list
- Remove irrigation standards and refer to City irrigation standards
- Locate irrigation backflow preventers and controllers in parkways
- Provide maintenance acceptance memorandum for City capital projects

If approved, the proposed Phase 1 Streetscape Standards updates will comply with State law and help protect City maintenance staff and the traveling public. They will continue to provide for the aesthetically pleasing medians and parkways residents have grown accustomed to seeing.

## CITY FINANCIAL IMPACTS

Staff resources and maintenance budgets for streetscapes have not grown at the same pace as the expansion of this infrastructure over the twelve years since the Streetscape Standards were last updated. As new development and City capital projects add streetscape elements, maintenance staff have identified the staffing, equipment, and materials required to support this growth. City budget requests have periodically included additional resources for routine maintenance; however, budget allowances and funding increases have not consistently aligned with the scale of new infrastructure. In addition, no dedicated funding has been established for streetscape refreshes—an investment similar in purpose to the 2050 tax’s ongoing support for community and neighborhood park reinvestment, which promotes long-term maintenance and replacement of public assets.

One of the fastest increasing costs associated with maintenance of streetscapes is the cost for traffic control to protect City maintenance staff and the traveling public. Increases in the number of near misses and crashes involving City maintenance staff have led to more traffic control measures to perform routine maintenance in medians, parkways, and roundabouts. Narrow medians and median islands are particularly challenging and require significantly more traffic control per area of streetscape. Proposed updates to the Streetscapes Standards limit installations in these areas to help reduce maintenance needs. This helps reduce overall maintenance costs while allowing staff to focus on streetscapes that can be effectively and efficiently maintained. These updates will allow staff to maintain the current level of service for most streetscapes for a longer period.

#### **BOARD / COMMISSION / COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION**

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Staff presented the Phase 1 Streetscape Standards updates to the Planning and Zoning Commission at their work session on November 14, 2025. The commission was supportive of the proposed updates and suggested additional outreach be conducted with the Transportation Board and Water Commission as well as highlighting safety for the traveling public. Staff will present the updated Streetscape Standards to the Water Commission, Parks and Recreation Board, Natural Resources Advisory Board, and Transportation Board as part of the Phase 2 revision process.

#### **PUBLIC OUTREACH**

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Staff will work with the Community and Public Involvement Office to develop a public outreach plan as part of the Phase 2 revision process.

#### **ATTACHMENTS**

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1. Revised Streetscape Standards showing proposed changes (highlight/strike)
2. Colorado General Assembly Senate Bill 24-005
3. Presentation
4. Ordinance No. 202, 2025