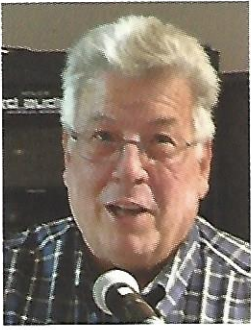


# HELP YOUR HOA FIGHT THE WATER BATTLE



## The Future of New Communities



**Don Ireland**

Third Cherry Creek  
Townhouse Corp.

**Y**ou're not alone if your homeowners association is struggling with escalating water and sewage costs. It's a battle faced by most residences throughout the West, where populations are swelling, and the availability of water is limited.

HOA leaders have two choices: keep hiking owner's maintenance fees or take an organized approach to beat back the water beast.

My homeowners association, Third Cherry Creek Townhouse Corp., continues to face rising costs for insurance, maintenance services, and water and sewage bills. (We have 251 side-by-side brick condominium buildings in a city block in southeast Denver.) As Cherry Creek 3's newly-elected president back in 2008, I accepted the challenge to prevent our community from drowning in water bills. Our neighborhood was built in 1965 and designed to have the HOA pay for all water and sewage—there are no individual meters to our 39 buildings or our 109,000-gallon swimming pool.

Bottom line: We're winning the battle... or, at the very least, staying reasonably afloat.

heads, which use up to 40 percent less water. Many water providers offer rebates for installing such devices.

Using Kentucky Blue Grass and similar water-thirsty turf grasses in the Front Range is eco-unfriendly because of the expense of watering and maintaining it. Although blue grass looks nice, it can't grow here naturally. Plant Select ([www.plantselect.org](http://www.plantselect.org)), a non-profit organization including Denver Botanic Gardens and Colorado State University, has more than 150 colorful, low-water and drought-tolerant plants – including a turf alternative, called Dog Tuff Grass—that can refresh your landscaping with a true Colorado-style look. I'm not saying you should have a lawn-less landscaping plan – just a "less lawn" landscaping plan.

**"It takes months or even years to plan, fund, and implement projects in planned phases. However, investing in a strategy can yield significant, measurable results and save money in the long run."**

Cherry Creek 3	Water used (millions of gallons)	Combined water & sewage costs
2008	36.7	\$157,705
2019	20.4	\$141,007

**RESULTS: The Association is using 16 million fewer gallons of water annually.**

Cherry Creek 3 avoided purchasing 126,577 million gallons of water from 2008-2019 by engaging in a concerted effort to emphasize and practice water conservation and efficiency. It takes months or even years to plan, fund, and implement projects in planned phases. However, investing in a strategy can yield significant, measurable results and save money in the long run.

Here are some of the successful steps we've taken and others that I recommend:

Organize and launch an education effort for residents, stressing that water is money and every gallon not wasted is money not going down the drain. The message that water is money can hit home with any owner who pays for their own electric, cable, or cellphone bill. We talk about water regularly in our newsletters. Each year, one newsletter is devoted entirely to the subject. (Read this year's edition in the "Striving to Save Water" section of our website, [www.cherrycreek3.com](http://www.cherrycreek3.com).)

Because 50% of all water used annually in a single-family or multi-family complex goes toward watering landscapes, install water-saving technologies, including smarter irrigation controllers that react to rainfall. Install MP Rotary-head sprinkler

Give your landscapers a schedule of watering times for each month. (Most water providers post this information online). Do your people know they shouldn't water between 10 a.m. and 6 p.m. to prevent evapotranspiration? Setting standards for the folks who control your sprinklers is crucial because your association—not them—pays for the water, which is more expensive from April through September. The truth be told, you really don't need to turn on your irrigation system until late May. If you do, you're likely wasting water.

We not only ask owners to install new water-efficient devices in their homes, we also are among the few HOAs that offer water-efficiency rewards (cash rebates) to those who do so. These rebates are in addition to what our local water provider offers. During the past 11 years, our owners replaced about 450 older toilets, which used 3.5 gallons per flush, with high-efficiency ones that use 1.28 (or fewer) gallons per flush. When our water bill decreased, so did our sewage bill.

Well-planned xeriscapes look great. Xeriscape doesn't mean using tons of rocks, gravel or cacti and turning your Association into a desert look. Colorado's legislature has passed laws that prohibit HOAs from preventing homeowners from installing xeriscape yards. Last year, the state approved a measure that encourages common-interest communities to use xeriscaping in common areas.

Many water providers in Colorado know it's cheaper to help you change than to pay to build another reservoir. That's why organizations, including Northern Water, Aurora, Thornton, Northglenn and others, offer rebates for converting lawn areas to xeriscaping.

If little Cherry Creek 3 can turn the tide in its fight, you can, too! 🏠



## Don Ireland

**Position(s) Held:** President, 2009-10, 2011-present; Newsletter author, 2007-present

**Association:** Third Cherry Creek Townhouse Corp. (aka, Cherry Creek 3), Denver, CO

**Association Size:** 251 Units

### Community & Personal Achievements:

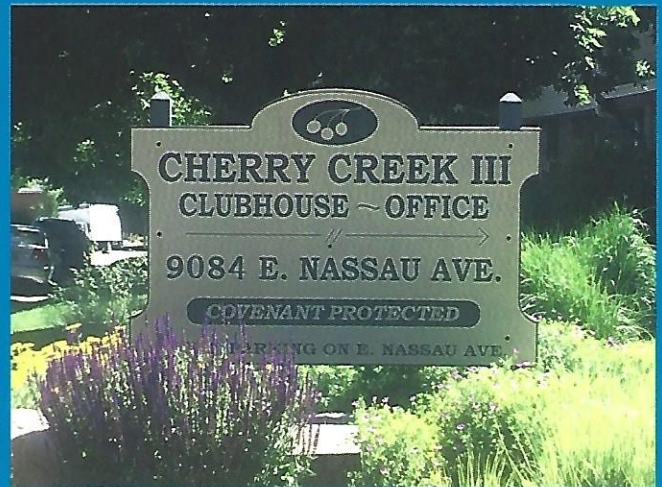
Don was named a Neighborhood Star by Denver's Inter-Neighborhood Cooperation organization in 2018 after leading Cherry Creek 3 to several awards, including:

- Colorado WaterWise organization's Conservation Award \*
- Audubon Rockies Habitat Hero Award \*
- Colorado Department of Public Health & Environment Environmental Leadership Award \*
- Plant Select HOA Partner Award \*
- Documentary/Film appearances: (2016) "Hometown Habitat: Stories of Bringing Nature Home"  
(2017) "Doing More with Less: The challenge and opportunity of water efficiency"

\* denotes first time award given to an HOA in Colorado.

Since becoming a Board member, Don has led efforts to create Cherry Creek 3's own web site, re-vamp its landscaping to low-water species, make available two satellite TV service options to all residents and use newer technologies to improve Board and community operations. His accomplishments including converting all HOA sidewalk lights to LED and working with Xcel Energy to convert all overhead street lights to LED. He worked to have 30 trees planted in the neighborhood during the last five years.

During the past five years, Don has spoken to hundreds of HOA leaders, environmental groups, and other organization throughout the Front Range on the subjects of water efficiency and conservation, appropriate landscaping in Colorado, the importance of pollinator preservation in urban and suburban areas and related topics. ⬆



If you're interested in sharing your community's achievements or spotlighting a homeowner leader, please email [bridget@caddo-leadership.com](mailto:bridget@caddo-leadership.com). We'd love to hear from you. You may also nominate a homeowner leader by filling out the questions referenced above.

Vol. 38 • No. 2 • 2020

www.CAI-RMC.org



# COMMON

I N T E R E S T S

## HOA Maintenance Issue



INSIDE:

**Preventative Maintenance**

**Pressure Washing**

**Judicial Foreclosure**

**Is Your Property Ready for Spring?**

**Sustainability in HOAs**

**And More!**