

Habitat Hero Program



Photo by Don Ireland

Is Your HOA this Awesome? ... Making a difference right at home.

You might pass Cherry Creek 3 unnoticed if you were driving along I-25 near Denver. It's a 251-home condominium complex covering one square block. However, this tiny homeowner's association is continuing to try to set a huge example on how water conservation and the Audubon Rockies Habitat Hero program can work.

Three years ago, Cherry Creek 3 was the first multi-family development to receive the Habitat

Hero award for retrofitting substantial parts of its landscaping to wildscaping. The project has attracted more birds, butterflies and hummingbirds to the property while also helping the HOA slash its annual water bill by as many as 15 million gallons.

“I use our swimming pool in terms of explaining water conservation,” said HOA President Don Ireland. “It holds 109,000 gallons of water. **We are now using about 138 fewer swimming pools worth of water than we did in 2009.** That helps people imagine what 15 million gallons of water looks like.”

This year, the HOA Board is trying to further stress the importance of water conservation to all residents. In addition to dedicating an entire edition of its newsletter to the subject, the Board has created a rebate program that is unique. Cherry Creek 3 is offering cash rebates for WaterSense-labeled dishwashers, washing machines and High-Efficiency Toilets (HETs). The rebates range from \$30 to \$50 per device and can be claimed in addition to those offered by the HOA’s water supplier, Denver Water.

“This trial program runs through Aug. 31, 2017, and we’re hoping many residents take advantage of it,” Mr. Ireland said. “Denver Water already offers up to a \$150 rebate for 1.1-gallon model toilets and our program could be a further incentive for owners to upgrade their water devices. Every drop of water we save in the Association helps lower both our water and sewage in the long term. The HOA owns all of the water and sewer lines in the complex. The owners’ monthly HOA maintenance dues pay for the overall water and sewage used. The conservation and fiscal sense of this rebate program should prove worthwhile for everyone.”

Saving water locally will help reduce the need for drawing water from our beautiful state’s rivers and reservoirs, Mr. Ireland said. “We’re ultimately all responsible for our environment. Saving one glass or one gallon of water at a time really can help exponentially if everyone does it.”

This past October, Cherry Creek 3 was the first HOA in the state named as an Environmental Leadership Program recipient by the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment. It previously received the 2015 Conservation Award from the Colorado WaterWise organization, also a first for an HOA in the state.

Mr. Ireland, in addition to working full-time and devoting services as a volunteer HOA president, also has spoken across the Front Range to promote the Audubon Rockies’ Habitat Hero program, native plantings recommended by *Plant Select* and water conservation.

“There are two mallard ducks that come back to Cherry Creek 3 every spring and spend a few weeks in our pool area prior to the public opening each May. I want them to keep coming back and view them as a sign that spring has finally arrived,” commented Mr. Ireland. “I am hoping that this spring will be memorable in terms of our HOA saving more water. We already have a crew of residents who can’t wait to get digging in our Community Garden and who want to plant more trees and native plants in various places around the complex. We saw more bird species and hummingbirds last year and hope we see even more this year.”