



Denver Resilient Landscape Regulatory Update

Budget and Policy Committee
December 9th, 2024

Michelle Teller, *Principal City Planner, Community Planning and Development*

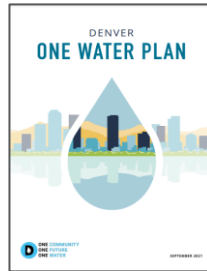
Work product prepared for an elected official. C.R.S. 24-72-202(6)(b)(II) & (6.5)(a).



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Background

- Senate Bill 24-005 was approved in March 2024 prohibiting new non-functional turf (high water use grass) and artificial turf for new nonresidential development beginning January 2026.
- Multiple city plans call for the city to adopt more climate resilient landscape regulations. Denver is behind on implementing this work.



Issue

- Our codes, rules, regs and policies are currently **not** creating landscapes that are resilient to ongoing periods of drought and extreme heat.



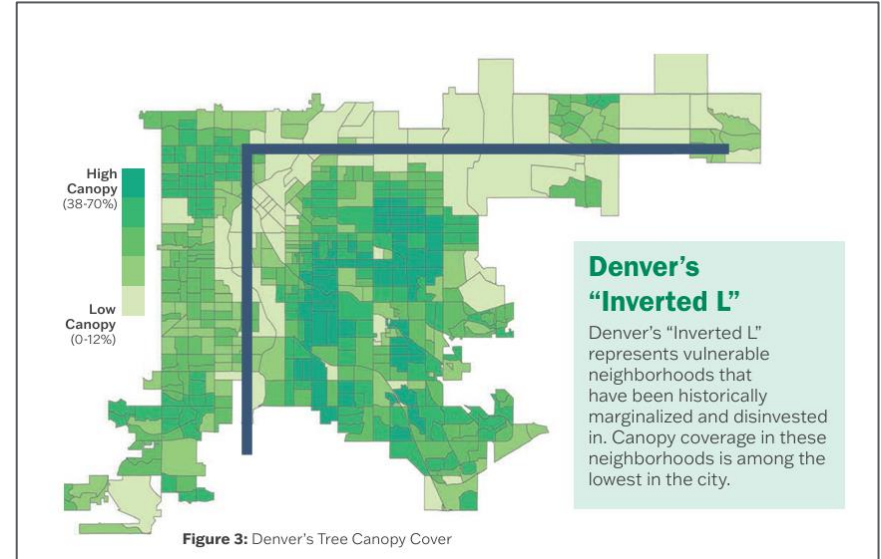
Image of "non-functional" Bluegrass turf in the medians



Image of a low-water native prairie

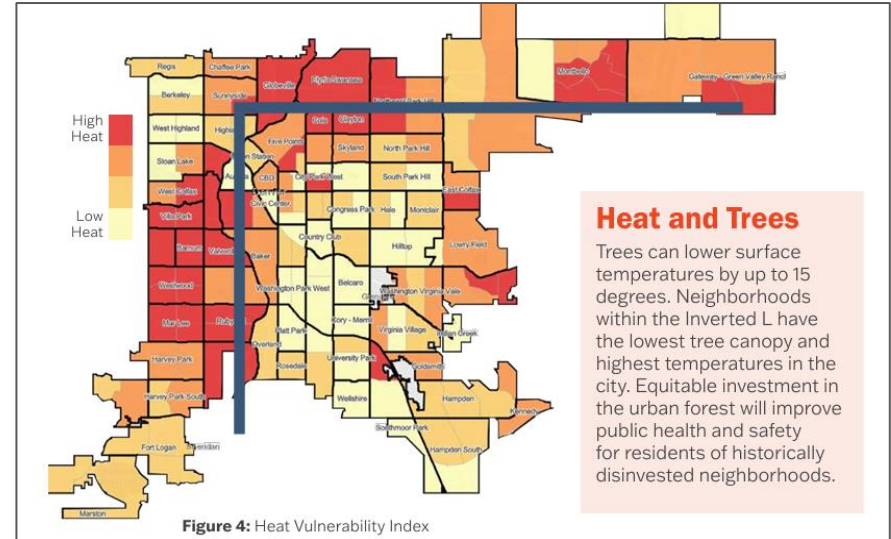
Issue

- Historic inequity of landscape and trees
- Denver's urban tree canopy coverage is 15%
 - One of the lowest compared to cities across the U.S.



Issue

- Landscape and trees help reduce urban heat island
- Highest heat areas coincide with the lowest tree canopy areas



Issue

- The 2024 DPR Turfgrass Study found that a majority of turf is on private land (74%).

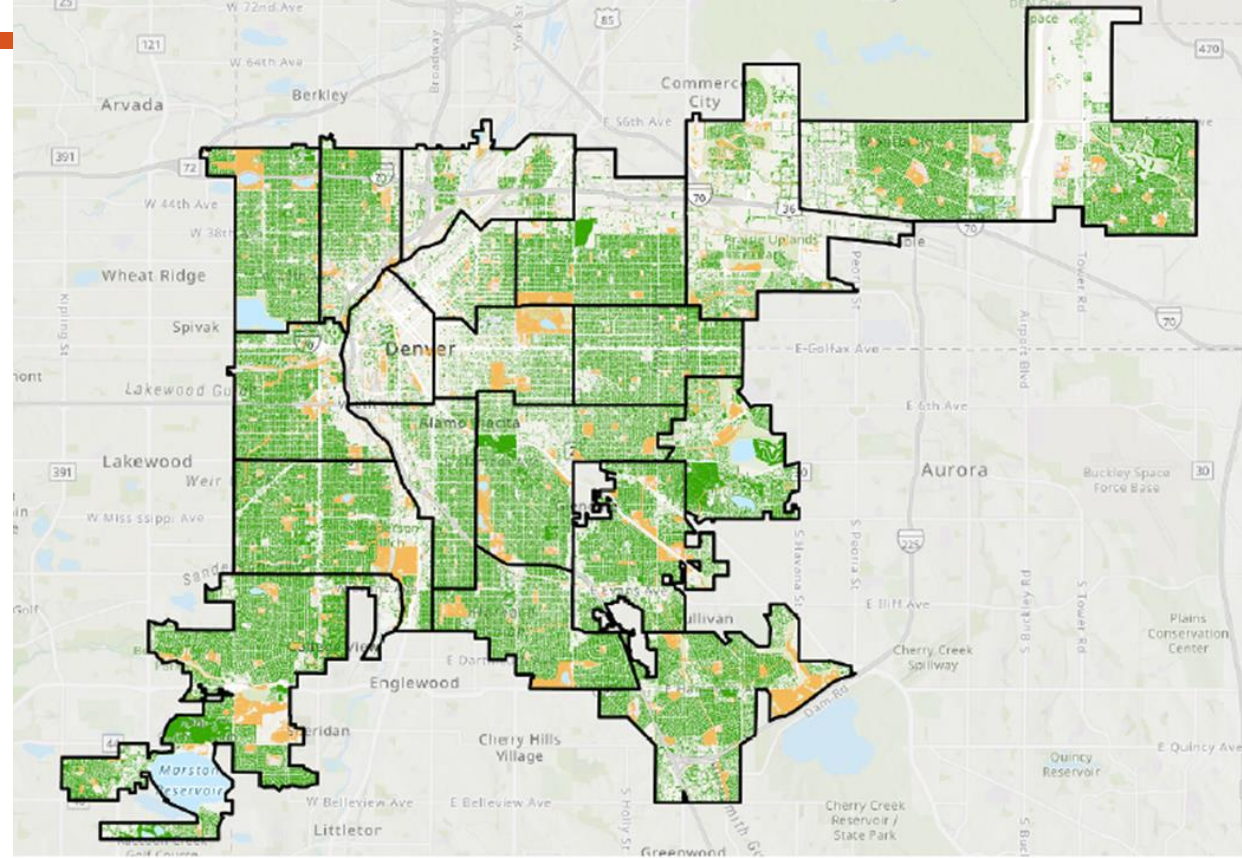
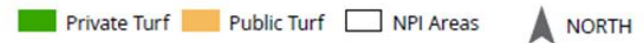
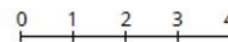


Figure 3. Public and private turf in Denver within Neighborhood Planning Initiative areas.



Recommendation

- With support from CASR, DPR, DOTI, DDPHE, and Denver Water and Council Sponsors, CPD will lead a regulatory update to all applicable codes, rules, regulations and policies to create climate resilient landscapes for all new projects.
Will include new residential and non-residential
- This project would be managed by staff and supported by consultants to identify best practices for landscape, irrigation, and long-term implementation and enforcement.

Reasoning

1. Regional partners and neighbors have successfully done this work (i.e., Castle Rock) through updating requirements. Denver Water supports us providing regional leadership on landscape.
2. SB 24-005 requires enactment by January 2026 but does not identify what non-functional turf should be replaced with.
3. Research and precedent work has been completed through DPR Turfgrass Study and adopted policy.

Reasoning

4. Landscape related rules and regulations currently exist in 11 different types of locations in Denver. Process will help streamline requirements.

- Denver Municipal Code- Chapter 57
- Denver Zoning Code
- Denver Green Code (optional)
- Denver Green Building Ordinance
- DPR Rules and Regs
- DOTI Rules and Regs
- Statewide Regs (i.e., nonfunctional turf bill)
- Denver Water Regs
- Urban Design Standards and Guidelines (UDSG)
 - Guidelines for site design, parking, and treatment of historic landscape features
- 1993 Streetscape Design Guidelines

Reasoning

5. Community, Council, and Mayoral alignment to mitigate heat and drought.

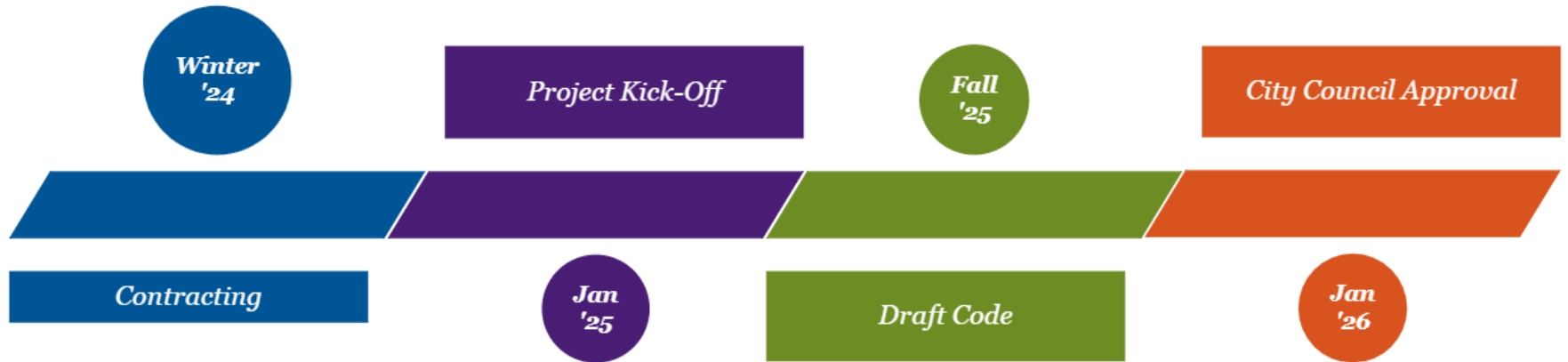
6. Well-designed climate resilient landscapes can meet a variety of city-wide goals as defined within the Resilient Landscape Vision.

- The vision is a multi-departmental citywide vision for the future of Denver's landscape.



Next Steps

- Press release and public awareness of 2025 project.



Questions

Staff recommends a citywide landscape regulatory update to address SB 24-005 and create a climate-resilient landscape.



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