

Build It Water-Smart From the Start in Colorado

By [Drew Beckwith](#), Water Policy Manager | March 20th, 2017

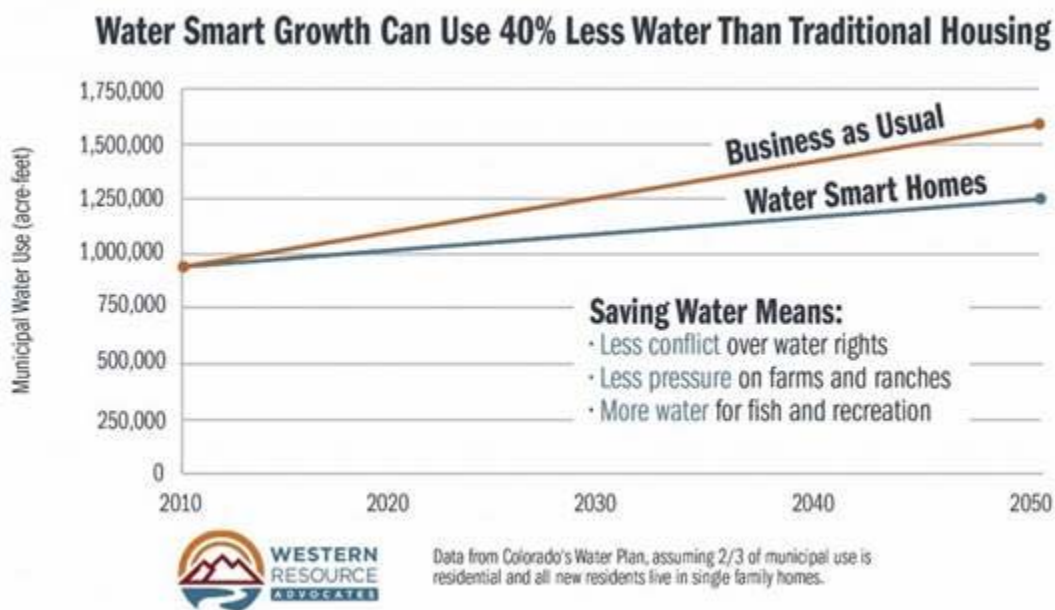
New legislation can help fill the state's water supply gap and close a loophole that allows new home developments to waste water.



Current Colorado law contains a loophole that allows new home developments to waste water. In a state with already strapped water resources, that's not OK. But new legislation that Western Resource Advocates is supporting will help ensure that all new development implements common-sense conservation actions and is [built water-smart from the start](#).

Some background to set the stage on why this legislative change is needed: Due to major population growth and climate change, Colorado is facing an impending water supply gap. If we continue with *business as usual*, our communities will need more water than they currently have. This gap can be best prevented by increasing water conservation, reusing water, and the voluntary and compensated sharing of water supplies between agricultural and urban water users. Fortunately, water conservation is a priority tool in Colorado's Water Plan, and doing more conservation will lessen potential conflicts between new urban/suburban growth and existing water users, decrease the pressure to transfer water from farms and ranches, and keep more water in rivers for fish, recreation, and tourism.

Unfortunately, water conservation is not being considered consistently statewide by the local governments that determine what new home developments will look like. [HB 17-1273](#), sponsored by Representatives Chris Hansen (D – Denver) and Hugh McKean (R – Loveland), will require new housing tract developers to present how the homes they plan to build will incorporate water conservation measures as part of gaining permit approval to move forward.



Building “water-smart from the start” is one of the easiest, cheapest, and most politically viable ways to reduce future water needs. There are a multitude of affordable conservation actions

available for new development, including high-efficiency indoor water fixtures like toilets and shower heads, efficient outdoor irrigation systems, and Colorado-friendly landscaping choices. But since current law does not require new home developments to even list the water-wise actions that will be implemented, these cost-effective options for homeowners are sometimes left out. Local governments need information on what water conservation actions are going to be used in new housing in order to make better-informed decisions about whether the proposed development is right for their communities.

The upfront planning cost for including conservation strategies in new home development is minimal. And importantly, developers using water-smart planning can save money on the cost of water they are required to purchase from the local water provider or obtain from other sources.

Even better news for future homeowners is that this legislation will help save people money. Residents living in water-smart homes will pay less on their water bills because water-smart new growth can use 40% less water annually than comparable development from a decade ago.

A [recent poll](#) shows overwhelming support, with 77% of Colorado voters polled saying they prefer using our current water supply more wisely as a means to address the state's water needs. If you're one of them, [sign up for our e-updates](#) so we can keep you informed on the right time to contact your elected representative to support HB 17-1273!