

# This presentation premiered at WaterSmart Innovations

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# **Walking the Talk: Aligning Regulations with Our Values**

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WaterSmart Innovations Conference  
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# City of Fort Collins, Colorado

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- 65 miles north of Denver
- East of the Rocky Mountains
- Grew from 25,000 to 140,000 people since 1960s
- 15" precipitation per year





# Fort Collins: A Great Place to Live

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- One of the Ten Best Vacation Cities for Beer Lovers:  
*Yahoo! Travel.com* - July 2012
- 3rd in the nation Best Places to Do Business:  
*Forbes.com* - June 2012
- 11th on America's Top 50 Bike-Friendly Cities:  
*Bicycle Magazine* - May 2012
- One of the Top 10 Best Places to Retire:  
*CBS Money Watch* – Feb. 2012





# A City Looking to the Future

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- Vision: “We are passionate about creating a vibrant, world-class community.”
- 2011 Plan Fort Collins
  - Guides the way Fort Collins looks, functions, feels and develops
  - Shapes the city for the next generation
  - Three themes: innovate, sustain and connect





# Sustainability a Core Value

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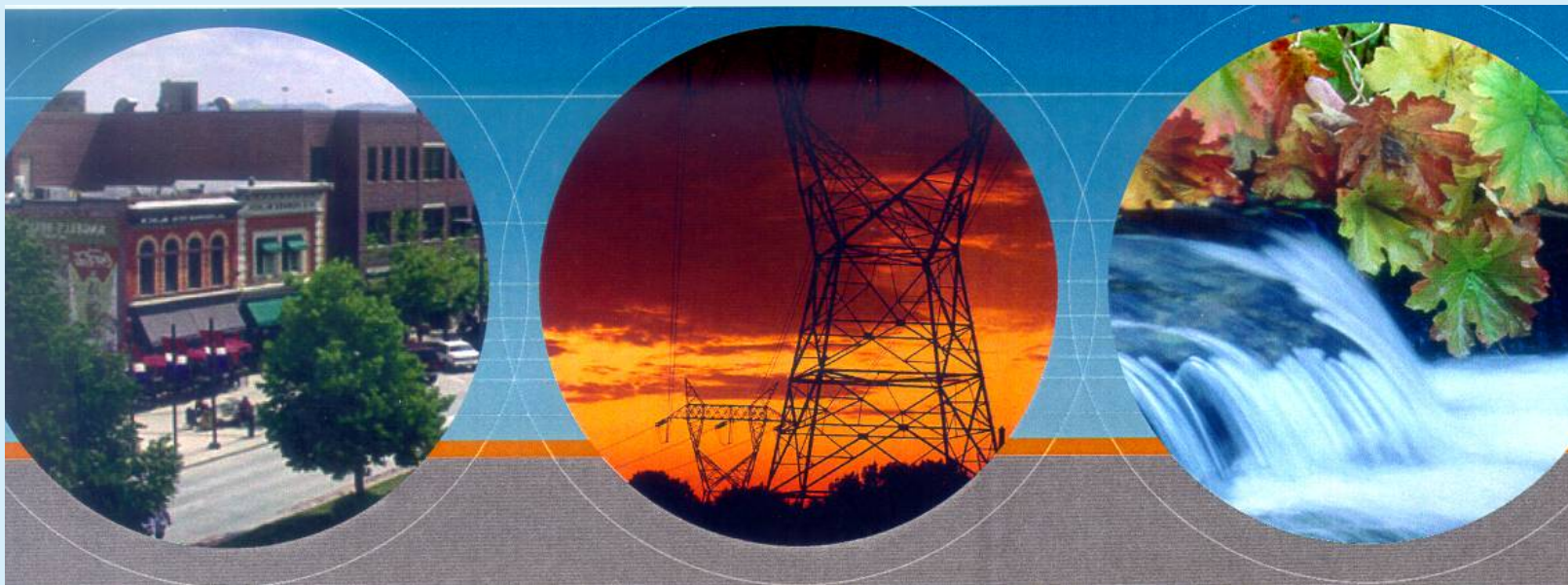
- New Office of Sustainability: Economic Health, Environmental Services, Social Sustainability
  - Air Quality
  - Recycling & Waste Reduction
- Green Building
- Transportation
- Utilities: Energy Efficiency, Water Conservation, Stormwater Quality





# Utilities for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

- Fort Collins Utilities is committed to delivering a high level of service to our customers in an environmentally and socially responsible way while making the best economic choices for the long term





# Water Stewardship

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- City committed to water conservation; supports regionally appropriate landscaping
- Xeriscape is not one particular style or look; it is the thoughtful process of creating a healthy, attractive landscape that conserves water





# Sustainable Landscape Gaps

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- Some City regulations sent a mixed message to citizens
  - Grass height
  - Parkway strips
  - Streetscapes





# Interdepartmental Team

- Planning
- Parks
- Forestry
- Streets
- Engineering
- Utilities
- Natural Areas
- Code Compliance
- Attorneys





# Varying Values: Lively Discussion

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- Fort Collins is a “green” city with lush lawns & trees
  - Neat, tidy and attractive
  - Unnatural and inappropriate for our semi-arid climate
- What looks natural and diverse to one person is seen as signs of neglect and laziness to another
- Consensus: encourage a variety of landscapes that fit the character of our region and give citizens a choice to pursue their individual style





# Grass Height Ordinance

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- City Code limited the height of grasses (except ornamental grasses) to 6 inches
- Citations issued for grasses exceeding the limit
- Some of these grasses are water-conserving and don't thrive with mowing

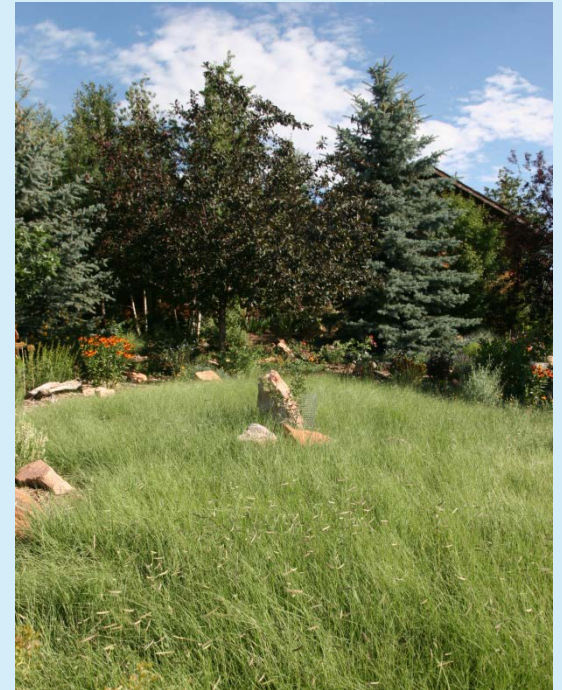




# Water-conserving Grasses

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- Bluegrass needs about 1½" of water per week
- Blue Grama and Buffalograss need about ¾" every 2 weeks, about a quarter of the water
- Updated City Code to allow water-wise grasses (blue grama & buffalograss) to grow up to 12"





# Parkway Landscaping

- Parkway is the R-O-W between a residential street and the sidewalk
- Planning has encouraged bluegrass and street trees
- Xeriscape discourages grass in narrow strips
- Takes a minor amendment to change HOA landscape plans





# New Parkway Guidelines

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- Brochure and outreach with landscaping guidelines
  - 50% of area must be covered in live plant material
  - Line of sight for traffic or pedestrians may not be obscured
  - Recommended plant list
  - HOA can apply for minor amendment for the entire subdivision





# Streetscape Standards

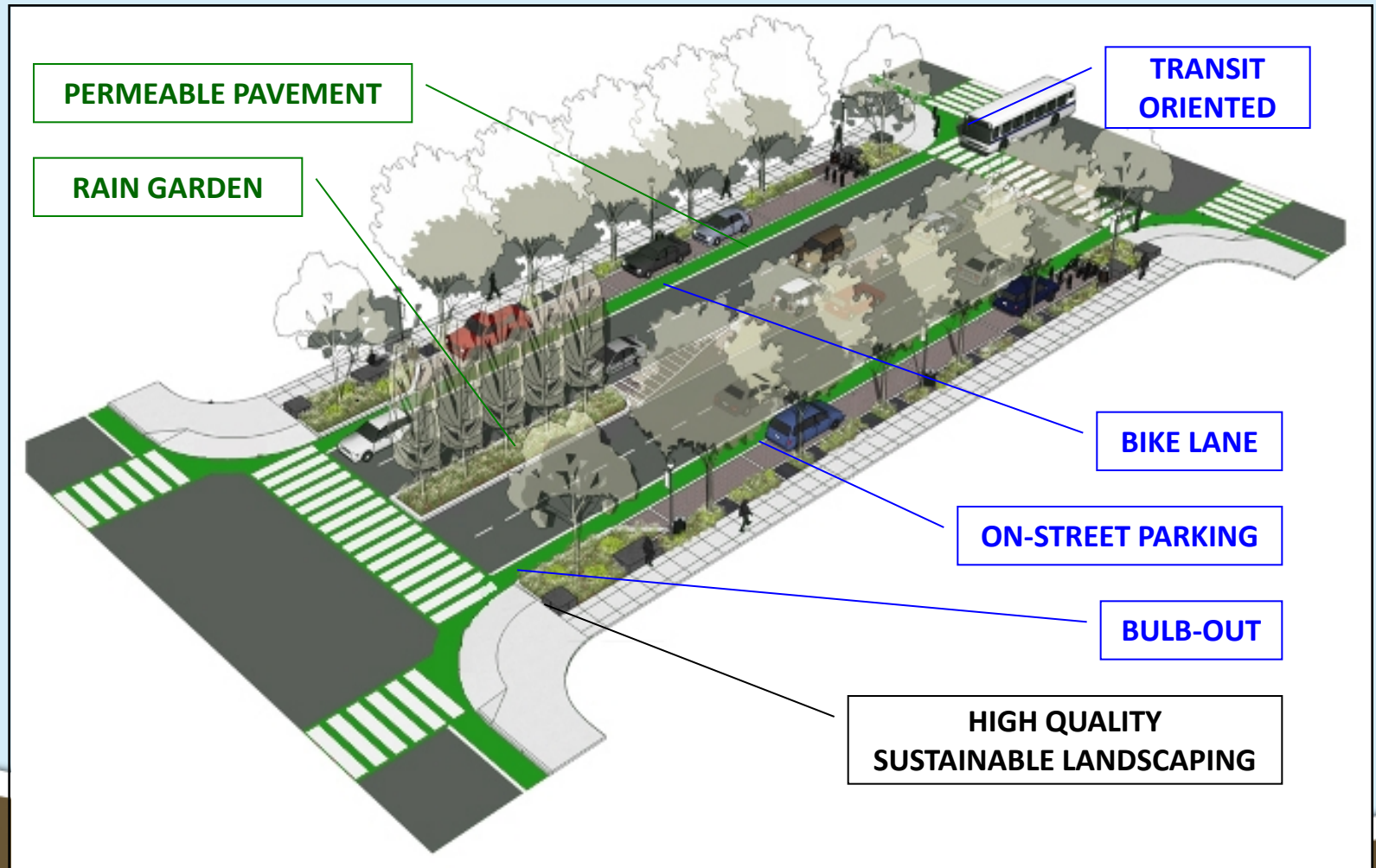
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- Streetscape refers to visual elements and character for arterial street medians, roundabouts and parkways
- “Gateway” intersections are special
- Plan Fort Collins: “The city’s streetscapes will be designed to contribute to the character, form and scale of the city.”





# Green Streets Initiative





# Sustainable Landscaping

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- Goal: create beautiful, sustainable streetscapes
  - More color and texture in landscape plantings
  - Add hardscape elements (railings, pylons, lighting, planters, walls, paving) for interest





# Visually Appealing Streets

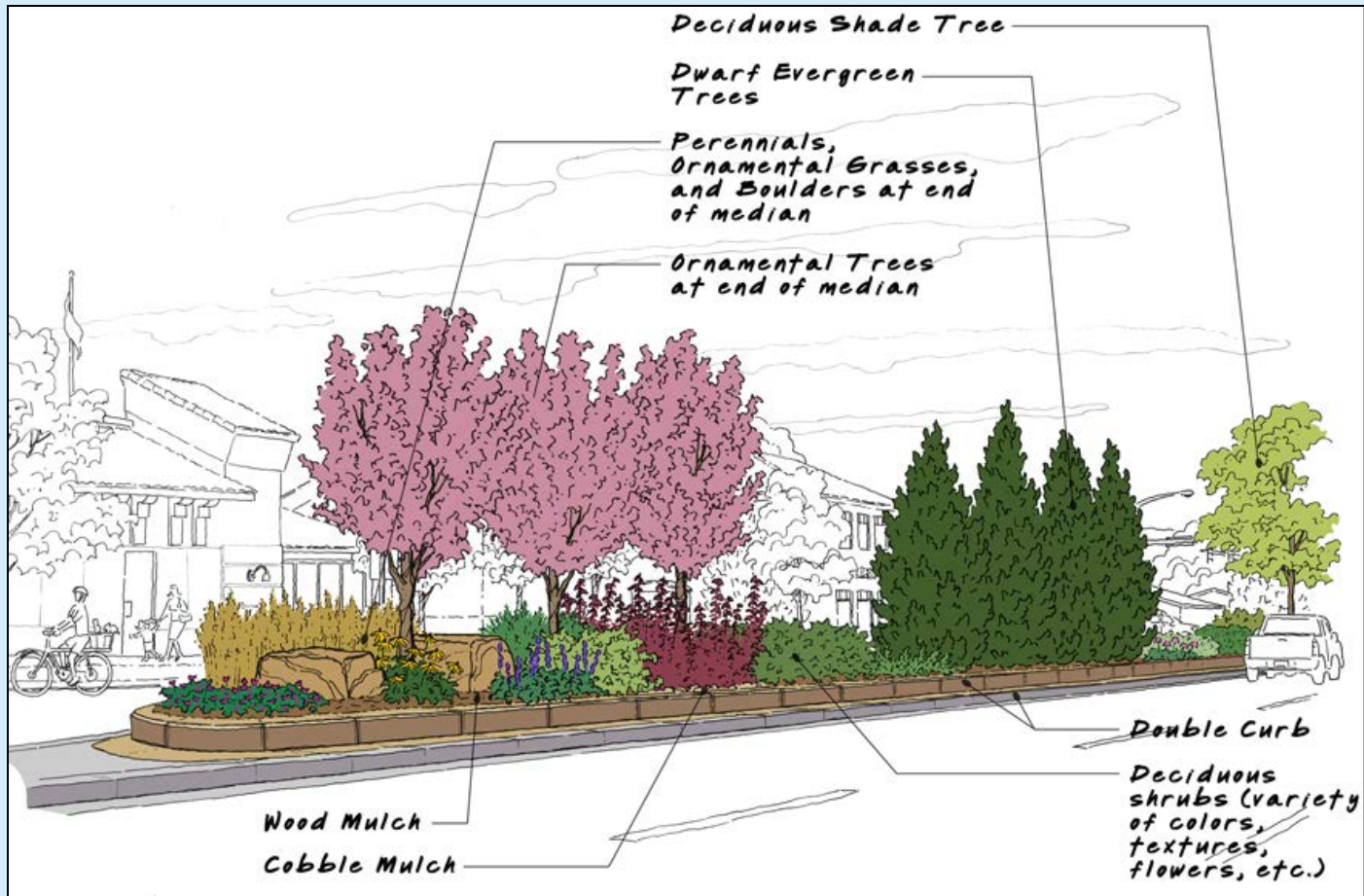
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- More plantings to create a stronger and more beautiful visual statement
- Use medians as demonstration gardens for perennials, grasses and shrubs that reflect our regional character





# Streetscape Rendering





# Work in Progress

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- Finalize standards for arterial medians and gateway intersections
  - Compare costs for installation & maintenance of options
- Develop standards for irrigation design and maintenance
- Develop a Streetscape Plant List
- City Council approval of new Streetscape Standards





# Questions?

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