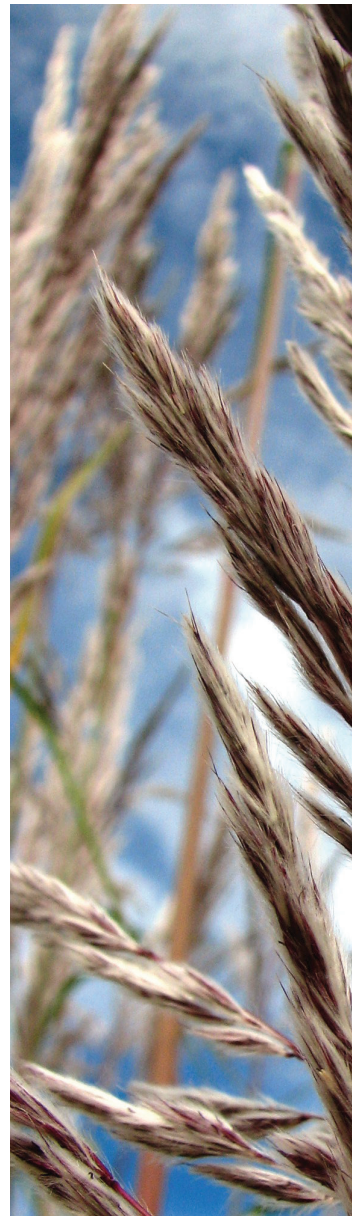




Grass Replacement Incentive Program (GRIP)

COMMERCIAL AND LARGE PROPERTY



AURORA WATER
CONSERVATION



Grass Replacement Incentive Program (GRIP)

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Purpose

The purpose of the Grass Replacement Incentive Program (GRIP) is to incentivize customers to replace high-water turf with water-wise landscapes. These landscapes are attractive, lower-maintenance landscapes that will save water and withstand drought.

Program Specifics

Requirements

Participants in the rebate program are held to the following requirements:

1. All projects must be approved by Aurora Water prior to installation.
2. Areas to be converted must have existing grass. See Eligibility section.
3. Areas containing existing grass that serves primarily an aesthetic purpose. Potential areas will be addressed on a case-by-case basis.
4. A phasing option is available. Discuss in detail with GRIP manager.
5. All projects must meet the requirements in the current version of the [City's Unified Development Ordinance \(UDO\)](#).
6. Projects must be completed according to the approved plan, pass the landscape inspection and paperwork submitted by Oct. 15 to receive a rebate in the current year.
7. All participants are required to enroll in the Large Property Watering Variance program. See Large Property Variance Program section.



Eligibility

Conservation staff determine rebate eligibility. Areas of existing grass that serves primarily an aesthetic purpose qualify for the rebate contingent upon staff assessment. Areas that contain barren soil or significant bare patches of soil and weeds do not qualify.

Rebate Framework

The rebate is paid in one payment via check. Below are further details and expectations regarding the rebate framework.

- Uses no- and low-water use plant material
- Incorporation of a landscape feature
- Maximum rebate amount subject to funding availability and size of project. Discuss scope with GRIP manager to determine maximum rebate amount.
- Payment schedule:
 - Based on the size and scope of the project, rebates will be issued via an allocation agreement. Details can be found at Auroragov.org/GRIP.
- All requirements met

Calculating Your Rebate

The GRIP will cover all material costs within the approved project area and according to the approved plan, up to a maximum limit.

Material costs include: drip irrigation equipment, plants, rocks, mulch, soil, sand, soil amendments, edging, fabric, landscape pins, boulders, concrete masonry units, retaining wall blocks, and strip stone used within the approved project area. The approved project area is determined by the program manager, but typically is the area where healthy high water-use turf grass is removed and replaced with an approved water-wise landscape.

Materials costs do NOT include: labor or installation of any kind, delivery fees, fuel surcharges, fuel, taxes, fees associated with surveying, permits or licenses; tools rented or purchased, irrigation materials* including: heads, nozzles, pipe, sensors, valves, wire; construction of patios/sidewalks/driveway extensions, edging or other materials to keep organic or inorganic mulch off of driveways or sidewalks, rain barrels, planters, materials for rain gutters. This list is not comprehensive. The program manager has jurisdiction regarding items covered and not covered.

*Please note: select irrigation materials are not covered under the GRIP, but certain items (rain sensors, smart weather-based controllers, etc.) may be covered under the [Irrigation Rebate program](#).

Final rebate values will be based on the itemized receipts or invoices for materials approved at the time of project completion. Submission of receipts for materials added after project completion will not be accepted.

Large Property Watering Variance Program

As mentioned in the requirements section, all participants are required to enroll in the Large Property Watering Variance program. Aurora Water will send monthly emails containing watering analyses based on landscape square footage and plant water requirements adjusted to observed weather over the billing period—providing actual water consumption versus recommended water consumption for the property.

For more information, read through the program guidelines and [apply here](#).





Overview of Steps

1. Sign in to [the customer portal](#). If you have not, register the property's profile in [the customer portal](#) and link the property's water account(s) to the profile once registered. This should be completed by a property manager or an HOA representative.
2. Fill out the [GRIP Application](#) and upload at least five high-quality photos of the proposed project area into the customer portal. You will receive an email confirming your successful application submission.
3. You will be notified via email whether you are eligible or not to participate in the GRIP. Approval to participate in the program is required **prior** to starting the project.
4. If your property is verified as eligible to participate, the City of Aurora Planning Department may need to update records related to the scope of the project. The program manager will provide you with information regarding this process, including working with our Planning Department to submit a Mylar Change or Site Plan Amendment application. The Planning Department may request specific design requirements for your property or require additional information or permits. All participating customers must complete and submit a tree appraisal for their project area.
5. If interested, we offer free water-wise landscape designs to approved participants in the GRIP. Discuss further with program manager.
6. Once completed, upload the landscape design and plant list documents to the application to obtain approval – see the Landscape Designs section for more information.
7. You will be notified of design and plant list approval via email. If changes have been requested by the program manager, re-submit your updated design and plant list to your application in the customer portal.
8. Obtain any additional/necessary approvals and permits from the city per Planning Department instructions.
9. Complete the installation in preparation for the inspection.
10. Update your application in the customer portal to indicate the property is ready for the inspection. You will be notified via email when the inspection has been scheduled. Items found to be noncompliant by the program manager may require a follow-up inspection.
11. Once you receive inspection approval, upload itemized receipts and invoices, as well as a required W-9 form (blank copies available here: <https://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/fw9.pdf>) to the application in the customer portal no later than Oct. 15 of the current year to receive rebate.

*Inspections will vary for water-wise grass projects. See Water-wise Grass Projects section.



Landscape Designs

A landscape design must be submitted for each project and approved by the GRIP manager prior to any demolition or installation taking place. This confirms that the project design meets both program requirements and the city's UDO landscape requirements. While a licensed landscape architect is not required to create the property landscape design, it is preferred. Approved GRIP participants are welcome to participate in our free Landscape Design program, pending available capacity. If you choose not to participate in this program, the design must be completed according to the design requirements below.

The Planning Department may need to update the city's record related to the scope of your project. The program manager will provide you with further information on this process and connect you with our Planning Department to discuss your property's site plan needs to be updated through a Mylar Change or Site Plan Amendment. Mylar changes are only applicable when only ONE department has to review it. If more than one department needs to be involved in reviewing a particular change or changes, then it becomes a Minor Amendment. Depending upon the nature of the change(s) it can be a major or minor amendment. The Mylar Change fee will be waived due to participation in the GRIP.

Design Requirements:

- Design is to be drawn to-scale
- Plants must be depicted at their mature size
- Design must have a legend that contains:
 - Customer/Property name
 - Property address
 - North arrow
 - Graphical scale
 - Numerical scale
- Design must also label:
 - All plants, new and existing (labeled as Ex.)
 - Landscape features
 - Mulch types
 - Remaining turf and/or bed areas
 - Utility boxes or meters

Category 1: For highly visible entries and areas that face primary streets (i.e. Chambers Road or Alameda Parkway.)

Project square footage x 0.025 = # of shrubs or shrub equivalents or 1 shrub per 40 sq ft.

Category 2: For areas that are internal to the site or community, or areas that face non-primary streets (i.e. medians or small spaces.)

Project square footage x 0.016 = # of shrubs or shrub equivalents or 1 shrub per 60 sq ft. If plants need to be substituted, the program manager will provide a list of suitable options to choose from. If plants on the substitute plant list cannot be found, please contact program manager for additional recommendations.



Note: All designs will be reviewed by the Public Works Traffic Division to ensure that landscape features do not obstruct sight visibility for adjacent roadways per the City of Aurora Roadway Design and Construction Specifications.

Designs created and submitted outside of Aurora Water's Landscape Design program must abide by plant specifications per the site triangle regulations, which pertain to visibility within roadway intersections. If you have questions, please discuss with the GRIP program manager. The Planning Department may require additional plan details, see the UDO.





A project must meet [the current UDO plant coverage requirements](#), which will depend on the type of project area. Depending on the project area, there may be further code specifications that the design must meet per the Planning Department. If the UDO does not provide plant coverage specifications for the specific project area, the project needs to meet plant material coverage standard as defined by the minimum number of shrub equivalents. A shrub equivalent is one shrub, three ornamental grasses or three perennials.

The purchase size of the plant is also important. Perennials and ornamental grasses must be at least a #1 (1-gallon) pot, while shrubs must be at least a #5 (5-gallon) pot per UDO requirements. Plants should be purchased locally, as plants purchased online are usually too small to meet the size requirements set by the UDO.

Artificial turf may replace natural turf areas. Total area of artificial turf may not exceed the maximum amount of cool season turf as defined by the UDO. Artificial turf is **NOT** eligible for a rebate and will not count towards the plant material coverage requirements for the project or rebate.

If you plan to install water-wise turf grass in place of Kentucky bluegrass, the installation and inspection process will vary slightly as outlined in this manual. Please discuss this with the program manager.





Landscape Feature Requirement

The UDO and the GRIP requirements dictate that all areas visible to the public include a landscape feature that provides year-long visual interest. Projects only converting grass in the tree lawns/curbside landscaping are exempt from including landscape features. There are three options to choose from to meet the landscape requirement:



1.

Berm – Less than or equal to 2' 5" high at center, and no more than 1:4 slope on all sides



2.

Boulders – Minimum of 3 that are at least 2' x 2' x 2'



3.

Small wall – Stone or masonry, must be 1 – 2.5' tall

Installing Your Landscape

Permits and Plans

Per the guidance of the Planning Department, various permits related to construction and landscape projects may be required, depending on the nature and scope of the project. Please contact the Permit Center to verify which permits are needed for your project at 303.739.7420.

- **Irrigation:** Installing a new or replacement irrigation/sprinkler system for commercial or multi-family projects requires a permit. The permit allows irrigation system installers to schedule an inspection to ensure compliance with Aurora's code for irrigation systems.
- **Seed/Sod:** The installation or replacement of new turf (sod or seed) for areas of 250 sq. ft. or greater, any time of the year, requires a permit. This includes the installation of water-wise grass. Fees are waived due to participation in the GRIP.
- **Stormwater:** All construction sites within the city of Aurora which disturb one acre of land or greater – including sites disturbing less than one acre that are part of a larger common plan of development or sale which will ultimately disturb one acre or greater – require a stormwater permit. A construction site is the combination of the project area and any areas used for staging or stockpiling.
- **Traffic Control Plans:** Depending on the scope of your project, you may need to submit and receive approval of a Traffic Control Plan (TCP) if there may be any impact to parking, flow of vehicles, bicyclists, pedestrians or other users of the public right of way.
- **Tree Survey:** All participants are required to submit a tree appraisal for their project area. This appraisal is to be performed by an approved consulting arborist. The appraisal shall identify each tree, it's genus and species, it's physical attributes, current size and health, and value. This appraisal will be submitted to the Forestry Department, contact at trees@auroragov.org. Approved consulting arborists are listed below:



Name	Company	Address	Phone
David Merriman	Arbor Scape	5044 S. Youngfield Ct, Morrison, CO 80465	303-795-2381
Keith Worley	Forestry Development, LLC	7377 Osage Rd Larkspur, CO 80118	303-681-2492
Scott Grimes	Colorado Tree Consultants	coloradotreeconsultants@yahoo.com	303-720-8170
Stefan Ringgenberg	Boulder Tree and Landscape Consulting	7289 Petursdale Ct Boulder, CO 80301	303-530-0640
Steve Geist	SavATree	8585 E Warren Ave Denver, CO 80231	303-306-3144

IMPORTANT NOTE FOR TREES:

(1) Established trees that are surrounded by grass typically get watered when the grass does. Removing grass from around a tree reduces or eliminates the amount of water the tree receives. To avoid harming your tree, it is vital to consider how your tree(s) will be watered. Aurora's Forestry division provides a [guide for tree watering](#). Transition to these recommendations slowly (i.e. double the water recommendation for the first-year post-conversion and then taper back).

(2) When removing grass from around mature trees, it is best to use herbicides or the smother method instead of a sod cutter to avoid damaging existing tree roots.



Soil Amendments

A soil amendment is material added to the soil to improve various physical characteristics, such as texture, pore space, water-holding capacity and nutrient levels. It is important to add amendments to help build the soil that feeds your plants. Reminder that soil amendments are not the same thing as mulch, as amendments are mixed into the soil and mulch is applied to the soil surface. Do not use soil amendment when planting trees.

Soil amendments should be applied and worked into the soil deeply and thoroughly before or during planting.

Water-wise Grass Projects

Water-wise grasses are a great option for large areas with infrequent foot traffic. To ensure a healthy and thriving project, please contact the GRIP manager for more guidelines and information on installing and establishing water-wise grasses in our region.

These projects will follow slightly different rebate guidelines per the nature of the plant material and growth habits. See below.

- **Irrigation:** Plans may need to be submitted if any major system changes occur. Depending on the type of water-wise grass used in the project, heads or bodies may need to be changed to accommodate the height of the mature grass. Contact the GRIP manager for irrigation guidelines for establishment.
- **Seed or sod mix:** The type and content of the seed or sod mix must be provided to ensure that the grass used is a native or water-wise species. A permit will be required for installation.
- **Inspection schedule:** For projects established with seed, an inspection will be conducted approximately 2 months after planting of the water-wise grass to assess germination. Discuss inspection process for water-wise grass projects installed via plugs or sod with program manager.
- **Management plan:** To ensure the appropriate and healthy establishment of water-wise grass areas, a management plan must be provided to the program manager.

Inspection

The inspection provides an opportunity for staff to review the project, ensuring the project was installed correctly per the design. It should be scheduled when all installation requirement have been met. The following is inspected:

- Plant type/size matches the plant list, and plant locations match the landscape design
- Plant holes are dug double wide with appropriate backfill of soil around plant
- Use of approved soil amendment
- Irrigation system including backflow prevention device and rain sensor are installed (if applicable)
- Site is free of weeds and hazards
- Edging is present to separate beds from turf sections (if applicable)
- Erosion control BMP's in place where needed and public right-of-ways are clean
- Move mulch away from base of plant for staff to inspect plant installation. If installed correctly, or the wrong plant material is installed, a customer is responsible for making a correction before the rebate is issued.
- Plants are healthy
- There is at least 3" of mulch coverage over the landscape
- Landscape fabric is not visible
- Irrigation lines are covered with mulch so that none are visible
- Edging, if used, extends a maximum of ½" above surrounding material
- Edging that terminates at driveway or sidewalk is not sticking above grade
- Site is weed-free and looks like a completed project

If issues are still present at the end of the inspection, an additional inspection may be required.





Mulch

Mulch is an important part of a water-wise landscape, as it helps the landscape retain soil moisture while mitigating weed growth. Choices for mulch include organic mulch (e.g. wood, bark) and inorganic mulch (e.g. river rock, cobble).

Here are some examples of mulch:



ORGANIC - GOLDEN SMALL CHIP



INORGANIC - 3" RIVER ROCK

Mulch Requirements

- Mulch is required and may be organic or inorganic. If all inorganic mulch is proposed, two different types and sizes are required.
- Mulch must be at least 3" deep
- Weed barrier/landscape fabric underneath organic/inorganic mulch is an option, though not typically recommended around plant material because of the unnatural barrier that is created between mulch and soil.
- White rock, lava rock and recycled products such as ground rubber or crushed concrete may NOT be used
- Be creative with colors and textures, but sensitive to neighborhood aesthetics





Final Steps

Once the project is complete and the inspection passed, no additional materials will be permitted for rebate consideration. Upload all eligible itemized receipts and completed W-9 form to the application in the customer portal. You will be notified by email when the rebate has been processed and approved.

