



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Feb. 1, 2022

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Climate Change highlights the need to conserve water in Colorado
Centerra becomes first community in state to receive Sustainable Landscape Community designation

LOVELAND – The [Associated Landscape Contractors of Colorado](#) (ALCC) has awarded [Centerra](#), a 3,000 acre master-planned community in Loveland, the state’s first ALCC Sustainable Landscape Community (SLC) designation recognizing the community’s commitment to water conservation and sustainability.

To increase water conservation in managed landscapes, ALCC, Colorado’s largest green trade group, created the [Sustainable Landscape Management](#) (SLM) program to educate public and private landscape professionals on sustainable, water-conserving landscape management principles. Based on best management practices (BMPs), SLM guidelines systematically reduce water consumption and plant loss in landscapes. SLC is an extension of SLM and recognizes large water users, including master-planned and HOA communities, commercial properties/sites and retail properties for using SLM guidelines.

Hotter drier weather, declining snowpack and lower river flows has brought water conservation to the forefront. Cities and water utility providers are looking to reduce water use and landscape water waste. Through its sustainability programs, ALCC is ensuring the landscape industry is part of the solution by reducing outdoor irrigation while keeping landscapes healthy and providing environmental benefit. [Landscape irrigation uses about 3% of the total water](#) used in Colorado.

According to ALCC Chief Executive Officer John McMahon, sustainable landscapes are responsive to the environment, re-generative and can actively contribute to healthy communities. Sustainable landscapes sequester carbon, clean the air and water; increase energy efficiency; reduce the heat island effect; and provide wildlife habitat.

“We need to use the least amount of water needed to keep landscapes healthy by using proven and vetted best management practices,” said McMahon. “Centerra’s SLC designation and sustainable landscape practices will serve as a model for other Colorado communities wanting to use less water.”

Centerra is honored to become the first community in Colorado to receive ALCC’s SLC designation and demonstrates our commitment to sustainable landscape practices and ongoing water conservation,” said Kim Perry, vice president of community design and neighborhood development at McWhinney. “We are not only cutting water use significantly, we are seeing major cost savings as well.”

Centerra has continued to reduce water consumption over the years and in 2020, compared the costs of installing, maintaining, and watering a native landscape area versus a manicured turf area. The native landscape was three times less than installing and maintaining a manicured landscape. Utility (primarily water) costs for a native landscaped area were an incredible twenty times less expensive than watering manicured turf.

Native Landscape Area:**Installation costs of native area**

Installation Cost	Square Feet	Cost per Square Foot
\$372,760.15	300,000	\$1.24

Annual maintenance costs for native area

Annual maintenance cost	Square Feet	Cost per Square Foot
\$19,800.00	300,000	\$0.06

Annual utility costs for native area

Annual water/electric cost	Square Feet	Cost per Square Foot
\$7,493.63	300,000	\$0.02

Manicured Turf Area:**Installation costs of manicured area**

Installation Cost	Square Feet	Cost per Square Foot
\$334,005.82	83,691	\$3.99

Annual maintenance costs for manicured area

Annual maintenance cost	Square Feet	Cost per Square Foot
\$12,553.65	83,691	\$0.15

Annual utility costs for manicured area

Annual water/electric cost	Square Feet	Cost per Square Foot
\$33,258.64	83,691	\$0.39

“Creating and managing landscapes for aesthetic purposes alone is no longer an option if we are to conserve our native pollinators and the birds that are directly dependent on them,” said Jim Tolstrup, Executive Director of [High Plains Environmental Center](#). “We must create and manage landscapes for their habitat potential, as well as for their aesthetic value. Indiscriminately destroying insects, or interrupting their life cycles, is counter to the goals of habitat friendly landscaping maintenance practices. The distinction of Centerra being acknowledged as the first ‘sustainable landscape community’ in Colorado is a reflection of practices that have been implemented within this community for well over a decade.”

In 2021, Centerra approached ALCC through the relationship they have with various ALCC member companies. Several ALCC member companies that support Centerra, including Brightview and Environmental Designs, have supported SLM since its inception. Because of Centerra’s ongoing commitment to sustainability, ALCC decided to pilot the Sustainable Landscape Community designation with the master-planned community.

Centerra applied for the designation, detailing how the landscape is maintained sustainably (based on practices dictated in the SLM training manual and photos of the site, which are also required). ALCC also requires that the landscape company doing the work on the property have at least one SLM designee on staff.

“Both the landscape industry and master-planned communities like Centerra are proactively seeking ways to reduce water use through sustainable landscape management practices,” said McMahan. “We want every landscape professional in the state who maintains landscapes to increase water conservation and reduce plant loss by following the same standards for landscape maintenance, using the same blueprint.”

That blueprint is a 125-page manual entitled [Sustainable Landscape Management: A Guide to More Sustainable Landscapes in Colorado](#). It defines the proper maintenance practices to conserve resources and maximize the natural beauty of Colorado landscapes. The manual was drafted from input by landscape companies, municipalities, water providers and property managers from across the state, including the City of Centennial, the City of Greenwood Village, Northern Water, Denver Water, the Denver Metro Building Office Managers Association (BOMA), Colorado Parks and Recreation and the Colorado Water Conservation Board.

“Sustainable landscape practices require year-round maintenance, which some master-planned communities see as cost-prohibitive. But in the long run, they will save money by using less water, reducing utility bills and ensuring they don’t have to replace trees – one of the largest landscape expenses – because they were poorly planted and not properly maintained,” said McMahan.

About Centerra

Centerra, an award-winning 3,000-acre master-planned community located in Loveland at the heart of Northern Colorado, is a McWhinney development that was built on the belief that nature provides the perfect balance to urban planning. As a community designed to enhance all aspects of life, Centerra integrates neighborhoods with recreation, art, shopping and dining, business opportunities and medical services. Centerra and its businesses offer more than 8,000 part-time and full-time jobs. This unique community is home to Northern Colorado’s first lifestyle center, The Promenade Shops at Centerra; UCHHealth–Medical Center of The

Rockies, a state-of-the-art 187 bed LEED gold-certified regional hospital; and The Marketplace at Centerra, one of Northern Colorado's largest contiguous shopping centers. Centerra is also home to High Plains Environmental Center, which manages 483 acres of wetlands, open space and reservoirs within Centerra and Chapungu Sculpture Park, a 26-acre park with more than 80 stone sculptures throughout. In 2018, Centerra became the first certified National Wildlife Federation (NWF) Community Wildlife Habitat in Colorado. Named Development of the Year by the National Association of Industrial & Office Properties' (NAIOP) Colorado Chapter, Centerra embodies McWhinney's purpose of creating great places and fabled experiences for people. For additional information, visit www.centerra.com.

About ALCC

Associated Landscape Contractors of Colorado (ALCC) is the premier professional organization for Colorado's landscape companies. ALCC promotes the responsible use of water and other natural resources and provides educational and industry certification opportunities to Colorado's landscape professionals. To join the Sustainable Landscape Management or Community initiative, including employee designation, visit www.alcc.com/slm or call us at 303-757-5611

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