

Article 17

LANDSCAPING and SCREENING

Section 17.01 Purpose

The purpose of this Article is to minimize noise, air, and visual pollution; improve the appearance of off-street parking and other vehicular use areas; assure adequate buffering between incompatible land uses; regulate the appearance of property abutting public rights-of-way; prevent soil erosion and soil depletion; and protect and preserve the appearance, character, and value of the community and its residential neighborhood areas.

Section 17.02 Application

The requirements of this Article shall apply to only those uses for which site plan approval is required under Article 4, Procedures for Site Plan & Plot Plan Review. No site plan shall be approved unless said site plan shall show landscaping, buffer areas, and screening consistent with the requirements set forth in this Article.

Section 17.03 Landscape Plan Required

A detailed landscape plan is required to be submitted as part of a site plan (see Article 4). The landscape plan shall be prepared at a minimum scale of 1" = 100' and shall identify all buffer areas (see Section 17.04) and parking lot landscaping (see Section 17.05). The landscape plan shall include, but not necessarily be limited to, the following items:

1. Proposed plant location, spacing, and size and descriptions for each plant type proposed for use to meet the requirements of this Article.
2. Identification of grass and other proposed ground cover and method of planting.
3. Existing and proposed contours on-site and 150 feet beyond the site at intervals not to exceed two (2) feet.
4. Significant construction details to resolve specific site conditions, such as tree wells to preserve existing trees or culverts to maintain natural drainage patterns.
5. Planting and staking details in either text or drawing form to ensure proper installation and establishment of proposed plant materials.
6. Identification of existing trees and vegetative cover to be preserved and those trees six (6) inches or larger in diameter, measured five (5) feet from ground surface, to be removed.

Section 17.04 Buffer Areas

A. Side and Rear Yard Buffer Areas: All land uses for which a site plan is required shall include a landscape buffer area along all adjoining side and rear yard boundaries. The buffer area shall not be used for storage purposes or used in any other manner except for the purposes of a landscape buffer.

1. The buffer area shall be a minimum of twenty (20) feet wide and include a berm or solid wall or fence or a combination thereof, and be of at least (5) feet in height. See Section 17.08 regarding requirements for walls and fences. The buffer area shall be planted and maintained with evergreens such as spruce, pines, or firs, and deciduous trees, at a rate of at least one (1) evergreen tree per fifty (50) linear feet and one (1) deciduous tree per one hundred fifty (150) linear feet, although such plantings need not be evenly spaced. Heights of walls shall be measured on the side of the proposed wall having the higher grade. At the time of their planting, evergreen trees shall be a minimum of five (5) feet in height and deciduous trees shall have a diameter of at least two and a half (2 1/2) inches, measured five (5) feet above the ground surface, and be a minimum of twelve (12) feet in height.
2. In the case where the lot for which a buffer area is required has side or rear yards that are not adjacent to an Agricultural or Residential District, the site plan review body may lessen or waive the required number of tree plantings and the necessity for a berm, wall, or fence otherwise required by subsection (1) above upon a finding that the lessening or waiving of such buffer measures shall not undermine the compatibility of the proposed use with the existing or future development of adjacent lots or with the desired character of the District in which the proposed use is to be located.

B. Front Yard Buffer Areas: A buffer area with a minimum width equal to the front yard setback of its zoning classification shall be located abutting the right-of-way of a public road, and shall be landscaped with a minimum of one (1) tree meeting the minimum size requirements specified in Section 17.04(A) above for each seventy-five (75) lineal feet, or major portion thereof, of frontage abutting said right-of-way. The remainder of the front yard buffer area shall be landscaped in grass, ground cover, shrubs, and/or other natural, living, landscape material. Access ways from public rights-of-way 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 17.05 Parking Lot Landscaping And Screening

A. Parking lots shall be landscaped and screened as follows:

1. There shall be provided a minimum of one (1) deciduous tree of at least two and a half (2 1/2) inch caliper for every eight (8) parking spaces. Such trees shall be located within parking islands or within fifteen (15) feet of the edge of the parking lot. A minimum distance of three (3) feet shall be established between proposed tree or shrub plantings and the edge of curbing and pavement.
2. Where a parking lot contains five (5) or more parking spaces and is within two hundred (200) feet of a Conservation or Residential district, a vegetative screen or fence of at least four feet in height shall be installed to fully screen views to the parking area from the neighboring District. Plant materials shall be a height of at least three (3) feet at the time of their planting.

Section 17.06 Minimum Standards of Landscape Elements

A. Quality: Plant material and grasses shall be of generally acceptable varieties and species, free of insects and diseases, hardy to the climate, conform to the current minimum standard of the American Association of Nurserymen, and shall have proof of any required governmental regulations and/or inspections. Plant species which are generally considered undesirable due to limited disease tolerance, low wood strength, and/or high tendencies toward splitting of wood, such as boxelder, mulberry, and willows, are not permitted unless specifically authorized otherwise by the site plan approving body.

B. Composition: A mixture of plant material, such as evergreen, deciduous trees and shrubs, is recommended as a protective measure against insect and disease infestation. A limited mixture of native hardy species is recommended rather than a large quantity of different species, to produce a more aesthetic, cohesive design and avoid a disorderly appearing arrangement.

C. Existing Trees:

1. If existing plant material is labeled "To Remain" on site plans by the applicant or required by the Planning Commission, protective techniques, such as, but not limited to, fencing or barriers placed around the plant material below the outer edge of the foliage crown, shall be installed during construction. No vehicle or other construction equipment shall be parked or stored within the dripline of any plant material intended to be saved. Other protective techniques may be used provided such techniques are approved by the site plan approving body. *Within the dripline* shall be interpreted to mean within the circular ground area extending from the base of the tree trunk to the edge of the foliage crown.
2. In the event that existing healthy trees which are used to meet the minimum requirements of this Ordinance, or those labeled to remain are cut down, destroyed, damaged, or excavated within the crown, as determined by the Planning Commission, the applicant shall replace them with trees which meet Ordinance requirements.

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Section 17.07 Installation, Maintenance And Completion

A. All landscaping required by this Ordinance shall be planted prior to obtaining a Certificate of Occupancy or, where the applicant can demonstrate to the Township Board 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.

B. 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.

C. The owner of property required to be landscaped by this Ordinance shall maintain such required landscaping in a reasonably healthy condition, free from refuse and debris. All unhealthy and dead material shall be replaced within one (1) year of damage or death or the next appropriate planting period, whichever comes first.

Section 17.08 Fencing and Walls Construction

A. Fencing: Required fencing shall consist of solid board fences with wood posts not less than three and one half inches (3 1/2" x 3 1/2") and solid board cover not less than three quarters (3/4) inch thick. Masonry piers may be substituted for wood posts. Posts or piers shall be spaced not more than eight (8) feet on center. The finished side of fencing shall face abutting properties. Fencing consisting of tree trunks and/or limbs anchored into the ground is not permitted.

B. Walls: Required walls shall be of masonry design and constructed to facilitate maintenance and not modify natural drainage in such a way as to endanger adjacent property. The faces of such walls are to be of face brick, poured-in-place simulated face brick, precast brick panels having simulated face brick, stone, embossed or pierced concrete block, or other decorative masonry material.

Section 17.09 Waivers and Modifications

A. Any of the requirements of this Article may be modified through site plan review proceedings, provided the approving body first makes a written finding that specifically identifies characteristics of the site or site vicinity that would make required buffer areas, fencing, or screening unnecessary, inappropriate, or ineffective, or where it would impair vision at a driveway or street intersection.

B. The Zoning Board of Appeals may require or waive any fencing, screening, landscaping or buffering as may be provided for in this Article as a condition of a variance or other authorization in whatever manner necessary to achieve an identified public purpose. The Zoning Board of Appeals shall record the reason for the condition and clearly specify what is required in any approval granted.

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