



Department of Planning & Community & Economic Development
Building Inspection Division

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DATE: July 31, 2013
TO: Urban Design Commission, Plan Commission
FROM: Zoning Text Amendment Staff Team
SUBJECT: Proposed changes to the Landscaping section of the Zoning Ordinance

On January 2, 2013, the City's new zoning code went into effect. It is the first major revision to the code since 1966. The standards in the new code were tested prior to adoption, but it was generally accepted by policy-makers and staff that changes would be necessary during the first year or two of implementation.

One of the most significant areas of change from the old code to the new was the landscaping standards. The new code takes a much more comprehensive approach. In working with the new code, staff has discovered several issues regarding the new landscaping requirements that need to be addressed, such as the requirements and triggers for compliance on sites developed prior to the new code. This memo summarizes changes to the landscaping section as proposed by staff after further testing and evaluation.

Summary of Changes to Sec. 28.142:

(2) Applicability section changes:

- Create an "area of disturbance" threshold. *Creates an opportunity for minor changes to a site, not resulting in requirement for complete site compliance.*
- Create a "gross floor area increase" threshold. *Creates an opportunity for minor building expansions, not resulting in requirement for complete site compliance.*

(3) Landscape Plan and Design Standards:

- Establish "root condition" for landscaping elements. *Standard industry terminology for landscape elements.*
- Include storage areas on landscape plans. *Add to plan to show complete site.*
- Change the depiction of plants, to show 75% of growth rather than 15 year growth. *Landscape varieties grow at different rates, so therefore a 75% growth more accurately measures the final species size.*

- Require the provision of the grading and stormwater management plan. *Add to plan to show complete site and ensure no conflicts between grading/stormwater management and landscaping.*
- Establish a minimum mulch depth of 2 inches. *Minimum mulch depth ensures moisture retention in soil, hence the requirement.*

(4) Landscape Calculations and Distribution

- Clarify the qualifying parts of a site when calculating the “Developed Area” exclusion of the building footprint from the developed area calculation. *Relating site improvements to landscaping area requirements.*
- Provide a graphic of the “Developed Area.” *Clarification of regulation.*
- Redefine the point generation calculator for sites. *Simplification of point calculator and more accurate values for landscaping elements.*
- Create a “modify/waive” process for sites where landscaping cannot be accommodated due to building placement. *Site-specific tool for places that cannot meet landscaping requirements.*
- Clarify minimum size for nursery stock reference (ANSI or ANLA). *Standard industry terminology for landscape elements.*
- Modify to various plant size requirements. *Standard industry terminology for landscape elements.*
- Clarify “upright evergreen shrub.” *Differentiating between low, on ground evergreen and upright evergreen, and clarification evergreen tree varieties.*
- Adding points for retaining “Existing Significant Specimen Tree.” *Incentive to maintain and calculate value for large specimen tree stock.*
- Add points for landscape furniture. *Incentivizing creating desirable and quality outdoor landscape spaces.*
- Create reasonable species diversity for trees across the site. *Establishing more flexible diversification of tree species across a site.*

(5) Development frontage Landscaping

- Replace fencing type wrought iron with “metal.” *Clarification of regulation.*

(6) Interior parking lot design

- Clarify that planting islands are not necessarily tree islands, by deleting the word tree. *Clarification.*
- Change light pole to tree placement to require light pole placement outside of 75% growth. *Adapting light spacing to species adjacent, versus establish a single distance rule.*
- Delete reference to pedestrian pathway. *Clarification does not belong in landscaping section.*

(7) Foundation plantings

- General clarification of the regulation.
- Create a “modify/waive” process for sites where landscaping cannot be accommodated due to building placement. *Site-specific tool for places that cannot meet landscaping requirements.*

(8) Screening along district boundaries

- Allow Plan Commission to modify district boundary screening requirements for Conditional Uses. *Allows Plan Commission flexibility to address edge conditions between developments in a more flexible way.*

(11) Fences, Walls and Hedges

- Clarify height limitation for “solid” fences. *Clarifies regulation is intended for solid fences as defined, not more open styles of fences.*
- Clarify language to prohibit the use of retaining walls and berms to increase height of screening. *Clarification.*

New Definitions:

- hedge,
- hedge, ornamental,
- hedge, solid

These definitions match similar definitions for fencing, to clarify regulations for screening hedges comparable to screening fencing.