

# Integrating Water into Jefferson County Land Use Planning

**Jefferson County Master Plan**

**Award Video**



When asked what is the most urgent planning issue in Jefferson County, residents responded with resounding concern for the relationship between water and development. In reply, Planning and Zoning assessed regulations and policies find the balance between growth, limited water supply, at-risk water quality, and a multitude of stakeholders.

In 2018, staff attended the Growing Water Smart conference hosted by the Sonoran Institute which helped identify areas of opportunity for water conservation in our plans, policies, and analysis tools. Vague language, piece-meal

policies, and incomplete regulations limited the effectiveness of Jefferson County's efforts to integrate land use



planning and water.

In 2019, a three-part action plan was put into motion to address these shortcomings. First, Planning and Zoning applied for and received Growing Water Smart Technical Assistance Funding from the Sonoran Institute to finance the review of the county's planning documents by the Colorado Geological Survey (CGS). Second, CGS, with Jefferson County's guidance, identified ways to better integrate water policy and land use development processes across all plans, regulations, and analysis tools. Finally, staff simultaneously began a Comprehensive Master Plan update to address water conversation policies for development review and long-range planning.

Through this plan, Jefferson County accomplished tangible improvements to our plans related to water conversation. Research, technical assistance, community outreach, stakeholder involvement, and inter-agency partnerships resulted in innovative and holistic solutions for Jefferson County's unique complexities surrounding geography, geology, topography, water sources, and development patterns. Because of this in-house work coupled with the CGS independent review, the team succeeded in crafting robust water policies and identifying regulation updates that are tailored to Jefferson County and integrated across all plans, regulations, and analysis tools.

Moving forward, this project will result in more sustainable development across Jefferson County, and decision-makers will have the best available data at hand to assure concerned constituents that new development will not place strain on the community's water resources. As Planning and Zoning continues to improve our plans and regulations based on the results of this project, water conservation and land use planning in Jefferson County will no longer be a fragmented response to an urgent development challenge. Instead, it will be a comprehensive package tailored to our unique development context that strikes the balance between growth and conservation.