Excerpt From

Staff Report

Landscaping Standards Review Proposal

November 22, 2011

Background:
At a Council workshop on September 20, 2011, staff gave Council a presentation on current landscaping issues which outlined some of the more common complaints regarding the City’s landscaping standards and illustrated various problems and successes in incorporating landscaping into development sites and streetscapes. Staff provided alternative approaches to addressing these landscaping issues, including the following:

- Maintain status quo. This option would retain current standards with no increased efforts in enforcement of violations of current standards.

- Retain and enforce the City’s current standards.

- Eliminate the current landscaping standards.

- Amend the current standards to address identified issues.

After review of the PowerPoint presentation, Council members agreed that there were problems with current landscaping approaches, such as the types of trees selected for various site conditions, the need to coordinate other site improvements with landscaping (e.g., parking and utilities), and issues associated with long-term maintenance of landscaping after initial installation. Council discussed possible approaches to the problem, such as looking at other ways of reducing heat-island effect, looking at how landscaping can be incorporated into and coordinated with storm water management, considering how landscaping might be clustered in some situations rather than spread throughout the site, applying different landscaping standards to different uses, and considering whether the related issue of parking requirements should also be addressed. Council expressed a desire to look at this issue in a way that makes requirements sustainable and creates flexibility between parking and landscaping while moving toward other goals of aesthetic appeal from foliage in the community, progressive storm water management, and minimizing irrigation.

Council then discussed creating a workgroup to consider these issues. This group would include a developer, a landscape architect, someone experienced in storm water management and how landscaping might contribute to absorption of water in green spaces, and a landscape maintenance person experienced in managing successfully landscaped areas.
In response, staff committed to chart out a process and bring it back to Council to verify that it reflects Council’s desires. Accordingly, the following list of issues, process, and workgroup make-up is being presented for Council’s consideration:

**Current Objectives For Landscaping:**
As part of this review, staff pulled together the following list of stated objectives in both the Zoning Code and the Land Use Policy Plan (LUPP). Broadly speaking, these objectives are intended to protect and promote public health, safety, and the general welfare. They are paraphrased for easy reading, but can all be found within the identified sections of the Zoning Code or LUPP. Staff suggests that the Council review these objectives and determine if they are relevant as policy guidance for this review process:

- Reduce the effects of wind and air turbulence.
- Reduce the effects of heat and noise.
- Reduce the effects of automobile lights.
- Preserve ground water strata.
- Act as a natural drainage system.
- Ameliorate storm water drainage problems.
- Reduce the level of carbon dioxide and return oxygen to the atmosphere.
- Prevent soil erosion.
- Conserve and stabilize property values.
- Facilitate the creation of a convenient, attractive, and harmonious community.
- Relieve the blight of the appearance of surface parking lots.
- Generally preserve a healthful and pleasant environment.
- Achieve greater conservation of natural resources and compatibility between development and the environment.
- Provide biodiversity through the inclusion of plant and animal habitats.
- Provide landscape shade for all streets and sidewalks in Village Residential areas.
- Integrate building and development design in Suburban Residential areas with emphasis on landscaping as a buffer element at the edge of different land use types.
- Install sufficient landscaped buffers in Suburban Residential areas to create an effective edge between different land use densities.
- Enhance the yard area of apartment buildings and soften the impact of the building from the street and from nearby residential areas.
- Include landscaping and screening to ensure that the land use relationship between commercial activity in Convenience Commercial Nodes and the adjacent residential land uses will be compatible.
- Provide, protect and maintain all landscaping in a healthy growing condition, and replace when necessary.
Issues to be Addressed:
Based upon the information provided to the Council at the September 20th workshop and the feedback received from the Council at that workshop, staff has prepared the following list of tasks to serve as a framework for a review of this important topic.

- Determine if existing landscaping standards are in line with stated objectives in terms of:
  - Tree & shrub spacing and quantity requirements.
  - Minimum widths of landscape areas
  - Specified minimum planting sizes
  - Limitations on use of rock as mulch

- Determine the best means of utilizing landscaping to reduce heat-island effect of urban areas.

- Identify means of coordinating landscaping into storm water control.

- Explore alternative and flexible means of distributing required landscaping throughout the site.

- Explore implications of zone-specific landscaping standards.

- Assess how current standards affect development of different parcel sizes.

- Develop a list of plant species best suited to various micro-climates and conditions. E.g., areas of:
  - Inundation (e.g., swales and flood-prone areas)
  - Snow storage
  - Salt and/or sand
  - Poor soil conditions
  - Little or no irrigation
  - Heavy foot traffic

- Identify measures that ensure ease of maintenance and long-term viability of landscaped areas.

- Balance other landscaping objectives with objectives of CPTED Standards (Crime Prevention through Environmental Design)

- Assess on-site parking needs and parking requirements and see if they are in balance with landscaping requirements and objectives.

- Ensure that the Council’s approved objectives in the LUPP and Zoning Code pertaining to landscaping are accomplished.