CHAPTER 29 ARTICLE 403

29.403 Landscaping Standards

Purpose:
The purpose of this section is to protect and promote the public health, safety and general welfare by requiring landscaping in relation to development of property in such a manner to ameliorate effects of wind, heat, and glare; to act as a valuable component of natural drainage systems, to improve storm water runoff quality, to help clean and refresh air by returning oxygen to the atmosphere, to conserve and stabilize property values through screening of incompatible uses and activities, and to promote a healthy and aesthetically interesting natural environment as part of the City to create an attractive and desirable community for the City’s many visitors, residents, and employees.

Non-Residential Landscaping Standards
Non-residential landscaping standards are designed to be applied on commercial, industrial or other non-residential sites. The minimum areas required to be landscaped are listed in the Zone Development Standards Tables for Base Zones. In the case of Special Purpose Districts and Overlay Zones, landscaping, screening and buffer standards are set forth in the applicable Article. Required landscaping and screening of Article IV must meet the levels referenced in each applicable Zone Development Standards Table, supplemental standards, and general development standards of Chapter 29.

A. Front Yard Landscaping

Front yard landscaping standards are designed to provide decorative and well thought out landscaping between streets and parking lots and between streets and non-residential buildings. These landscape standards are a combination of low level decorative plantings and significant trees arranged in various styles that complement and enhance the general site. The front yard, for the purposes of calculating front yard landscaping, is defined as the area between the building and any abutting street and the area between the street and a parking area.

1. Front Yard Planting Requirements
   a. The landscaped front yard for parking lots shall be a minimum of 10 feet in depth from the property line to the first edge of paving unless the base zone specifies a greater setback. The Planning Director may approve a reduction in the front yard planter area depth to 7 feet in certain circumstances in order that a site may achieve dimensional requirements of parking stalls for required parking. When a reduction is approved, the minimum landscaped area shall be calculated by the original 10 foot requirement. The maximum depth of landscaped front yard for the purpose of calculating landscaping is 30 feet.

   b. The minimum landscaped front yard in relation to buildings shall conform to the requirements of the base zone. The maximum depth of landscaped front yard for the purpose of calculating landscaping is 30 feet.

![Diagram of front yard landscaping standards](image_url)
c. The front yard landscaped area requires minimum base plantings of 1 overstory tree per 50 lineal feet of street frontage and for the plantings of a combination of 8 shrubs and 12 decorative grasses per 1,000 square feet of required front yard area. The front yard area is calculated across the entire frontage of a site regardless of interruptions, such as walkways, encroachments, or driveways.

Alternatively, substitution planting choices may be approved by the Planning Director as outlined below. Additionally, if overhead utilities are in place, the Planning Director may approve for overstory trees to be substituted with alternative locations for planting of trees or for the planting of smaller trees. The property owner may propose substitute planting plans for the trees and shrubs as follows.

2. Alternative Front Yard Plantings

In order to promote design interest and diversity, a property owner may propose substitution of landscaping to enhance the front yard area. Substitutions that promote sustainability, color and texture are desirable. Arrangement of plantings and use of substitution landscaping that diminish any necessary parking lot screening effects will not be approved.

a. Front yard plantings must contain a minimum of four (4) overstory trees within each front yard of a site before allowing for substitutions. For sites that exceed 200 linear feet of frontage, ornamental trees may be substituted at a rate of 2 for every 1 overstory tree for every required tree after the first four trees. No more than 50% of the total trees planted to meet 1 per 50 linear foot standard shall be ornamental. For example, a 300 foot frontage would require either 6 overstory trees or as few as 4 overstory trees and 4 ornamental trees. A 500 foot frontage would require 10 overstory trees or as few as 7 overstory trees and 6 ornamental trees.

i. Evergreen trees may be used in place of ornamental trees. No more than 30% of the total trees shall be evergreen trees unless specifically required to assist in screening of a site.

b. Storm Water Treatment Features

When a site includes a landscaped based stormwater treatment feature of a bio-cell, rain garden, or bio-swale, an alternative configuration of ground cover and shrubs and grasses can be approved when the design provides for storm water quality treatment and includes plantings with visual interest within and along the feature.

c. Shrub/Grass Substitutions

i. Front yard shrub or ornamental grass plantings may be substituted by up to 5% of the total plantings with flower species of similar size or coverage.

ii. Large landscaped undulations or berms may be incorporated into the landscape design with an allowance for a 35% reduction in required plantings of shrubs and grasses.

iii. Additional Ornamental grasses may be substituted for shrubs at a 3 grass to 1 ratio. No more than 75% of required front yard decorative plantings may be ornamental grasses.

iv. Decorative landscape planters with decorative ground covers, flower beds, or similar plantings with interesting color and textures may be substituted at a rate of 40 square feet for 4 shrubs or 6 grasses.
c. Design and Configuration

Required front yard landscaping is encouraged to take on a variety of configurations including clustering, layered rows, alternating patterns or other designs. Front yard plantings are to be arranged in manner that is well dispersed throughout the yard area and includes clustering of vegetation for interest and to address needs of parking lot screening. However, some landscaping shall be dispersed throughout a yard and not all materials may be shifted or concentrated to one area of the yard. Planting may be provided in any areas between the building or parking lot and the street when the landscaping is primarily arranged to be visible from the street or upon immediate entry to a site. When parking lots and buildings are set well back from the street, more than 50 feet from a street, a minimum of 80% of the required landscaping should be placed in the first 50 feet of the site to ensure visibility and enhancement of the site along the street. In circumstances where there is a constraint on plantings due to space, the front yard landscaping may be placed in areas near side property lines, wrapped around buildings, or placed within parking lot islands closest to the front yard.

d. Diversity requirements

Required front yard landscaping must contain no more than 50% of one type of plant family per plant family. A minimum of 4 types of plants per required plant family are required in a yard area. A plant family is defined as a shrub, tree or grass.

Landscaping Requirements for Surface Parking and Loading Areas.

Parking lot landscaping standards are designed to provide an aesthetically pleasing parking lot design combined with the support and encouragement of sustainability through increased shading from trees and allowing for stormwater treatment design within parking lots.

1. Surface Parking Lot Landscaped Area
   a. Parking lots must contain landscaped area equal to 10% of the total gross parking lot and loading areas. The total gross area of a parking lot is defined as the gross area of the paved surface measured from the back of the curb.
   b. Overstory shade trees must be planted at a rate of 1 tree for every 200 square feet of required landscape area. Trees must be dispersed across the entire parking lot area and not over concentrated to any one area of the parking lot.
      1. All shade trees must be planted in landscape planters/islands no less than 150 square feet in area.
   c. Perimeter planters abutting a parking lot that are 5 feet in depth or greater may count towards the 10% area requirements. Note that to meet the dispersal requirement a site may need to exceed 10% landscaped area in and abutting a site.
      1. Perimeter parking tree planter areas must be at least 7 feet in depth in any one direction may satisfy the tree planting requirement.
      2. If parking lot landscaping is placed in perimeter parking areas the landscaping must be located within 10 feet of the edge of paving to count towards the required 10% area.
   d. Front yard landscaping shall not count toward parking lot landscaping. Evergreen trees are not permitted as a required parking lot landscape tree.
   e. The Planning Director may waive up to 10% of required parking stalls within parking lots that exceed 30 spaces to increase landscape area.
f. The Planning Director may approve a reduction of up to three required parking stalls to accommodate a vehicular cross-access route to adjoining properties.

2. Perimeter Parking Lot Landscaping and Bufferyards
   a. Side and rear perimeter bufferyard landscaping is required for screening of the parking lot and use of a site when it abuts a dissimilar use or zoning.
      1. When abutting a residential site high screen standard shall be applied (add cross reference). In some circumstances the base zone may require additional width or a greater level of buffering.
      2. During Site Development Plan review the City may require additional bufferyard plantings when a commercial zoned or industrially zoned lot is used for a dissimilar use.
   b. When a perimeter buffer is not required, parking areas must be setback a minimum of three from all side and rear property lines.
   c. Perimeter planter areas are required to be landscaped. Planter areas less than five feet in width shall not include turf grass.

3. Parking Lot Medians
   In addition to the 10% landscaped area requirement, a landscaped median is required for every 3 continuous double loaded parking drive aisles.
   a. A required median must be a minimum of 15 feet wide with a minimum length equal to the average drive aisle length of the double loaded aisles.
   b. A landscaped median must include 1 overstory shade tree for every 50 linear feet of median. The trees must be located within an area that is a minimum of 7 feet in any one direction and totals 150 sq. ft. of area with impervious surfaces.
   c. Landscaped medians must include a minimum of 30% of the area of the median landscaped with ornamental or decorative landscaping that does not include turf.
   d. The median may include a walkway when it does not encroach upon the placement of trees.
   e. Landscape medians may be configured into oversized landscape islands with a minimum size of 400 square feet for each island and a total area of all oversized islands that equal the required area of the median. The oversized islands must be located within the parking lot and may not be configured along perimeter of a parking lot.

4. Stormwater Treatment Credit in Parking Lots
   If treating stormwater within a parking lot landscaped area, the required parking lot landscaping in this ordinance may be substituted by up to 20%. To be eligible for this reduction, the storm water treatment features must treat at least 30% of total site storm water volume needed to meet storm water quality standards of Chapter 5b. The storm water measures must be within or abutting the parking lot as part of a bio-swale, rain garden or other bio-retention treatment process. Detention ponds are excluded from this consideration.

5. Parking Overhang Allowance
   In circumstances where a reduced parking stall depth is desired an 18 inch overhang allowance may be granted to allow for a parking stall depth of no less than 17.5 feet (17 foot stall plus 6 inch curb) An overhang allowance is not permitted for compact parking spaces. (Note this will be added to the parking section)

6. Loading Areas
   As part of the parking lot requirements, a loading area shall require landscaping equal to 10% of the loading area. The required landscape area shall be provided adjacent to or in the impervious
space where the loading area is located. A loading area is defined as an impervious area used for maneuvering vehicles but not considered parking or drive aisle.

7. Detention Ponds
Detention ponds must be unfenced and contain decorative landscaping elements such as tiered retaining walls, decorative rock features and plantings to be eligible to be counted toward base zone landscape percentage. On ‘wet’ detention ponds the area of water may not count towards the base zone landscape percentage.

**Landscaping Requirements for Apartment Dwellings.**

A. Front Yard
Front yard landscaping standards are designed to provide decorative and well thought out landscaping between streets and parking lots and between streets and non-residential buildings. These landscape standards are a combination of low level decorative plantings and significant trees arranged in various styles that complement and enhance the general site. The front yard, for the purposes of calculating front yard landscaping, is defined as the area between the building and any abutting street and the area between the street and a parking area.

1. Front Yard Planting Requirements
   a. The minimum landscaped front yard setback for buildings shall conform to the requirements of the base zone for principal buildings.
   
   b. Parking in residential areas may not be between the building and the street. The landscaped front yard for parking lots shall be a minimum depth equal to the building setback of the zone measured from the property line to the first edge of paving. The maximum depth of landscaped front yard for the purpose of calculating landscaping is 30 feet.
   
   c. The minimum front yard landscaped area requires base plantings of 1 overstory tree per 50 lineal feet of street frontage. Up to 50% of required trees may be substituted at the following ratios:
      - Two (2) ornamental (understory) trees, or
      - Two (2) evergreen trees, or
      - One (1) ornamental (understory) tree and one (1) evergreen tree
   
   d. Front yards between the street and parking lot require a planting density that provide for a moderate level of screening with 12 shrubs per 50 linear feet of street frontage associated with parking areas. A pro rata share of plantings may be substituted with ornamental grasses at a 3 to 1 ratio of grasses to shrubs it provides for visual interest and the desired level of screening. No more than 75% of required front yard decorative plantings may be ornamental grasses.
   
   e. Front yards between buildings and streets and areas elsewhere in the front yard require the planting of shrubs at a rate of 9 shrubs with a mix of deciduous and evergreen for every 50 linear feet.
      
      Up to 35% of required shrubs can be substituted with ornamental grass. A mix of shrub types is required between evergreen and deciduous. At least 40% of the required plantings must be located within 15 feet of the building foundation. Uniform spacing along the foundation with a single row of plantings is discouraged, grouping and designated planter areas are preferred for the building front yard landscaping.
      
      The Planning Director may approve decorative planter beds in lieu of some of the required plantings.
f. If overhead utilities are in place the Planning Director may approve for overstory trees to be substituted with alternative locations for planting of trees or for the planting of smaller trees.

g. Required front yard trees may be placed within the public right-of-way if there is a City standard parking area along the street frontage and there are no street trees are located along the frontage of the site and no overhead utilities are in place. The Planning Director in consultation with the Streets and Maintenance Manager, or designee, must approve the proposed tree species as appropriate to the City’s street tree standards and its placement.

h. Large landscaped undulations or berms may be incorporated into the landscape design with an allowance for a 35% reduction in required plantings of shrubs and grasses.

i. When a site includes a landscaped based stormwater treatment feature of a bio-cell, rain garden, or bio-swale, an alternative configuration of ground cover and shrubs and grasses can be approved when the design provides for storm water quality treatment and includes plantings with visual interest within and along the feature.

e. Design and Configuration
Required front yard landscaping are encourage to take on a variety of configurations including clustering, layered rows, alternating patterns or other designs. However, some landscaping shall be dispersed throughout a yard and not all materials may be shifted or concentrated to one area of the yard. In circumstances where there is a constraint on plantings due to space, the front yard landscaping may be placed in areas near side property lines, wrapped around buildings, or placed within parking lot islands closest to the front yard if additional space for required plantings is necessary.

f. Diversity requirements
Required front yard landscaping must contain no more than 50% of one type of plant family per plant family. A minimum of 4 types of plants per required plant family are required in a yard area.

2. Landscaping Requirements For Surface Parking Lots.

Parking lot landscaping standards are designed to provide an aesthetically pleasing parking lot design combined with the support and encouragement of sustainability through increased shading from trees and allowing for stormwater treatment design within parking lots.

8. Surface Parking Lot Landscaped Area

g. Parking lots must contain landscaped area equal to 10% of the total gross parking lot and loading areas. The total gross area of a parking lot is defined as the gross area of the paved surface measured from the back of the curb.

h. Overstory shade trees must be planted at a rate of 1 tree for every 200 square feet of required landscape area. Trees must be dispersed across the entire parking lot area and not over concentrated to any one area of the parking lot.
   i. All shade trees must be planted in landscape planters/islands no less than 150 square feet in area.

i. Perimeter planters abutting a parking lot that are 5 feet in depth or greater may count towards the 10% area requirements. Note that to meet the dispersal requirement a site may need to exceed 10% landscaped area in and abutting a site.
   1. Perimeter parking tree planter areas must be at least 7 feet in depth in any one direction may satisfy the tree planting requirement.
2. If parking lot landscaping is placed in perimeter parking areas the landscaping must be located within 10 feet of the edge of paving to count towards the required 10% area.

j. Front yard landscaping shall not count toward parking lot landscaping. Evergreen trees are not permitted as a required parking lot landscape tree.

k. The Planning Director may waive up to 10% of required parking stalls within parking lots that exceed 30 spaces to increase landscape area.

l. The Planning Director may approve a reduction of up to three required parking stalls to accommodate a vehicular cross-access route to adjoining properties.

9. Perimeter Parking Lot Landscaping and Bufferyards

d. High Screen Side and rear perimeter bufferyard landscaping is required for screening of the parking lot and use of a site. See general requirements below.

10. Parking Lot Medians

In addition to the 10% landscaped area requirement, a landscaped median is required for every 3 continuous double loaded parking drive aisles.

f. A required median must be a minimum of 15 feet wide with a minimum length equal to the average drive aisle length of the double loaded aisles.

g. A landscaped median must include 1 overstory shade tree for every 50 linear feet of median. The trees must be located within an area that is a minimum of 7 feet in any one direction and totals 150 sq. ft. of area with impervious surfaces.

h. Landscaped medians must include a minimum of 30% of the area of the median landscaped with ornamental or decorative landscaping that does not include turf.

i. The median may include a walkway when it does not encroach upon the placement of trees.

j. Landscape medians may be configured into oversized landscape islands with a minimum size of 400 square feet for each island and a total area of all oversized islands that equal the required area of the median. The oversized islands must be located within the parking lot and may not be configured along perimeter of a parking lot.

11. Stormwater Treatment Credit in Parking Lots

If treating stormwater within a parking lot landscaped area, the required parking lot landscaping in this ordinance may be substituted by up to 20%. To be eligible for this reduction, the storm water treatment features must treat at least 30% of total site storm water volume needed to meet storm water quality standards of Chapter 5b. The storm water measures must within or abutting the parking lot as part of a bioswale, rain garden or other bio-retention treatment process. Detention ponds are excluded from this consideration.

12. Parking Overhang Allowance

In circumstances where a reduced parking stall depth is desired an 18 inch overhang allowance may be granted to allow for a parking stall depth of no less than 17.5 feet (17 foot stall plus 6 inch curb). An overhang allowance is not permitted for compact parking spaces.

13. Loading Areas

As part of the parking lot requirements, a loading area shall require landscaping equal to 10% of the loading area. The required landscape area shall be provided adjacent to or in the impervious space where the loading area is located. A loading area is defined as an impervious area used for maneuvering vehicles but not considered parking or drive aisle.

(vi) Side and Rear Yard Parking Lot High Screen.
3. **Residential Site Landscaping Standards in all other non-required landscape areas.**
   
a. In all other non-required landscape areas of a residential site there shall be 1 tree and 1 decorative landscape cluster per 2,000 square feet of area. A decorative landscape cluster must consist of shrubs and/or grasses arranged in an aesthetically pleasing manner.

b. When an apartment development consists of multiple buildings, landscaping with trees, grasses, flowers, or shrubs shall be planted in open areas and along foundations or near primary entrances.

c. Parking lots located adjacent to outlots of a subdivision may qualify for reduced landscape screening based upon the spacing and use of the adjacent outlot and the properties abutting the opposite property line of the outlot. Use of lower growing shrubs or substitution of other equivalent materials may be permitted by approval of the Planning Director.

d. Decorative Highway Landscaping. On residential sites abutting Highway 30 or Interstate 35 a landscape buffer consisting of evergreen plantings of 1 evergreen tree per 30 lineal feet of highway frontage must be provided. Plantings are not required to be placed on center. Up to 20% of the required evergreen trees may be substituted with deciduous overstory trees.

4. **Usable Open Space**

   When development exceed 40 dwelling units or 80 bedrooms, usable open space configured as gathering spaces, outdoor recreational amenities, or open area with turf usable for informal activities must be provided outside of required setbacks at rate of 80 square feet per unit. Required open space may be grouped among adjoining properties or within a common area with mutual property ownership interests. However, gathering areas or informal spaces may be required at a reduced level when the majority of area or facilities are provided in common with other sites.

**General Requirements All Sites**

The following standards are required on all residential and non-residential sites.

1. Any required planting shall be rounded up to the next whole number.

2. **Soil Quality Standards.** Soil located in required planting areas must be conditioned and tilled in the top 6 inches with at least a 5% organic compound makeup. Certification of the soil conditioning must be provided by a contractor, licensed engineer or landscape specialist.

3. **Minimum planting standards.**
   
a. **Shrubs and Grasses.** In all front yards where required, all shrub and grass minimum planting size must be no less than 18 inches in height above the soil. (Based on Type 2 container size for 3 foot growth) Any materials planted for the purpose of achieving screening shall be a variety that is a minimum 75% of the height of screened facility with the ability to mature to a full screening of 6 inches above the facility within three years.

b. **Buffer Yard High Screen.** In all required buffer yards, high screen shrubs must be planted at a minimum of size of 3’ feet in height above the average grade of the planter or the top of the curb in a depressed planter.

c. **Trees.** In all required tree planters, all trees must be planted with a minimum 1.5” caliper tree. Any evergreen tree must be a minimum height of 6 feet at the time of planting.

d. **Ornamental grass.** Shall be of a species that in every growing season has a height that exceeds 24 inches. Grasses that are typically less than 24 inches in height and are intended for groundcover are categorized as decorative grasses.

4. **Tree Spacing and Placement**
Trees must be planted with recognition of the space needs for eventual growth and maturity. Small to medium trees may be planted no closer than 10 feet to a building. Larger trees require a minimum spacing of 15 feet from a building. Trees are to be located within and along parking lots in a manner that does not include parking lot lights within 15 feet of the tree. Medium and large trees can be planted as close as 20 feet from another similarly sized tree.

   (i) Generally. The L3 landscape standard uses screening to provide physical and visual separation between uses or development. It is generally used in those instances where visual separation is desirable.
   (ii) Required Landscape Elements. The L3 standard requires high shrubs spaced at a maximum distance of 6 feet on center to form a screen 6 feet high. In addition, one Landscape Tree is required per 50 lineal feet of landscaped area or as appropriate to provide a tree canopy over the landscaped area. Ground cover plants must fully cover the remainder of the landscaped area. A 6-foot high wooden fence with the fence posts on the interior side unless the fence is finished on both sides may be substituted for some or all of the high shrubs. When a 6-foot high wooden fence is installed, high or low shrubs shall be planted at the rate of one shrub per 10 lineal feet and one Landscape Tree is required per 50 lineal feet or as appropriate to provide canopy over the landscape area. A 6-foot-high masonry wall may be substituted for the high shrubs spaced 6 feet on center, but the trees and ground cover plants are still required.

5. L4, High Wall Screen between Industrial and Residential Areas.
   (i) Generally. The L4 standard is intended to be used in special instances where extensive screening of both visual and noise impacts is needed to protect abutting uses in areas where there is little space for separation.
   (ii) Required Landscape Elements. The L4 standard requires an 8-foot-high masonry (but not non-decorative concrete block) wall along the interior side of the landscape area. One Landscape Tree is required per 50 lineal feet of wall or as appropriate to provide a tree canopy over the landscaped area. In addition, 3 high shrubs or 6 low shrubs are required per 30 lineal feet of wall. Ground cover plants must fully cover the remainder of the landscaped area.
   (iii) Alternative Compliance. The L4 standard can be met alternatively for sites that provide a minimum of 30 feet of separation from the property line to the use of the site by providing a berm with a minimum height of 4 feet with evergreen shrubs placed on the slope of the berm with an aesthetically pleasing density and evergreen trees planted within 10 feet of the berm.

L1 Standard- Eliminated

L2 Standard- Eliminated

6. Alternative Design Approvals
   i. Major Site Development Plan.
      A landscape plan prepared by a certified Landscape Architect with alternative design and plantings may be approved under the requirements of a major site development plan after review and approval by the City Council when found to address the purposes of the ordinance and provides for a unique or high quality landscape environment that exceeds the quality of the base standards.

   ii. The Planning Director may approve an alternative landscaping plan for unique conditions related to site constraints and topography that achieve necessary screening and aesthetic purposes of the landscape standards. The Planning Director may not approve reductions in landscaping based solely upon existence of existing vegetation on an adjacent site.

7. Required Landscaped Area Conditions
   Required landscaped areas and buffer yards must have suitable soil conditions and depth exclusive of
retaining walls, fill or other inorganic materials to permit the growth and maturity of the plant.