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# *Denver Resilient Landscape Regulatory Update*

Budget and Policy Committee

December 9<sup>th</sup>, 2024

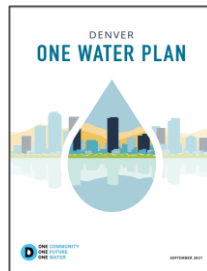
Michelle Teller, *Principal City Planner, Community Planning and Development*



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# Background

- Multiple city plans call for the city to adopt more climate resilient landscape regulations. Denver is behind on implementing this work.
- 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.



# Issue

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



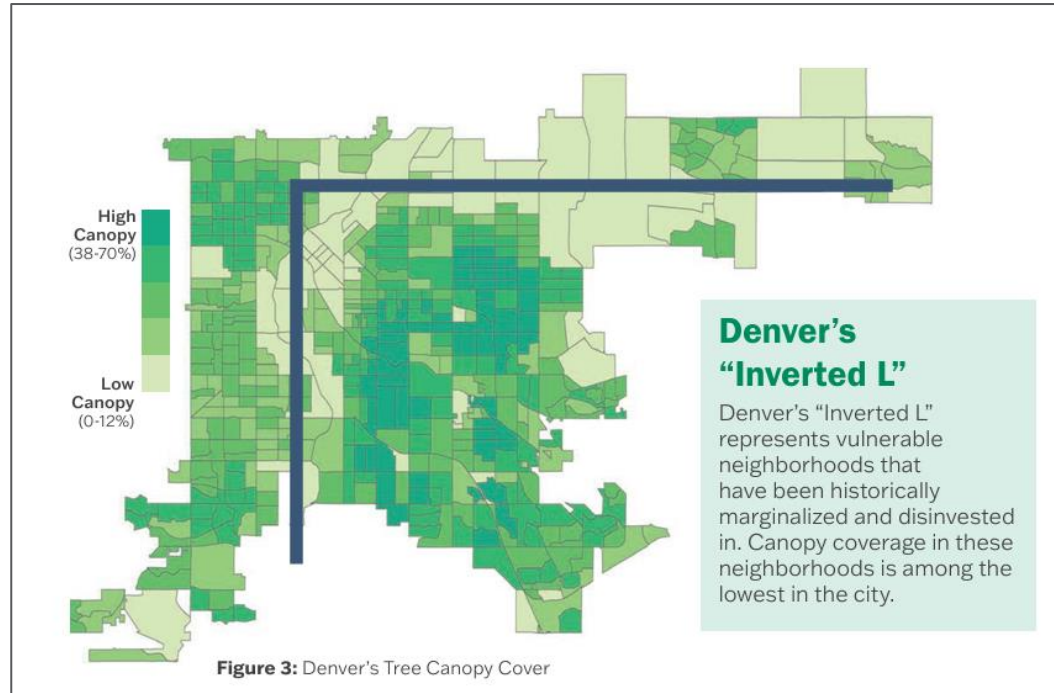
Image of "non-functional" Bluegrass turf in the medians



Image of a low-water native prairie

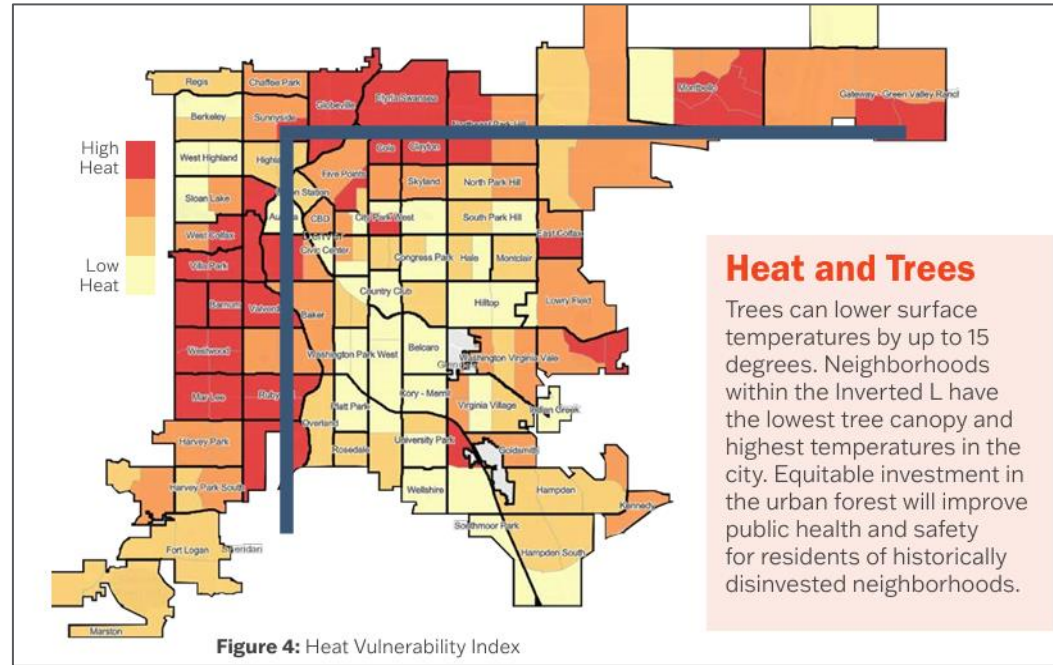
# Issue

- 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%).

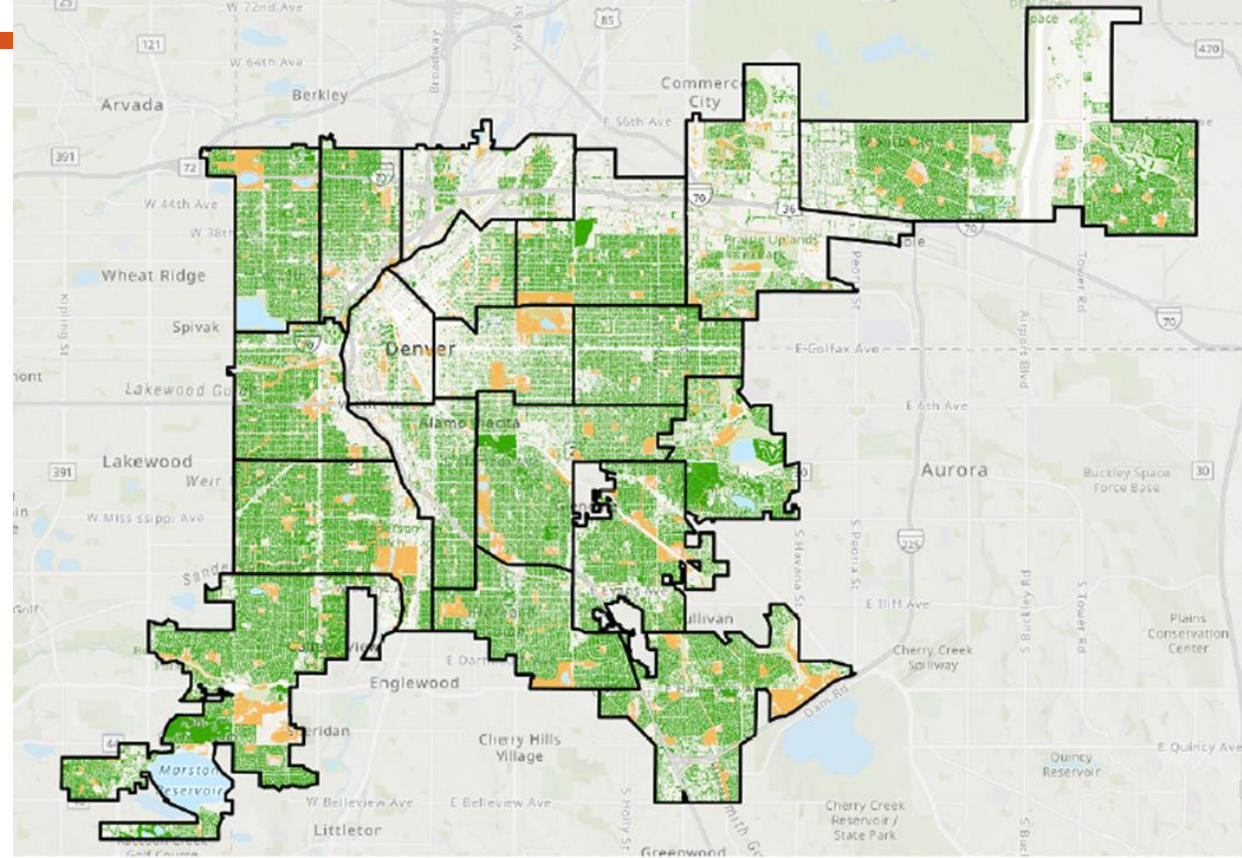
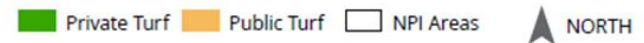
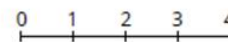


Figure 3. Public and private turf in Denver within Neighborhood Planning Initiative areas.



# Regulatory Project

- With support from CASR, DPR, DOTI, DDPHE, Denver Water, the Colorado Water Conservation Board (CWCB) and Council Sponsor Kashmann, 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.

# Why now?

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. Community, Council, and Mayoral alignment to mitigate heat and drought.
3. Research and precedent work has been completed through DPR Turfgrass Study and adopted policy.



# Why now?

4. Landscape related rules and regulations currently exist in 11 different types of locations in Denver.

- 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

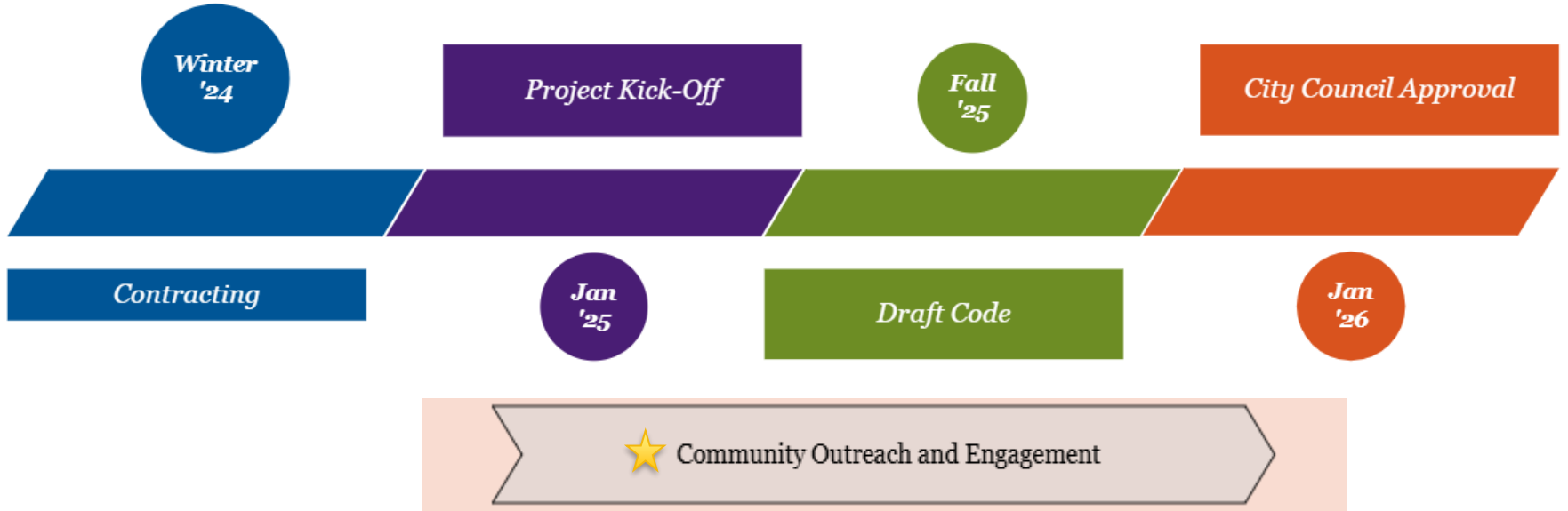
# Why now?

5. SB 24-005 requires enactment by January 2026 but does not identify what non-functional turf should be replaced with.

6. Well-designed climate resilient landscapes can meet a variety of city-wide goals.



# Timeline



# Next Steps

- Launching advisory committee
- Kick-off Q1 2025
- Public engagement in every phase



# Questions?



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