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Living Landscapes

Commercial Rainwater Harvesting

Planning Commission Study Session

September 16, 2026

Background and Purpose

Commercial Rainwater Harvesting Ordinance

- Adopted in 2008
- Requires 50% of landscape irrigation to be met through harvested rainwater
- Implemented through plan review and inspection

Today's Study Session

- Second study session, continuing the August 26, 2026 Planning Commission discussion
- Discuss proposed amendments, as directed by the Mayor and Council April 7, 2026.

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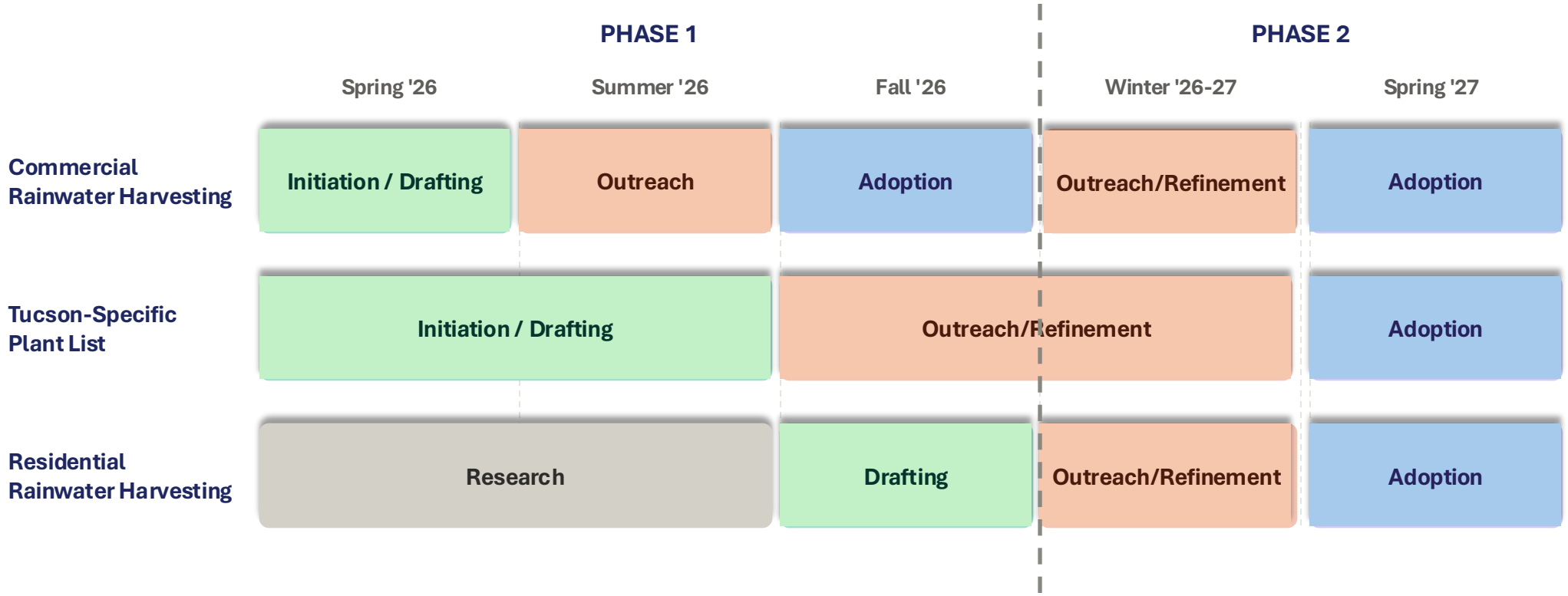
Living Landscapes Timeline



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Two Phase Approach

Phase 1: Limited Amendments to the **Commercial Rainwater Harvesting Ordinance**

Phase 2: Creation of Residential Rainwater Harvesting standards, Updates to Commercial Rainwater Harvesting, and Tucson Specific Plant List

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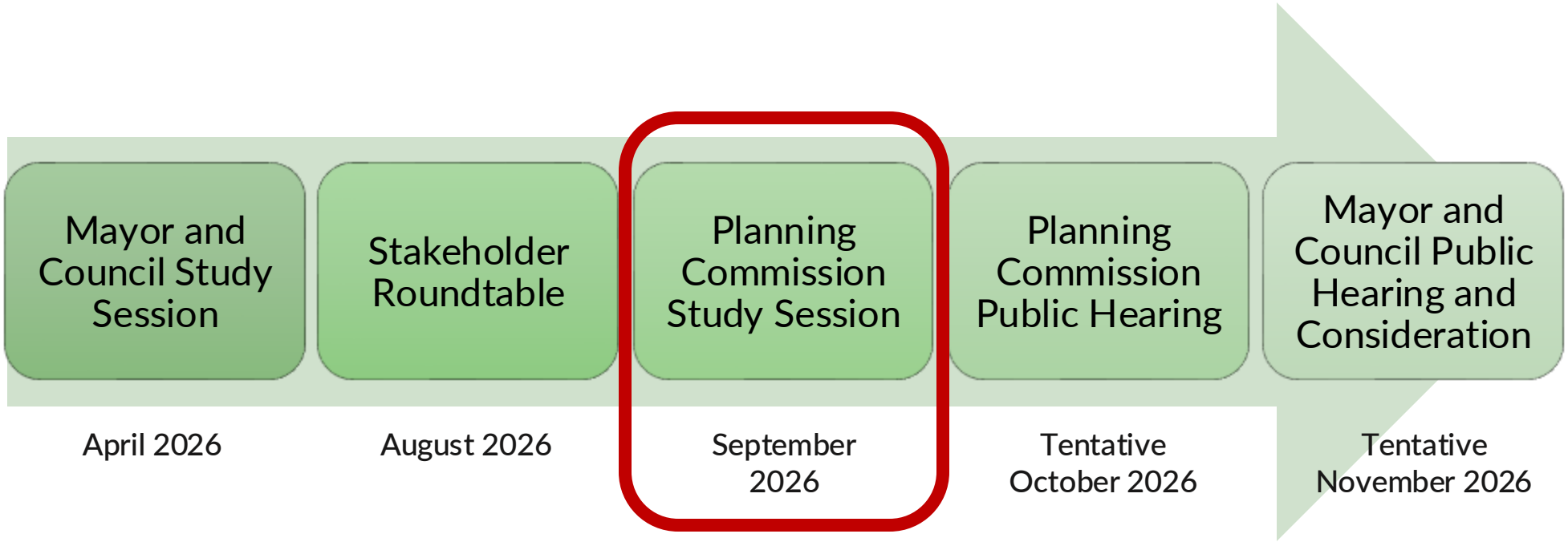
Phase 1 Timeline



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August 26 Study Session

Discussion topics

- Public Review of Tucson-specific plant list
- Tree to understory ratio specifications
- Construction best practices
- Landscaping maintenance
- Alignment with Middle Housing landscaping requirements

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UDC Proposed Amendments

UDC 7.6.4.B Depress parking lot tree planting areas 6–9"; require curb cuts; increase planting area size

UDC 7.6.6.C Reference standard details for water harvesting; higher tree-to-border ratio, option for pedestrian shade

UDC 7.6.4.F Allow green stormwater infrastructure in right-of-way; permit capturing right-of-way runoff on private property

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Additional Amendments in TSM & TCC

Not within Planning Commission purview but included for context

- **TSM 4-01.2.1 :** Recessed planting areas, infiltration, standard details
- **TSM 4-01.7.1 :** Preconstruction meeting + inspection checkpoints
- **TSM 4-01.1.3 :** Applicability/exceptions clarification
- **TCC Sec. 6-185 :** Rewrite golf course/cemetery exceptions; church lots not exempt

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Tucson Specific Plant List

Related/Parallel Effort

- The Mayor and Council directed work to the Landscape Advisory Committee
- Planning Commission:
  - Discussed at August 26 Study Session
  - No further action currently requested by staff
- Larger community engagement in Fall 2026

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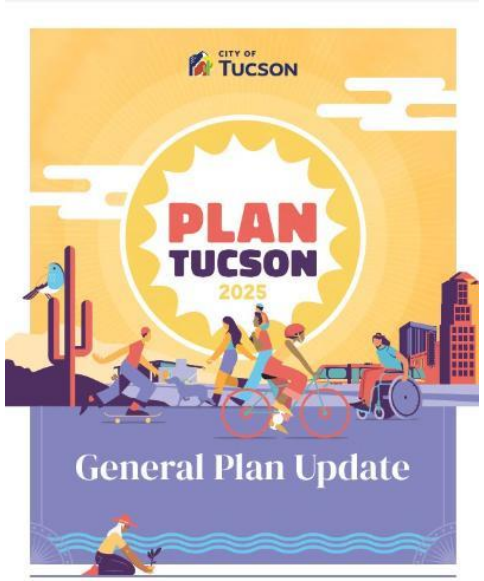
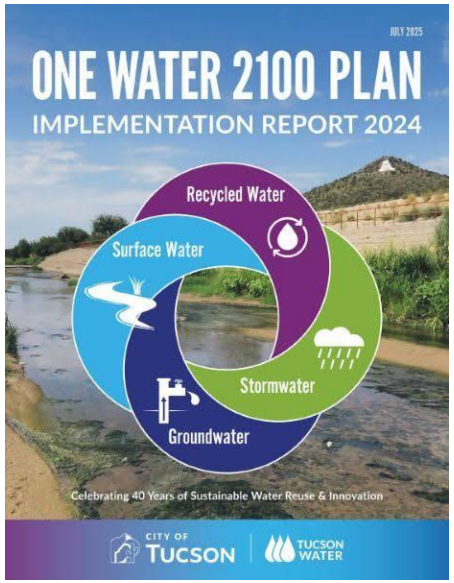
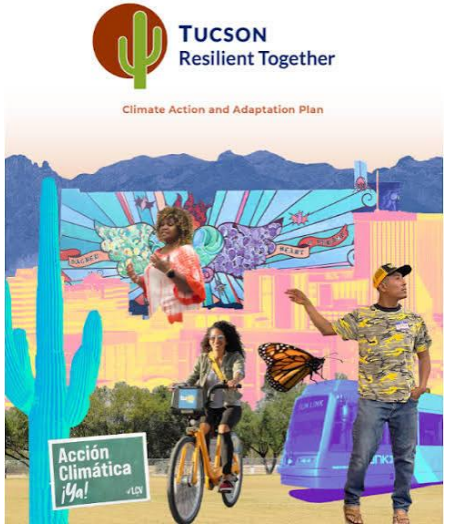
Plan Policy Alignment

- Plan Tucson
  - Ecosystems 3, 5, 6, 9: green space, tree canopy, urban heat island, flood/erosion reduction
  - Water 6, 7: stormwater management, water-use efficiency







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Discussion & Staff Recommendation

Staff requests the Planning Commission provide feedback on potential Unified Development Code (UDC) amendments related to the commercial rainwater harvesting ordinance and set a public hearing for October 7, 2026.

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