

Article 10 LANDSCAPING and SCREENING

Section 10.1 Purpose

It is the purpose of this Article is to establish standards and requirements to assure adequate landscaping and screening so that land uses minimize noise, air, and visual pollution; enhance the appearance of off-street parking, other vehicular use areas and the township in general, in association with new development and modifications to existing landscapes; assure adequate buffering between differing uses; support the desired community character along property adjoining public rights-of-way; prevent soil erosion and soil depletion; and protect and preserve the appearance, character, and value of the community as a whole.

Section 10.2 Uses Subject to this Article

The requirements of this Article shall apply to those uses for which site plan approval is required under Article 14, Site Plan Review, and any other use so specified in this Ordinance. This Article shall not apply to single family and two-family dwellings.

Section 10.3 Landscape Plan Required

A. A landscape plan is required to be submitted as part of a site plan according to Article 14. The plan shall be prepared at a minimum scale of 1" = 100' and shall identify all buffer areas (see Sections 10.4 and 10.5). The landscape plan shall include, but not necessarily be limited to, the clear delineation of the following:

1. Proposed plant location, spacing, size, common and botanical name, and growth habit of each plant type proposed.
2. Identification of grass and other proposed ground cover, including common and botanical name.
3. Existing and proposed contours at no greater than two-foot (2') contours, and construction details for berms.
4. Planting and staking details in either text or drawing form to ensure proper installation of proposed plant materials, including construction details to resolve specific site conditions such as tree wells to preserve existing trees.
5. Identification of existing trees and vegetative cover to be preserved.
6. Proposed maintenance program for the continued care and health of plant material.

Section 10.4 Landscaping/Screening Buffer Areas

A. Side and Rear Yard Buffer Areas: A landscaping/screening buffer area shall be established along all side and rear lot lines. The buffer area shall not be used for off-street parking, storage or used in any other manner except for the purposes of a buffer.

1. **Width:** The buffer area shall extend from the respective lot line for a minimum width of twenty (20) feet except that the minimum buffer width in Commercial and Industrial Districts shall be ten (10) feet when adjacent to a lot in a Commercial or Industrial District.
2. **Plant Material:** The buffer area shall be planted and maintained with evergreen trees such as spruce, pines, or firs, and deciduous trees, and shrubs. While such plantings need not be evenly spaced within the buffer, the trees shall be provided at a rate of a minimum of one (1) evergreen tree per thirty (30) linear feet, one (1) deciduous tree per fifty (50) linear feet, and one (1) shrub per ten (10) linear feet. Where a solid wall or fence is part of the buffer area, a minimum of fifty percent (50%) of the required plantings shall be located on the exterior side of such wall or fence.
3. **Berm, Wall and/or Fence:** The buffer area shall include a minimum five (5) foot high berm or solid wall or fence, or a combination thereof, where the site plan approving body determines that the plantings required by subsection (2) does not adequately mitigate negative impacts. In the case where a berm, wall and/or fence is required or otherwise provided, the site plan approving body may reduce the required plantings by no greater than fifty percent (50%).
 - a. A berm or solid wall or fence, or combination thereof, shall not be required along any portion of a lot line where there exists such features in the immediate adjacent yard area on the adjacent lot unless the site plan approving body determines during site plan review proceedings that such additional buffering measures are necessary.
4. **Corner Lot:** In the case of a corner lot, the buffer requirements of this subsection (A) shall equally apply to the side yard adjacent to a road.

B. Front Yard Buffer Areas: A landscaping/screening buffer area shall be established along all front lot lines. The buffer area shall not be used for off-street parking, storage or in any other manner except for the purposes of a buffer.

1. **Width:** The buffer area shall extend from the front lot line for a minimum distance equal to the required front yard setback according to Table 3-4 of Article 3, except where off-street parking may be permitted according to Article 9.
2. **Plant Material:** The buffer area shall be landscaped with a minimum of one (1) deciduous or evergreen tree for each fifty (50) lineal feet, or portion thereof, of frontage adjoining the road right-of-way. The remainder of the front yard buffer area shall be landscaped in grass, shrubs, trees and/or other ground cover. Access ways through required buffer areas shall be permitted, but such access ways shall not be subtracted from the lineal dimension used to determine the minimum number of required trees.

Section 10.5 Parking Lot Landscaping and Screening

A. General Landscaping: There shall be provided a minimum of one (1) deciduous tree for every eight (8) parking spaces or fifty (50) linear feet of parking lot edge, whichever is greater. Such trees shall be located within parking islands and/or within twenty (20) feet of the edge of the parking lot. A minimum distance of five (5) feet shall be maintained between proposed tree or shrub plantings and the edge of curbing and pavement.

B. Screening: Where a parking lot contains six (6) or more parking spaces and is within view of an existing dwelling, public road, or Residential District, a berm, fence, wall and/or vegetative screen shall be installed to screen views to the parking area. All berms and plant material, either individually or in combination, shall be of such height and spacing to provide a minimum fifty percent (50%) screen of the parking lot border between the height of one (1) foot to four (4) feet above the ground at the time of berm and/or plant material installation. Shrub materials shall be of evergreen or otherwise densely-branched screening character and shall have a growth habit so as to provide for a minimum eighty (80%) screen of the parking lot border between the height of one (1) foot to four (4) feet above the ground within three (3) years of berm and/or plant material installation. The applicant shall supplement plantings as necessary to ensure compliance with the required eighty percent (80%) screen, within six (6) months of notification by the Zoning Administrator.

Section 10.6 General Site Landscaping

In addition to the other landscaping and screening required by this Article, a minimum of one (1) additional tree shall be planted for each three thousand (3,000) square feet of impervious surface to be established on the lot including paved surfaces and buildings. Plantings may be uniformly spaced, clustered, and/or randomly scattered. Any remaining unpaved areas within the developed portion of the site shall be planted with grass, ground cover, shrubbery, or other suitable live plant material.

Section 10.7 Platted Subdivision and Site Condominium Landscaping

A. Lot Landscaping: In the case of a platted subdivision or site condominium development and irrespective of whether it is of a residential or non-residential character, a minimum of two (2) trees shall be provided on each lot within the front yard and no greater than sixty (60) feet from one another. The landscape plan submitted as part of a site plan shall identify the proposed trees according to Section 10.3.

B. Other Landscaping: In the case of a platted subdivision or site condominium development and irrespective of whether it is of a residential or non-residential character, amenity facilities such as recreation areas and community buildings shall be landscaped in a manner so as to enhance the visual character of such amenity areas and their compatibility with adjacent properties. The landscape plan submitted as part of a site plan shall identify such landscaping according to Section 10.3.

Section 10.8 Minimum Standards of Landscape Elements

A. Plant Material Quality and Composition: Required plant material shall be living, free of insects and diseases, and hardy to the central Michigan climate. Plant species that are generally considered undesirable due to limited disease tolerance, low wood strength and/or high wood-splitting tendencies, such as boxelder, mulberry, poplar, silver maple and willows, are prohibited unless specifically authorized by the site plan approving body based on the manner in which the plant material is to be used or located. A mixture of plant material shall be required to protect against insect and disease infestation.

B. Plant Material Size: Unless specified otherwise in this Ordinance, required plant material shall comply with the following size standards:

1. Deciduous Shade Trees: Minimum of two and one-half (2.5) inches in caliper measured four (4) feet above the ground elevation at the time of planting, and with the first branch a minimum of four (4) feet above the ground elevation when planted.
2. Deciduous Ornamental Trees: Minimum of one and one-half (1.5) inches in caliper measured six (6) inches above the ground elevation, with a minimum height of four (4) feet above the ground elevation when planted.
3. Evergreen Trees: Minimum of six (6) feet in height and with a minimum spread of three (3) feet at the time of planting.
4. Shrubs: Two (2) feet in height at time of planting except that intentional low growing shrubs shall have a minimum spread of twenty-four (24) inches when planted.

C. Ground Covers: Ground cover used in lieu of turf grasses in whole or in part shall be planted in such a manner as to present a finished appearance and a minimum fifty percent (50%) coverage after two (2) complete growing seasons.

D. Grasses: Grass areas shall be planted using species normally grown as permanent lawns in central Michigan. Grass, sod, and seed shall be clean and free of weeds, pests, and diseases. Grass may be sodded, plugged, sprigged or seeded. When grass is to be established by a method other than complete sodding or seeding, nurse grass seed shall be sown for immediate effect and protection until complete coverage is otherwise achieved. Straw or other mulch shall be used to protect newly seeded areas.

E. Berms: Berms shall be constructed with slopes no steeper than one (1) foot of vertical rise for each three (3) feet of horizontal run (33 percent slope), with a minimum three (3) foot flat area on top. Berms may undulate in height, subject to review and approval of berm design as shown on the site plan. Berms shall be graded in a manner that will blend with existing topography, shall be graded smooth, and shall be appropriately sodded, seeded, and mulched, or planted. Berms shall be planted with sod, ground cover, or other suitable live plant material to protect it from erosion and to retain its height and shape. Berms shall be constructed to ensure proper site drainage and the avoidance of ponding.

F. Fences, Walls and Other Manufactured Landscape Elements

1. General Requirements: All required or otherwise proposed fencing, walls and other manufactured landscape elements shall be constructed and maintained in a sound manner to assure long-term structural integrity and visual character. Site plans shall include all necessary construction details to illustrate compliance with this requirement.
2. Specific Requirements:
 - a. Walls and fences shall be constructed so as to be a minimum of eighty percent (80%) opaque and no open portion shall exceed one (1) sq. ft. in area.
 - b. The finished side of fencing and walls shall face abutting properties.
 - c. Walls shall be constructed of brick, poured concrete with a simulated brick or stone pattern, or be of similar construction that offers enhanced texture features and/or otherwise lessens the visual mass of the wall.
 - d. See also Section 20.9 for additional provisions regarding fences and walls.

Section 10.9 Installation, Maintenance and Completion

A. Installation and Timing

1. General: All landscaping and landscape elements shall be planted, and earth moving or grading performed, in a sound workmanlike manner and according to accepted good planting and grading procedures. Trees, shrubs, hedges, and vines shall be mulched to a minimum depth of four inches (4") at the time of planting.
2. Timing of Landscape Improvements: All landscaping required by this Ordinance shall be planted prior to obtaining a Certificate of Occupancy or, where the applicant can demonstrate to the Zoning Administrator that seasonal conditions prohibit the installation of the plant material prior to desired occupancy, the plant material shall be installed within six months of receipt of such Certificate.
3. Performance Guarantee for Delayed Plantings: If development is completed during the off-season when plants cannot be installed, the owner shall provide a performance guarantee to ensure installation of required landscaping in the next planting season, in accordance with Section 2.8.

B. Protection of New Landscaping: Landscaping shall be protected from vehicles through use of curbs or wheel stops in parking lots. Landscape areas shall be elevated above the pavement to a height that is adequate to protect the plants from snow removal, salt, and other hazards.

C. Protection of Existing Plant Material: If an approved site plan identifies existing plant material to be preserved, to remain, or to otherwise be undisturbed, protective measures should be implemented such as the placement of fencing or stakes at the dripline around each tree. No vehicle or other construction equipment shall be parked or stored within the dripline of any tree or other plant material intended to be saved.

1. **Replacement of Damaged Plant Material:** In the event that healthy plant materials which are intended to meet the requirements of the Ordinance are cut down, damaged or destroyed during construction, said plant material shall be replaced with the same species as the damaged or removed plant material, in accordance with the following schedule, unless otherwise approved by the Zoning Administrator based on consideration of the site and building configuration, available planting space, and other pertinent considerations:
 - a. A damaged tree with a caliper of six (6) inches or less, measured four (4) feet above the ground elevation, shall be replaced with two (2) trees with a minimum caliper of two and one-half inches (2.5") measured four (4) feet above the ground elevation.
 - b. A damaged tree with a caliper greater than six inches, measured four (4) feet above the ground elevation, shall be replaced with one (1) tree with a minimum caliper of two and one-half inches (2.5") measured four (4) feet above the ground elevation for each four inches (4") of caliper of fraction thereof of the damaged tree.

D. Maintenance: Landscaping required by this Ordinance shall be maintained in a healthy, neat, and orderly appearance, free from refuse and debris. Plant material shall be watered as necessary to ensure health and disease resistance. Unhealthy and dead material shall be replaced within one (1) month of notice by the Zoning Administrator unless the season is not appropriate for planting, in which case such plant material shall be replaced at the beginning of the next planting season. Constructed or manufactured landscape elements, such as but not limited to benches, retaining walls, edging, and so forth, shall be maintained in good condition and neat appearance. Rotted, deteriorated, or damaged landscape elements shall be repaired or replaced.

Section 10.10 Modifications of Landscape and Screening Provisions

A. Modifications Authorized: The site plan approving body may modify the specific requirements of this Article according to subsection (B).

B. Basis for Modifications: Modifications may be granted where the site plan approving body finds that such modifications are in keeping with the intent of this Article and Ordinance in general. In determining whether a modification is appropriate, the site plan approving body shall consider whether the following conditions exist:

1. Topographic features or other unique features of the site create conditions such that strict application of the landscape regulations would result in a less effective and/or unnecessary screen than an alternative proposal.
2. Parking, vehicular circulation, or land use are such that required landscaping would not enhance the site or result in the desired screening or visual enhancement effect.
3. Proposed modifications to the lot impact only a small portion of the lot and landscape improvements to only limited portions of the lot are appropriate.
4. The public benefit intended by the landscape regulations could be better-achieved with a plan that varies from the strict requirements of the Ordinance.

End of Article 10