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Article 23 Landscape Standards and Tree Replacement

Section 23.1 Purpose

A. The intent of this article is to promote the public health, safety and welfare by establishing minimum standards for the design, installation and maintenance of landscape improvements. Landscaping is viewed as a critical element contributing to the aesthetics, development quality, stability of property values and the overall character of the city. The standards of this article are intend to help achieve a number of functional and environmental objectives such as:

1. promoting the implementation of the City Master Plan and subarea studies;
2. defining and articulating outdoor spaces and architectural elements;
3. obscuring, integrating and complementing various site elements;
4. assisting in directing safe and efficient movement of vehicular and pedestrian circulation;
5. screening headlights to reduce glare and incidental pollution;
6. reducing the physical impact between adjacent land uses;
7. provide landscape treatments that are consistent with adjacent sites and parcels within the surrounding area;
8. providing incentives to preserve quality existing plant material;
and
9. providing reasonable standards to bring developed sites, which existed prior to the adoption of these standards, into compliance with the requirements contained herein.

B. The standards contained in this article are considered the minimum necessary to achieve the objectives identified above. In several instances these standards are intentionally flexible to encourage flexibility and creative design. Additional landscaping beyond the minimum specified is encouraged to further improve the function, appearance and value of the property.

Section 23.2 Definitions

For purposes of this ordinance, the following definitions shall apply:

1. **Berm:** A mound of earth graded, shaped and improved with landscaping in such a fashion as to be used for visual and/or audible screening purposes.
2. **Buffer zone:** A strip of land often required between certain zoning districts reserved for plant material, berms, walls, or fencing singularly or in combination to serve as a visual and noise barrier.
3. **Caliper:** The diameter of a trunk measured as follows:
 - a. Existing trees are measured at four and one-half (4.5) feet above the average surrounding grade; and
 - b. Trees which are to be planted shall be measured twelve (12) inches above the average surrounding grade if the tree caliper is more than four (4) inches, or if the tree caliper is less than four (4) inches, it shall be measured at six (6) inches above the average surrounding grade.
4. **Canopy tree:** A deciduous tree whose mature height and branch structure provide foliage primarily on the upper half of the tree. The purposes of a canopy tree are to provide shade to adjacent ground areas and to enhance aesthetics.
5. **Diameter breast height (DBH):** The diameter of a trees measured at four (4) feet above the natural grade.
6. **Drip line:** An imaginary vertical line extending from the outermost branches of a tree to the ground.
7. **Greenbelt:** A landscaped area along a street between the curb or road shoulder and the front yard building or parking setback line, this area is also referred to as the front yard parking lot setback area.

8. **Hedgerow:** A row of eight (8) or more trees having a four-inch diameter or greater at a height of four (4) feet; the dripline of the trees defines the land area of the hedgerow.

9. **Landmark tree:** Any tree of stature standing alone in the open; or any woodlot tree which stands obviously apart from its neighbors by size, form or species. Trees equal to or greater than the diameters shown below will generally be considered a landmark tree regardless of location:

<i>Common Name</i>	Diameter (In Inches) at 4 Feet
American Hornbeam	8
Arborvitae	18
Ash	24
Basswood	24
Beech, American	18
Beech, Blue	8
Birch	18
Black Walnut	24
<i>Common Name</i> (Cont'd)	Diameter (In Inches) at 4 Feet (Cont'd)
Catalpa	24
Cedar, Red	12
Chestnut	18
Crabapple/Hawthorne	8
Dogwood, Flowering	8

Elm	24
Fir	18
Ginkgo	18
Hackberry	24
Hemlock	18
Hickory	18
Honey Locust	24
Kentucky Coffeetree	18
Larch/Tamarack	12
London Plane, Sycamore	24
Maple	18
Oak	18
Pine	18
Redbud	8
Sassafras	18
Serviceberry	8
Spruce	18
Sweetgum	16
Tulip Popular	24
Wild Cherry	18
Witch Hazel	8

10. **Landscaping:** The treatment of the ground surface with live plant materials normally grown in Lapeer County such as, but not limited to, grass, ground cover, trees, shrubs, vines, and other live plant material. In addition, a landscape design may include other decorative natural or processed materials, such as wood chips, crushed stone, boulders or mulch. Structural features such as fountains, pools, statues, and benches shall also be considered a part of landscaping if provided in combination with live plant material. Various landscaping related terms are defined below.

a. **Grass:** Any of a family of plants with narrow leaves normally grown as permanent lawns.

b. **Ground Cover:** Low-growing plants that form a dense, extensive growth after one complete growing season, and tend to prevent weeds and soil erosion.

c. **Parking Lot Landscaping:** Landscaped areas located in and around a parking lot in specified quantities to improve the safety of pedestrian and vehicular traffic, guide traffic movement, improve the environment and improve the appearance of the parking area and site.

d. **Planting:** A young tree, vine or shrub that would be placed on or in the ground.

e. **Screen or Screening:** A wall, wood fencing or combination of plantings of sufficient height, length, and opacity to form a visual barrier. If the screen is composed of non-living material, such material shall be compatible with materials used in construction of the main building, but in no case shall include wire fencing.

f. **Shrub:** A self-supporting, deciduous or evergreen woody plant, normally branched near the base, bushy, and less than fifteen (15) feet in height.

g. **Tree:** A self-supporting woody, deciduous or evergreen plant with a well-defined central trunk or stem which normally grows to a mature height of at least fifteen (15) feet.

h. **Ornamental Tree:** A deciduous tree which is typically grown because of its shape, flowering characteristics, or other attractive features, and which grows to a mature height of twenty five (25) feet or less.

Section 23.3 Landscape Plan Specifications

A. The requirements set forth in this article shall apply to all uses, lots, sites, and parcels which are developed, expanded or otherwise modified. A separate detailed landscape plan shall be submitted as part of the preliminary site plan review or tentative preliminary plat review process.

B. The landscape plan shall demonstrate that all requirements of this article are met and shall be prepared in accordance with the following:

1. illustrate location, spacing species, and size of proposed plant material;

2. separately identify compliance with the minimum numeric requirements for greenbelts, buffer zones, parking lot trees, detention ponds, and interior landscaping; required trees or materials cannot be double counted;

3. if applicable, identify compliance with the numeric requirements for tree replacement and preservation;

4. provide, where required by the city, typical cross sections to illustrate views from adjacent land uses and the slope, height and width of proposed berms or landscape elements;

5. identify trees and other landscape elements to be preserved;

6. delineate the location of tree protection fence and limits of grading at the perimeter of areas that to be preserved;

7. provide significant construction details to resolve specific conditions such as limits of grading adjacent to areas with trees and vegetative cover to be preserved, tree wells to preserve existing trees or culverts to maintain natural drainage patterns;

8. provide details to ensure proper installation and establishment of proposed plant material;

9. identify grass areas and other methods of ground cover; and

10. identify a landscape maintenance program including statement that all diseased, damaged or dead materials shall be replaced in accordance with standards of this ordinance.

Section 23.4 Replacement of Removed Trees

A. A tree survey is required to identify the location, species and size of existing trees within the proposed development area. Existing trees that are greater than eight (8) caliper inches shall be replaced on the site in accordance with the following standards:

1. Trees between eight (8) and eighteen (18) caliper inches shall be replaced at a rate of fifty percent (50%) of the total dbh* removed.

2. Trees greater than eighteen (18) caliper inches shall be replaced at a rate of seventy-five percent (75%) of the total dbh removed.

3. Trees greater than thirty (30) caliper inches shall be replaced at a rate of one hundred percent (100%) of the total dbh removed.

4. Trees that are dead or diseased are exempt from replacement requirements.

B. A summary table of the existing trees shall be provided and those trees that will be removed shall be indicated.

*Diameter at breast height (dbh) is the diameter measured at a height of four and one-half (4½) feet above the natural grade.

Section 23.5 Incentives to Preserve Existing Trees

The standards listed below are intended to encourage the preservation of quality and mature trees by providing credits toward required landscape components.

A. Trees intended to be preserved shall be indicated on the site plan.

B. To obtain credit, the preserved trees shall be arranged to meet the intent of this article, be of high quality, as confirmed by the city, and at least two and one-half (2½) inches caliper in size.

C. Each tree preserved that is between two and one-half (2½) inches to seven and nine-tenths (7.9) inches caliper in size shall be calculated as one (1) required tree, two (2) credits for trees with a caliper of eight (8) inches or greater.

D. The landscape plan shall include a matrix that lists required trees and credits for preserved trees.

E. During construction, tree protection fencing shall be placed ten (10)

shall be maintained with vegetative landscape material or pervious surface cover. The city may allow pedestrian pathways, driveways or parking within the dripline upon determination that the setback from the trunk is suitable to reasonably ensure protection of the tree and the public. Storage of soils or other materials during or after construction within the dripline is prohibited.

F. If trees are lost within three (3) years after completion of the construction, the property owner shall replace with new trees equal to the number of tree credits granted.

G. Tree credits may account for up to fifty percent (50%) of the required trees and be applied throughout the site.

Section 23.6 Design Standards

A. **Greenbelts.** A greenbelt shall be planted or preserved along public right-of-ways and designated frontage roads. The greenbelt is intended to provide a transition between the roadway and an existing or proposed land use. Greenbelts shall be provided in accordance with the following requirements:

1. The width of the greenbelt shall be thirty-five (35) feet in residential districts and equivalent to the minimum required parking lot setback in non-residential districts.

2. Greenbelts shall include only living materials and planting beds, except for approved sidewalks, bike paths, signs, driveways, and essential services.

3. Where sidewalks are located within the greenbelt, plant material shall be provided on each side of the pathway to provide visual and physical separation between the vehicular and pedestrian circulation.

4. The greenbelt shall contain a minimum of one (1) canopy tree and six (6) shrubs per thirty (30) linear feet, or fraction thereof, of road frontage including any openings for driveways, pathways or easements. The Planning Commission may approve the substitution of evergreen trees for up to fifty percent (50%) of the required canopy trees when appropriate in consideration of the land use and existing character of adjacent uses.

5. Ornamental trees may be used to diversify greenbelt planting requirements, provided two (2) ornamental trees shall be provided for each one (1) required canopy tree.

Single Family	none	Type B	Type A	Type B	Type A	Type A	Type A
Multiple Family	Type B	none	Type A	Type B	Type A	Type A	Type A
Manufactured Housing	Type A	Type A	none	Type A	Type A	Type A	Type A
Office	Type B	Type B	Type A	none	Type B	Type B	Type B
Medical or Municipal Use	Type A	Type A	Type A	Type B	none	Type B	Type B
Central Business District	Type A	Type A	Type A	Type B	Type B	none	Type B
Commercial	Type A	Type A	Type A	Type B	Type B	Type B	none
Industrial	Type A	Type A	Type A	Type B	Type A	Type A	Type A
Outdoor Storage Areas in Any District	Type A	Type A	Type A	Type B	Type B	Type A	Type A
Public Utility Buildings & Structures in Any District	Type A	Type A	Type A	Type A	Type A	Type A	Type A
Parking Lots	Type A	Type A	Type A	Type B	Type B	Type B	Type B

C. Parking Lot Landscaping. Parking lot landscaping shall be provided in accordance with the following standards:

1. Landscaping shall be dispersed throughout the parking lot in order to break up large expanses of pavement and assist with vehicular and pedestrian flow.

2. At least one (1) canopy tree shall be provided per eight (8) parking spaces provided.

3. All of the required parking lots trees shall be placed within the parking lot envelope as described by the area including the parking lot surface and extending ten (10) feet from the edge of the parking lot.

4. A minimum of one-third (a) of the trees shall be placed within the interior of the parking area.

5. Parking lot islands shall be curbed and be at least one hundred (100) square feet in area. Islands within parking lots having less than 100 spaces may be a minimum of ten (10) feet in width, parking areas with more than 100 spaces shall have islands at least twenty (20) feet in width. The depth of the island shall be two (2) feet shorter than an adjacent parking space.

6. Only shrubs, grass or other living ground cover shall be used to supplement trees within parking lot islands.

7. The design and layout of the parking lots shall provide appropriate pedestrian circulation and connections to perimeter pedestrian connections.

D. Detention/Retention Pond Landscaping. Ponds shall be located outside required setbacks and designed to provide a natural appearance. Detention and retention ponds shall be provided in accordance with the following standards:

1. Side slopes shall not exceed requirements that require the perimeter of the pond to be fenced.

2. One (1) canopy or evergreen tree and ten (10) shrubs are required per fifty (50) feet of pond perimeter, as measured along the top of the bank elevation. The required landscaping shall be planted in a random pattern, not limited to the top of the pond bank.

3. Where a natural landscape is found not to be particular or desirable the Planning Commission may require some type of decorative fencing.

E. **Interior Site Landscaping.** At least fifteen percent (15%) of the total site area, exclusive of rights-of-way required greenbelts, minimum number of spaces required for parking lots, detention ponds and buffers zones, shall be landscaped for all developments except detached single family homes. Site landscaping shall be located near building entrances, along building foundations, along pedestrian walkways, near service areas or as landscaped plazas. Interior site landscaping shall be provided in accordance with the following standards.

1. One (1) deciduous or one (1) evergreen tree for every four hundred (400) square feet of required site landscaping area. The Planning Commission may approve two (2) ornamental trees as the equivalent of one (1) deciduous or evergreen tree.

2. One (1) shrub for every two hundred fifty (250) feet or required site landscaping area.

F. **Residential and Site Condominium Developments.** Landscaping for single-family and multiple-family residential developments shall be provided in accordance with the following requirements:

1. Street trees shall be provided at a rate of one (1) tree per forty (40) linear feet of frontage, or thereof, along all interior roads. The Planning Commission may determine that existing trees preserved within ten (10) feet of the road edge may fulfill the street tree requirement for that portion of the road. Trees should generally be planted between the sidewalk and road curb, in consideration of intersection sight distance.

2. The landscape plan shall also include details of the cul-du-sac islands, project entrances, accessory buildings and common open space areas.

G. **Right-of-Way Landscaping.** Public right-of-ways located adjacent to required landscaped areas shall be planted with grass or other suitable living plant material and maintained by the owner or occupant of the adjacent property as if the right-of-way were part of the required landscaped areas. Tree and shrubs may be planted within the right-of-way with permission from the appropriate authority with jurisdiction over the road.

H. **Accessory Site Components.** In addition to required screens or walls, necessary site elements such as waste receptacles, air conditioner units, utility boxes and other similar components shall be appropriately screened with plant material.

Section 23.7 Specifications for Landscape Improvements and Plant Materials

A. Wall Standards. While walls are not necessarily encouraged, certain situations may be appropriate for provision of a structural screen. When provided, walls shall meet the following standards:

1. Walls shall be located on the lot line or within the required setback when it is desired to have plant material on both sides of the wall.
2. Walls shall be continuous except for openings for pedestrian connections as approved by the Planning Commission.
3. Walls shall be constructed of the primary building material of the principal structure as determined by the Planning Commission.

B. Berm Standards. While berms are not necessarily encouraged, certain situations may be appropriate for provision of a structural screen. In instances where large setbacks are available between uses, the Planning Commission may allow the substitution of a berm with additional landscaping in place of the wall requirement. Berms shall be constructed with horizontal and vertical undulations so as to represent a natural appearance with a crest area at least four (4) feet in width. Berms shall be planted with trees, shrubs or lawn to ensure that it remains stable. The exterior face of the berm shall be constructed as a earthen slope. The interior face of the berm may be constructed as an earthen slope or retained by means of a wall, terrace or other similar method. The maximum slope of the berm shall not exceed one (1) foot of vertical rise to three (3) feet of horizontal distance.

C. Plant Material. All plant material shall be hardy to the City of Imlay City, be free of disease and insects and conform to the American Standard for Nursery Stock of the American Nurserymen.

D. Minimum Sizes and Spacing. The minimum plant sizes and spacing shall be provided in accordance with the following:

1. Wherever screening is required, screening shall consist of closely spaced evergreen plantings which can be reasonably expected to form a complete visual barrier. Deciduous plant material may be used for variety to supplement evergreen plantings.

<i>Plant Material</i>	Minimum Plant Sizes	Spacing Requirements
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Deciduous canopy trees	22" caliper	25' on-center
Ornamental trees	2" caliper 6' height (clump form)	15' on-center
Evergreen trees	6' height	15' on-center
Narrow evergreen trees	4' height	12' on-center
Deciduous shrubs	2' height	4' - 6' on-center
Upright evergreen shrubs	2' height	3' - 4' on-center
Spreading evergreen shrubs	18" - 24" spread	6' on-center

E. **Mixing of Species.** The overall landscape plan shall not contain more than 33% of any one plant species. The use of native species and mixture of trees from the same species association is strongly encouraged.

F. **Trees Not Permitted.** The following trees are not permitted as they split easily, their wood is brittle, their roots clog drains and sewers, and they are unusually susceptible to disease or insects. The Planning Commission may however allow trees from this list when associated with an appropriate ecosystem. Trees not permitted are as follows: Box Elder, Elms, Tree of Heaven, Willows, Soft Maples (silver), Poplars, Horse Chestnut (nut bearing), Ginkgo (female), Cottonwood, Mulberry, Black Locust, Honey Locust (with thorns).

G. **Planting Beds.** Bark used as mulch shall be maintained at minimum of two (2) inches deep. Planting beds shall be edged with either plastic or metal edging in residential districts and metal edging in all other zoning districts.

H. **Topsoil.** Top soil shall consist of a four (4) inch base for lawn areas and an eight (8) inch to twelve (12) inch base within planting beds.

1. **Proximity to Utilities.** Plant material shall not be located in a manner that will interfere with or cause damage to underground utility lines, public roads or other public facilities.

2. **Lawn Grasses.** Lawn grasses shall be planted in species normally grown as permanent lawns in Lapeer County. Grasses may be

plugged, sprigged, seeded or sodded except that rolled sod, erosion reducing net or suitable mulch shall be used in swales or other areas susceptible to erosion and shall be staked where necessary for stabilization. When complete sodding or seeding is not used, nursegrass seed shall be sown and mulched for immediate protection until permanent coverage is achieved. Grass sod and seed shall be free of weeds and noxious pests or disease.

Section 23.8 Waiver or Modification of Landscaping and Screening Requirements

During site plan or subdivision plat review, the Planning Commission may determine that existing plant material would provide adequate landscaping or screening or than dimensional conditions unique to the subject parcel would prevent development of required landscape components. If such a determination is made, the Planning Commission may waive or modify the landscape provisions of this Article in consideration of, but not limited to, the following:

- A. existing vegetation;
- B. topography and grade changes;
- C. existing wetlands;
- D. type of and distance to adjacent land uses;
- E. tree sizes proposed being larger than the minimum requirements;
- F. existing development pattern in the central business district; or
- G. the future land use designation proposed in the City Master Plan.

Section 23.9 Minimum Standards for Installation, Irrigation and Maintenance

A. **Timing of Planting.** All required plant material shall be planted prior to issuing a Final Certificate of Occupancy. In the event that the project is completed during a time of year when planting is impractical, a financial guarantee in the amount of the remaining improvements shall be provided in a form of payment acceptable to the city.

B. **Completion of Improvements.** Tree stakes, guy wires and tree wrap shall be removed after completion of the initial growing season.

C. **Irrigation.** All landscaped areas shall be provided with an underground irrigation system.

D. **Maintenance.** Landscaped areas and plant materials required by this ordinance shall be kept free from refuse and debris. Plant materials, including lawn, shall be maintained in a healthy growing condition, neat and orderly in appearance in accordance with the approved site plan. If any plant material dies or becomes diseased, it shall be replaced within thirty (30) days written notice from the city or within an extended time period as specified in said notice.

Section 23.10 Standards for Compliance for Existing Sites

In any case where the building and/or parking area is being increased by at least twenty-five percent (25%) over the originally approved site plan or is being changed to a more intense use as determined by the Planning Commission, the site shall be brought into full compliance with the landscape standards herein. In instances where the increase in building and/or parking area is less than twenty-five percent (25%) over the original site plan, the extent of new landscaping shall be equal to four percent (4%) of compliance for every one percent (1%) of increase in building or parking footprint. For example, a building or parking area increase of ten percent (10%) requires forty percent (40%) compliance with the landscape standards.

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