

1321.43 PARKING LOT LANDSCAPING AND PERIMETER BUFFERING

(a) Intent. In order to mitigate visual impacts on adjacent uses, particularly residential uses, and to protect the health, safety and welfare of the community through the reduction of noise, air and visual pollution, any change in use; or any new, or substantially expanded use; shall provide parking lot landscaping and perimeter buffering in compliance with the requirements of this Section.

(b) Applicability. For the purposes of this Section, substantial expansion in use shall be defined as an increase of more than twenty percent (20%) in gross floor area or the addition of the equivalent of more than ten percent of the existing off-street parking spaces designated for the use.

(c) Standards. Parking lot landscaping and perimeter buffering for any outdoor parking areas shall be provided in accordance with Section 1321.43(f) & (g). Planning Commission may require additional landscaping and buffering or authorize variances from these requirements after consideration of site conditions, setbacks, line of sight, noise, nuisance or site aesthetics.

(1) Responsibility for installation shall be with the person in control of developing the project whether as owner, lessee, tenant, or otherwise (hereinafter referred to as "Owner."

(2) Locations. Perimeter buffering and landscaping shall be provided between the vehicle use area and the public right-of-way; between vehicular use areas and private street easements; in side and rear yards between non-residential and residential uses; and, in side and rear yards between multi-family uses and single family uses. Interior landscaping for vehicular use areas shall be provided in all parking areas.

(3) Unless specifically approved by Planning Commission, no structure shall be permitted in a required landscape area other than a wall, fence, or earth berm.

(d) Requirements for submission. When required by these regulations, a "Parking Lot Landscaping and Buffering Plan" shall be prepared and included in drawings submitted for Planning Commission Approval as part of the regular Site Plan Review process. The "Parking Lot Landscaping and Buffering Plan" shall be prepared at a reasonable scale and shall include the following information:

(1) Name of the applicant/owner.

(2) Name, address and phone number of the person or firm responsible for the preparation of the plan.

(3) All existing and proposed buildings and other structures, paved areas, planted areas, utility poles, fire hydrants, light standards, signs, fences and other permanent features to be added and or retained on the site.

(4) Material to be removed or retained.

(5) 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.

(6) Contour lines shall be shown if the grades are in excess of six percent (6%) slope.

(7) Proposed elevation at sufficient locations and existing elevations of the site to clearly show the drainage patterns.

(8) Tabular listings of existing plant material to be retained and proposed plant material within the buffer yard or landscape area with typical planting details for trees, shrubs and ground cover within the landscaped area.

(e) Approval. No site plan approval will be issued by the Planning Commission, and no occupancy permit will be issued by the Building Commissioner until the "Parking Lot Landscaping and Buffering Plan" has received final approval. Approval of the "Parking Lot Landscaping and Buffering Plan" is conditioned upon satisfaction of the following criteria:

(1) Landscaping and perimeter buffering material shall be fully installed on the site by completion of construction; or,

(2) If not feasible due to seasonal conditions, within one planting season after completion of construction. A guaranteed agreement regarding the postponed improvement must be secured with a letter of credit, cash escrow or other instrument in an amount equal to the cost of such installation.

(f) Perimeter Landscaping. Parking lots containing six (6) spaces or more shall provide perimeter landscaping meeting the following minimum requirements:

- (1) Buffer area between the public right-of-way and the parking area, and between private street easements and the parking area, shall be of a size equivalent to six (6) square feet of area for every linear foot of roadway frontage. If site constraints prohibit the provision of this amount of buffer area, Planning Commission may approve a plan with a buffer area equal to the length of the roadway frontage, minus ingress and egress driveways, multiplied by six (6) feet. (Example: Parcel frontage is 150 feet. Driveway width equals 30 feet. Therefore, the frontage minus drive width is 120 feet times 6 feet, or 720 square feet of buffer area). Where it is not practical to provide a buffer area of at least six (6) feet in depth, Planning Commission may approve alternative buffers consisting of evergreen or deciduous hedges, low masonry walls, bollards and other structures or plantings that provide a screen meeting the intent of these regulations.
 - (2) Perimeter landscaping shall be provided in side and rear yards between residential and non-residential uses, and in side and rear yards between multi-family and single family uses. These perimeter landscape areas shall consist of earth mounds, decorative fences or masonry walls, vegetative screens or combinations of these sufficient to screen views of vehicular use areas. Perimeter landscaping shall be designed to provide a minimum of 50% opacity upon installation and minimum of 70% opacity at maturity. Perimeter landscape buffering shall contain evergreen and deciduous plant materials as approved by Planning Commission in consideration of desired opacity and need for year-round screening. Material shall be kept neat and trimmed throughout the entire year.
 - (3) Curbs or wheel stops shall be provided to prohibit bumpers and bodies of parked vehicles from over-hanging a perimeter buffer landscape area by more than two and one-half (2 ½) feet.
 - (4) In order to retain visibility along public rights-of-ways, trees shall have a clear trunk of at least five (5') feet above the ground. Shrubs and other landscape material shall not exceed three (3) feet unless approved by Planning Commission.
- (g) Interior Landscaping which meets the following requirements shall be provided for parking areas containing more than 6,000 square feet of paved area or more than 20 vehicular parking spaces, whichever is less. Interior landscaping is required in addition to perimeter landscaping.
- (1) For every ten (10) parking spaces or fraction thereof, the applicant shall provide not less than two hundred (200) square feet of interior landscaped parking lot areas containing at least one tree with a minimum caliper of two inches (2") and two shrubs.
 - (2) If interior parking lot landscaping requirements create a hardship in meeting the required parking for the use, each two hundred (200) square feet of area designated for landscaping may be counted as one (1) required parking space.
 - (3) In order to assure that landscape areas are properly dispersed and to break up large expanses of parking pavement, no individual landscape area shall be larger than five-hundred (500) square feet in size in vehicle use areas less than 30,000 square feet and no individual area shall be larger than two-thousand (2,000) square feet in vehicular use areas larger than thirty-thousand (30,000) square feet.
 - (4) Curbs or wheel stops shall be provided to prohibit bumpers and bodies of parked vehicles from over-hanging an interior landscape area by more than two and one-half (2 ½) feet.
 - (5) In order to retain visibility, trees shall have a clear trunk of at least five (5') feet above the ground. Shrubs and other landscape material shall not exceed three (3) feet unless approved by Planning Commission.
- (h) In its consideration of modifications from the requirements of these regulations, Planning Commission shall consider the following:
- (1) Conditions which are unique to the applicant's land.
 - (2) The manner in which strict application of the provisions of these regulations deprive the applicant of a reasonable use of the land in a manner equivalent to that permitted other landowners in the same zoning district.

- (3) The existence of unique conditions and circumstances that are not the result of actions of the applicant subsequent to the adoption of these regulations.
 - (4) Whether the requested modification shall preserve, not harm, the public safety and welfare, and shall not alter the essential character of the neighborhood.
 - (5) Whether the applicant has provided for landscaping and buffering that achieves the spirit of these regulations.
- (i) Landscaping materials used in conformance with the provisions of these regulations shall be healthy and in good condition, conform to the standards of the American Association of Nurserymen, and be planted in accordance with industry standards. Materials may consist of the following:
- (1) Deciduous trees with a minimum caliper size of 2 ½ inches.
 - (2) Evergreen trees with a minimum height of four (4) feet at the time of planting and so chosen as to provide the desired opacity and effective growth.
 - (3) Shrubs and hedges shall be at least 24" at the time of planting.
 - (4) Grasses of the Fescue or Bluegrass family shall be planted in species normally grown as permanent lawns in Northeast Ohio. Swales and other areas subject to erosion shall be sodded, mulched, and temporarily seeded for immediate protection until complete coverage is otherwise achieved. Grass sod shall be clean and free of weeds and noxious pests or disease. Ground cover shall be planted in such a manner as to provide 90% coverage after two growing seasons.
 - (5) Rock, stone and mulch are acceptable alternatives for ground cover when the use does not exceed fifty percent (50%) of the total square foot area of required landscaping.
- (j) All landscaping material shall be installed and maintained according to accepted nursery industry standards. The property owner shall be responsible for its continued maintenance and shall keep it in a neat and orderly appearance, free of refuse and debris at all times.
- (k) Unhealthy or dead plant material shall be replaced within one year, or by the next planting period, whichever occurs first. Violation of these provisions shall be grounds for the Building Commissioner to refuse to issue building occupancy permits.
- (l) Landscaping which has been required and installed in compliance with the provisions of these regulations may not be used, disturbed or changed for any purpose other than for maintenance and restoration.