

City of Madison, Wisconsin

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REPORT OF: URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION

**PRESENTED:** July 18, 2018

**TITLE:** Discussion of a Zoning Text Amendment (Legistar I.D. 52049) to Allow for the Use of Stone Mulch in Certain Landscaping Areas. (52475)

**REFERRED:**

**REREFERRED:**

**REPORTED BACK:**

**AUTHOR:** Janine Glaeser, Secretary

**ADOPTED:**

**POF:**

**DATED:** July 18, 2018

**ID NUMBER:**

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Members present were: Richard Wagner, Chair; Dawn O’Kroley, Lois Braun-Oddo, Tom DeChant, Christian Harper and Amanda Hall.

**SUMMARY:**

At its meeting of July 18, 2018, the Urban Design Commission **GAVE AN ADVISORY RECOMMENDATION** to the Plan Commission regarding a zoning text amendment to allow for the use of stone mulch in certain landscaping areas. Matt Tucker, Zoning Administrator introduced the zoning text amendment to allow for the use of stone mulch, in addition to wood mulch and chipped wood. The Plan Commission will be considering this item at their next meeting. The Zoning Code rewrite included the landscaping code changes. One question has come up relates to the UDC; they will still put conditions on items regarding wood mulch and have the ability to provide a recommendation on a certain project or property. He recommend that the UDC provide articulation on why they are recommending wood mulch in lieu of stone; this body working with a registered landscape architect can make a recommendation. The memo for the Plan Commission did describe specific situations. There was question on the public comment/photos submitted to the Commission, specifically Sequoya Commons (they are unsure what was approved).

Comments and questions from the Commission were as follows:

- Do not support the change from wood mulch. This body should not allow for stone mulch.
  - (Tucker) You need to deliver a recommendation to the Plan Commission.
- Provide the public comment that was sent. Bring forward as a variance for stone mulch, site-specific reasons.
- Want to be clear where we stand. We are not likely to EVER recommend a project with stone mulch.
- There is a place for it, but not where plants are. Cannot keep anything alive. Sometimes put it next to a building to keep things from growing and holding water. Appropriate for a rock garden.
- Agree this would have to be an exception – request a variance.
  - (Tucker) Variances are rarely approved. The applicant has to present a valid hardship.
- Exceptions would have to come to the UDC. Not use the word variance.
  - (Tucker) An exception to the Zoning Code goes before Common Council.

- What is the definition of mulch in the code? If talking hard surface, i.e. at base of building, what is mulch within landscaped areas?
  - (Tucker) That falls under landscape beds.
- If it is a landscaped area, then no stone mulch.
- Appropriate use is questionable.
  - (Tucker) The code says “can use stone at a minimum of 2” deep with fabric.”

**ACTION:**

On a motion by O’Kroley, seconded by Braun-Oddo, the Urban Design Commission **RECOMMENDED** the following:

1. The Commission does not support use of stone as a mulch in any case. Do not support the ordinance change.
2. Add a provision to the zoning text that the UDC can require wood mulch on projects under our review.
3. If the Plan Commission does allow stone mulch, a special review is required for any exceptions.
4. Forward email public comments from Landscape Architects to Plan Commission and Common Council.

The motion was passed on a vote of (5-0).