

Chapter 27.71 LANDSCAPE FOR PLANNING APPLICATIONS

27.71.010 PURPOSE.

The purpose of this chapter is to enhance the quality of life in San Mateo by the provision for appropriate design of landscaping and through the preservation of existing trees. Landscaping shall be a major component of all site design in order to create a city that has a strong landscaped character. The intent is that individual neighborhood character be developed and maintained, architecture be softened by plant materials where appropriate, conflicting uses be buffered, parking areas be screened, comfortable outdoor living and walking spaces be created, air pollution be mitigated and future developments be made water efficient. (Ord. 1989-34, § 1, 1989).

27.71.020 SCOPE.

This chapter shall apply as a minimum for all projects requiring approval of a planning application pursuant to Section 27.08.010, except for Single Family Dwelling Design Review applications. Landscaping not subject to this chapter shall be governed by the provisions of Chapter 10.52—Heritage Trees. The Zoning Administrator may determine that minor additions or changes to existing property are not reasonably related to the purpose of this chapter and may be exempt from the requirements of this chapter. (Ord. 2009-7 § 38, 2009; Ord. 1989-34, § 1, 1989).

27.71.030 GENERAL OBJECTIVES.

(a) Required Landscaping. All required front and street side yards shall be landscaped, except for necessary driveways and walkways. In all other areas landscaping shall be required except for necessary circulation areas, paved outdoor living areas or water features.

(b) Buffering and Screening. Plantings shall be provided to buffer residential uses from commercial or industrial uses. Plantings shall also be provided to screen service and storage areas, parking lots or unsightly areas. Plantings shall be used where appropriate to control noise, wind, climate and ensure privacy.

(c) Outdoor Living Areas. Landscaping shall be arranged so as to provide usable outdoor living areas where appropriate. Plant materials and architectural features should be used to control noise, sun and wind and provide adequate privacy.

(d) Composition of Required Landscaping. All required landscaping shall include the planting and maintenance of some combination of trees, groundcover, shrubs, vines, annuals and lawns. In addition, the combination or design may include natural or structural features, including but not limited to fountains, reflecting pools, artwork, screens, walls, and fences.

(e) Security. Landscaping shall be installed and maintained to provide aesthetic quality while promoting building security.

(f) Minimum Requirements. The provisions contained in this chapter are intended to be a minimum standard. Compatibility with other projects and compliance with required findings and adopted goals and policies of the City shall be evaluated through the planning application process. (Ord. 2008-8 § 15, 2008; Ord. 1989-34, § 1, 1989).

27.71.040 DEFINITIONS.

The following definitions shall apply to this chapter:

~~(a) "Annuals" means live annual vegetation that is normally replaced on a seasonal or yearly basis.~~

~~(b) "Drought tolerant" means the ability to survive with little or no water other than available rainfall. Drought tolerant plants include those contained in publications referred to in Section 27.71.130.~~

(ea) "Groundcover" means low growing live perennial vegetation, other than turf, of a species which is sold as a groundcover or shrub by licensed nurserymen.

(eb) A "heritage tree" is any one of the following:

(1) Any bay (*Umbellularia californica*), buckeye (*Aesculus* spp.), oak (*Quercus* spp.),

cedar (*Cedrus* spp.) or redwood (*Sequoia sempervirens*) tree that has a diameter of ten (10) inches or more measured at forty-eight (48) inches above natural grade;

(2) A tree or stand of trees designated by resolution of the City Council to be of special historical value or of significant community benefit;

(3) A stand of trees, the nature of which makes each dependent on the others for survival;

(4) Any other tree with a trunk diameter of sixteen (16) inches or more, measured at forty-eight (48) inches above natural grade.

(ec) "Landscape" or "landscaped area" means an area that consists of living plantings.

(ed) "Landscape unit (LU)" means the unit of measurement for trees which indicates the worth of each relative to one another and towards satisfying City requirements.

(ee) "Natural landscaping" means an area consisting of uncultivated native plant growth and other features of natural terrain such as rock outcroppings, streams or other areas covered by water.

(ef) "Plantings" means annuals, groundcover, turf grass, shrubs or trees.

(eg) "Shrubs" means live perennial vegetation, greater than an average height of two feet (2') and maintained below twelve feet (12') in height. Vines shall be considered as shrubs.

(eh) "Trees" means a live self-supporting woody plant having at least one well defined stem or trunk and normally attaining a mature height and spread of at least twelve feet (12'), and having a trunk that may, at maturity, be kept clear of leaves and branches at least six feet (6') above grade.

~~(ei) "Turfgrass" means live vegetation of a species normally grown as turf by a nursery and which is maintained at a height of three inches (3") or less. (Ord. 2009-7 § 39, 2009; Ord. 1997-24, § 9, 1997; Ord. 1989-34, § 1, 1989).~~

27.71.050 MAINTENANCE.

All landscape areas shall be maintained free of weeds, litter and debris. All plantings shall be maintained in a healthy growing condition and whenever necessary, replaced with equivalent plant materials to ensure continued conformance with approved plans. (Ord. 1989-34, § 1, 1989).

27.71.060 PLANT ESTABLISHMENT PERIOD.

A plant establishment period of three (3) growing season months (March through October) shall be required for all landscape areas. At the completion of this period all plant

materials shall be in a healthy condition and the landscaped area shall be maintained free of weeds, litter and debris.

(a) For projects with less than 10,000 square feet of landscaped area, proof of a contract with a licensed landscape contractor to maintain the landscape for the plant establishment period shall be submitted.

(b) For projects with greater than 10,000 square feet of landscape area and for all residential condominiums, financial securities shall be held by the City as required in Section 27.71.090 to ensure compliance with the plant establishment period. (Ord. 1989-34, § 1, 1989).

27.71.070 SUBMITTALS REQUIRED FOR A PLANNING APPLICATION.

(a) All landscape plans must be at a reasonable scale to indicate all types of improvements. All plans must contain sufficient information to ensure conformance with the requirements of this chapter and must include but are not limited to the following information:

- (1) North arrow and scale;
- (2) The name of the applicant/owner;
- (3) The name, address, and phone number of the person or firm responsible for the preparation of the plans and other required information;
- (4) The dates the plans are submitted and revised;
- (5) All existing and proposed buildings and other structures, paved areas, planted areas, power poles, fire hydrants, light standards, signs, fences, and other permanent features to be added and/or retained on the site;
- (6) All existing plant material to remain and to be removed, a tree evaluation schedule identifying trees as to size, species, the condition of trees to be removed as determined by an arborist and the existing and proposed replacement LU values;
- (7) All existing and proposed streets, sidewalks, curbs and gutters, railroad tracks, drainage ditches, and other public or semi-public improvements within and immediately adjacent to the site;
- (8) Contour lines, if the slopes are in excess of 10 percent;
- (9) Existing and proposed topographic elevations at sufficient locations, to clearly show the drainage pattern unless this information is provided on a grading plan or other documents in the planning application;
- (10) All property lines and easements;
- (11) Square footage of all planted area;
- ~~(12) Square footage of all turf area;~~
- ~~(13)12~~ Species, sizes and location of all proposed plant material;
- ~~(14)13~~ Soil tests as required by the discretion of the Zoning Administrator;
- ~~(15)14~~ A tree protection plan consistent with the section 13.52.025(c) of the municipal code.

(b) All projects with over 1,000 square feet of new or modified planting areas as required to meet the provisions of this chapter shall have all landscape plans and accompanying documents prepared or reviewed and found acceptable by a licensed landscape architect registered with the State of California. (Ord. 2009-7 § 40, 2009; Ord. 1989-34, § 1, 1989).

27.71.080 SUBMITTALS REQUIRED FOR A BUILDING PERMIT APPLICATION.

- (a) All of the required submittals for a planning application;
- (b) Type and depth of mulch indicated on the plan;
- (c) An irrigation plan accurately drawn to scale that indicates all components of the irrigation system including sprinklers and other outlets, valves, the backflow prevention device(s), controller(s), and piping;
- (d) All required tree preservation fees as required in Section 27.71.180;
- (e) For projects with less than 10,000 square feet of landscaped area, proof of a contract with a licensed landscape contractor to maintain the landscape area for the plant establishment period; and
- (f) For projects with greater than 10,000 square feet of landscape area, financial securities as required in Section 27.71.090; and
- (g) Soil tests as required in Section 27.71.110. (Ord. 1989-34, § 1, 1989).

27.71.090 REQUIREMENTS FOR USE OR ISSUANCE OF A CERTIFICATE OF OCCUPANCY.

- (a) Prior to use, final inspection, or the issuance of certificate of occupancy, all landscaping shall be installed in conformance with the approved plans.
- (b) Phased Projects. Incremental landscape installation may be permitted by the Zoning Administrator when building construction is phased.
- (c) Financial Securities. Financial securities shall be required for all projects with over 10,000 sq. ft. of landscape area and for all residential condominiums. On smaller projects where adverse weather, drought conditions or project phasing prohibit the installation of landscaping, the Zoning Administrator may allow financial securities to be submitted to the City in order to allow use or issuance of a certificate of occupancy. The security shall be in a form which is legally sufficient to ensure the preservation of trees and the installation of all approved landscape improvements. Financial securities shall be returned to the applicant upon completion of the plant establishment period. The City shall be the beneficiary and the sole determinant of compliance and completion. A detailed cost estimate of all landscape improvements plus the value of any existing trees to remain, as determined in Section 27.71.180, shall be used to determine the amount of security. (Ord. 1989-34, § 1, 1989).

~~27.71.100 AUTOMATIC IRRIGATION:~~

~~———— All landscaped areas shall be provided with an automatic irrigation system that is adequate to support the vegetation selected. Irrigation systems shall be designed and installed so as to limit runoff and overspray. The Zoning Administrator may determine that, due to the conditions required by native plantings an automatic irrigation system would not be necessary, and may approve an alternative method of watering.~~

~~———— (a) Backflow Prevention. Backflow prevention device for the irrigation system shall be located in areas least noticeable from view and shall consist of one of the following:~~

- ~~(1) A pressure type vacuum breaker located twelve inches (12") above the highest water outlet or piping downstream;~~
- ~~(2) A reduced pressure type backflow prevention device located twelve inches (12") above finished grade; or~~
- ~~(3) Atmospheric type vacuum breakers located downstream from each control valve and twelve inches (12") above the highest water outlet or piping downstream.~~

~~(b) Separation of Zones. Turfgrass, non-drought tolerant plantings and drought tolerant plantings shall all be irrigated with separate valves.~~

~~(c) Low Volume Water Distribution. Low volume heads and emitters shall be used where site conditions are appropriate such as on wind protected hillsides. Low volume is defined as emitting less than 0.75 inches per hour of water.~~

~~(d) Automatic Moisture Sensor. All irrigation systems with over 20,000 square feet of area irrigated with spray systems shall contain at least one automatic moisture sensor device per type of zone (e.g. lawn or groundcover).~~

~~(e) Tree and Shrub Drip System. All trees and shrubs shall be irrigated with a drip or bubbler system, with the exception of shrubs planted with groundcover, which may be irrigated with a spray system. (Ord. 1991-7 § 2, 1991; Ord. 1989-34, § 1, 1989).~~

27.71.110 LANDSCAPE COMPATIBILITY AND SOIL TESTING.

The location and nature of all landscaping shall be compatible with the soil, amendments, existing plantings to remain and character of the landscaping in the vicinity. For projects with over 10,000 sq. ft. of landscape area or in areas of questionable soils such as the foothills or areas of bay fill, soils testing shall be required. Testing shall be performed by a professional testing laboratory. Soil shall be amended according to test report recommendations. (Ord. 1989-34, § 1, 1989).

27.71.120 PLANT COVERAGE AND TREE SIZES.

(a) Allowed Bare Ground. Areas of bare ground or ground covered only by bark or rocks shall be allowed on site only where required as part of an approved facility, such as a baseball diamond, vegetable garden, flowerbed, or similar use.

(b) Allowed Natural Landscaping. Natural landscaping shall be allowed only in areas where it is compatible with the surrounding environment.

(c) Turfgrass.

~~(1) The combined turf and or water area (i.e., pools, ponds and fountains) shall be limited to 25 percent of the landscaped area for landscapes over 1000 square feet.~~

~~Ground level patios, plazas and decks may be included in the total landscaped area for purposes of figuring the allowable amount of turf. This turf limitation is excluded for public parks, golf courses, cemeteries and school recreation areas.~~

~~(2) Long narrow strips of turfgrass such as traffic medians and areas between curbs and sidewalks are prohibited.~~

~~(3) Turfgrass on slopes shall be permitted only where slopes do not exceed twenty-five percent (25%) in grade.~~

~~(d) Annuals. Areas to be planted in annual flowers shall be a maximum of 5 percent of the total landscaped area unless the plants used are drought tolerant.~~

(e) Minimum Tree Size. All required trees shall be a minimum size of 15 gallon container at time of installation, except for Heritage tree replacements, which require a minimum size of 24" box.

(f) Plant Coverage:

(1) Trees shall be planted at a minimum ratio of 1 per 400 square feet of required landscaped area. The ratio may include existing trees and required street and parking

area trees. In some instances a greater ratio will be necessary to achieve desired landscaping objectives. Required tree ratio excluded for public parks, golf courses, cemeteries and school recreation areas.

(2) Groundcover and shrub massing areas shall be planted in a manner or at the spacings recommended by the American Association of Nurserymen, to uniformly cover the proposed groundcover areas within two (2) years and the shrub areas within five (5) years or a period optimum for the species.

(~~ee~~f) Security planting. The use of plant materials that promote building security is encouraged. A list of such materials may be obtained from the planning division. Perimeter landscaped areas should incorporate thorny plant materials to discourage persons from cutting through parking areas, trampling vegetation near ground floor windows, or climbing perimeter fences and walls. (Ord. 2009-7 § 41, 2009; Ord. 2008-8 § 16, 2008; Ord. 1989-34, § 1, 1989).

~~27.71.130 DROUGHT TOLERANT PLANTINGS.~~

~~———— Ninety percent (90%) of all plant materials, except for allowable turf grass and annuals, shall be drought tolerant, as listed by the California Department of Water Resources in Bulletin 209 (1979 Ed. or later) entitled, Plants for California Landscapes (A Catalogue of Drought Tolerant Plants), The East Bay Municipal Utility District, Water Conserving Plants and Landscapes for the Bay Area, or other plant material which has been documented as being drought tolerant. The Zoning Administrator may determine that non-drought tolerant plantings are more appropriate due to surrounding riparian or heavily shaded conditions, and may approve non-drought tolerant plants in those areas. (Ord. 1989-34, § 1, 1989).~~

~~27.71.140 MULCH.~~

~~———— A 2-inch depth layer of mulch shall be required in all new planting areas except in areas of turfgrass or annuals. Non-porous material shall not be placed under the mulch. (Ord. 1989-34, § 1, 1989).~~

27.71.150 STREET TREES.

(a) Tree Planting. Fifteen-gallon or larger street trees shall be planted along public streets in accordance with the City Street Tree Master Plan. Trees shall be planted at a spacing not to exceed 30 feet except to allow for utilities, street furnishings and driveways. Trees shall be planted closer than 30 feet if so recommended by the City Arborist.

(b) Tree Maintenance Easement. Where a planning application requires a parcel or tentative map, a street tree maintenance easement shall be required if the street trees are to be located on private property and no such easement exists. However, it is recommended that even when a parcel or tentative map is not required or included, an easement be provided to allow the City to maintain the trees (other than irrigating) on private property. (Ord. 1989-34, § 1, 1989).

27.71.160 PARKING AREAS.

The following requirements shall apply to open parking areas containing five (5) or more parking spaces.

(a) Setbacks. Whenever a parking area is located adjacent to any residential use or zone and along all street frontages, a landscape strip shall be provided that is equal in width to five percent (5%) of the parking lot depth or six feet (6'), whichever is greater.

(b) Percentage of Parking Areas to be Landscaped. At least ten percent (10%) of the open parking area shall be landscaped. The following shall be considered in computing the landscape area:

(1) Parking area includes all paved surfaces devoted to on-site circulation and parking;

(2) Only those landscaped areas within six feet (6') of a parking stall or aisle shall apply towards meeting the 10% requirement;

(3) Areas to be considered shall include planting areas and required curbing.

(c) Screening. All open parking areas shall be effectively screened on each side adjoining or fronting on any property in a residential zone and along all street frontages. Screening of adjoining property shall be a minimum of four feet (4') to a maximum of six feet (6') in height. Screening along street frontages shall be at least two and one-half feet (2'-6") in height for at least eighty percent (80%) of its length. Screening shall be accomplished by a wall, fence, earth berm, densely planted shrub mass or any combination of the above. Where walls or fences are provided, they shall be located adjacent to the edge of the parking lots. Screening shall conform with the sight distance requirements contained in Chapter 7.24 of the San Mateo Municipal Code.

(d) Parking Lot Islands.

(1) All islands and small areas unused for parking or circulation shall be landscaped. The Zoning Administrator may determine that certain areas for reasons of size, aesthetics or circulation should not be landscaped and may approve paving in those areas.

(2) Interior landscape islands, having a minimum dimension of five feet (5') including curb, shall be provided after every ten (10) parking spaces in a row to provide for tree planting.

(e) Required Trees. For each three (3) parking spaces at least one (1) tree shall be planted within the parking lot landscaped area in addition to any required street trees. Existing trees may be included in the required total.

(f) Protection of Planting Areas. All planting areas shall be protected from common vehicular traffic. For parking lots containing five (5) stalls or more, this requirement shall be met by a six-inch-high vertical concrete curb. For parking lots containing less than 5 stalls, this requirement may be met by a concrete wheel stop in front of each diagonal or perpendicular stall plus a minimum six-inch-high concrete curb in other areas or approved equal. No trees or shrubs shall be planted and sprinkler heads shall be kept below curb height within two feet six inches (2'6") of any curb or wheel stops which front upon parking stalls or backup areas. (Ord. 1989-34, § 1, 1989).

27.71.170 RIGHT-OF-WAY LANDSCAPING.

The unpaved right-of-way area located between the public street and private property shall be landscaped in a manner compatible with the required landscaping on site. Such landscaping shall be permanently maintained by the property owner in conformance with the

approved plans and so as not to create a safety hazard. Strips of public right-of-way located between the curb and sidewalks may not be paved but must likewise be landscaped. [Long narrow strips of turfgrass such as traffic medians and areas between curbs and sidewalks are prohibited.](#) (Ord. 2009-7 § 42, 2009; Ord. 1989-34, § 1, 1989).

27.71.180 PRESERVATION OF EXISTING TREES.

- (a) Evaluation of Existing Trees. Trees over six inches (6”) in caliper shall be evaluated on the basis of species, size, condition, location and classification as a heritage tree.
- (b) Required Submittals. To evaluate the existing trees the landscape plan and a tree evaluation schedule shall be submitted with the planning application showing:
 - (1) The location of all existing trees 6 inches or greater in caliper, noting which are to be removed and which are located within the allowable building area;
 - (2) Caliper size in inches measured 48 inches above grade;
 - (3) Species name and species value as determined by utilizing the most recent edition of the Guide for Plant Appraisal, published by the Council of Tree and Landscape Appraisers;
 - (4) Condition and location value of trees as determined by an arborist or landscape architect;
 - (5) The total LU value of trees to be removed; and
 - (6) The total LU value of replacement trees.
- (c) Landscape Unit Value (LU).
 - (1) The tree species, condition, and location values of the trees shall be based on an evaluation by an experienced landscape appraiser recognized by the American Society of Consulting Arborists utilizing the most recent Guide for Plant Appraisal, published by the Council of Tree and Landscape Appraisers; and approved by the Zoning Administrator.
 - (2) Trees not within the allowable building area shall receive a location factor of 1.0 (100%). Trees located within the allowable building area shall receive a location factor of .70 (70%).
 - (3) Trees designated as heritage trees shall receive a bonus percentage value of 1.25 (125%). Trees located within the allowable building area shall receive a location factor of .70 (70%).
 - (4) Trees designated as heritage trees shall receive a bonus percentage value of 1.25 (125%).

The species, condition and location value assume an average tree value to be .70 (.7 x .7 x .7 = .343). All existing trees to be removed shall be given a LU value based upon the following calculation:

$$\frac{\text{species value\%} \times \text{condition value\%} \times \text{location value\%}}{.35}$$

$$\times \text{caliper inches} \times \text{bldg./setback\%} \times \text{heritage tree\%} = \text{LU}$$

- (d) Tree Replacement. Existing trees to be removed shall be replaced with new trees to equal the total removed LU value. The following rates shall be given to replacement trees to obtain the replacement LU value:

LU Value	Replacement Tree Size
1	15 gallon
2	24-inch box
3	36-inch box
4	48-inch box

Replacement trees shall be in addition to and not substitute requirements for street trees, parking lot trees or other required trees.

(e) Preservation of Heritage Trees. The site design shall make every reasonable effort to preserve heritage trees, consistent with the section 13.52.025 of the municipal code. Conditions shall also be imposed to protect heritage trees during construction. Heritage trees shall be removed only when it is demonstrated that preservation of these trees would result in a threat to health, safety, and welfare due to a hazardous tree condition, impacts on soil erosion and stability, or an unreasonable effect upon the economic enjoyment of the property, consistent with section 13.52.040 of the municipal code.

(f) Protection of Existing Trees. The site design shall make reasonable effort to protect existing trees. The design shall be evaluated as to how it protects existing trees or the reasons for removal of existing trees. Tree protection measures shall be provided for trees to remain on site, which shall be consistent with section 13.52.025 of the municipal code and imposed as a condition of approvals.

(g) Alternates to On-Site Replacement. If the required LU value for replacement of existing trees to be removed is not made up with replacement trees on-site, the City shall require that trees be planted in another location on-site or off-site or a contribution of funds be made to the City to be used for plantings on public land or a combination of the above options. If a contribution of funds is required, it shall be ~~two hundred and fifty dollars (\$250.00) per required LU or such other~~ the fee as ~~may be~~ established by Resolution of the City Council in the annual Comprehensive Fee Schedule. (Ord. 2009-7 § 43, 2009; Ord. 1989-34, § 1, 1989).