

PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT SERVICES STAFF REPORT

For Planning Commission Meeting of December 6, 2011

SUBJECT: Proposed Technical Amendments to Chapter 62 (Landscaping and Screening) Sections 5:602 and 5:603 regarding Interior Landscaping and Conflicting Land Use Buffer Requirements

PROPOSED CITY PLANNING COMMISSION MOTION

The Ann Arbor City Planning Commission hereby recommends that the Mayor and City Council approve the proposed amendments to Chapter 62 (Landscaping and Screening) Sections 5:602 and 5:603 regarding interior landscaping and conflicting land use buffer requirements.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends approval of proposed amendments to Chapter 62 (Landscaping and Screening). The proposed changes will modify the interior landscaping requirements to apply the Bioretention and maximum parking aisle length requirements only to site plan extensions or projects that require City Planning Commission or City Council approval; and eliminate the conflicting land use buffer requirement for side and rear yards in the R4C (Multiple Family Dwelling District).

BACKGROUND

While implementing the recent Chapter 62 amendments, adopted by City Council in June 2011, staff has identified several unintended consequences that have arisen from the changes. The three amendments to Chapter 62 described below are proposed by staff to provide relief in situations where the application of the requirements would make it difficult to make minor changes to a developed site. The draft amendment language is attached to this report.

The Ordinance Revisions Committee reviewed the draft amendments on November 1, 2011 and made several revisions to the proposal.

PROPOSED AMENDMENTS

Section 5:602(2)(d) and (g) Vehicular Use Area Landscaping and Screening: The recent amendments to Chapter 62 require a maximum of 15 parking spaces without a landscaped island break and a requirement that 50% of the interior landscaping areas be depressed to accommodate storm water. These standards apply to all site plan submittals, including administrative amendments.

The proposed amendments will exempt administrative amendments from these requirements,

with the exception of administrative site plan extensions. Administrative amendments are intended to accommodate minor modifications to a site plan. The current language discourages minor improvements to a developed site because, in many cases, expensive modifications to existing parking lots would be required to accommodate the landscaping requirements.

Section 5:603(D) Conflicting Land Use Buffers: The recent amendments to Chapter 62 require a conflicting land use buffer for the side and rear yards of parcels zoned R3 and R4 when adjacent to a parcel principally used or zoned for residential purposes. This new language requires additional vegetation to be planted along the periphery of new multiple-family construction sites adjacent to residential uses. The new landscaping will help screen new residential buildings from existing neighborhoods. Prior to this modification, conflicting land use buffers were only required to screen parking lots and solid waste areas in residential areas.

The intent of this change was to address new residential construction on sites with substantial side setback requirements. However, the R4C zoning district primarily includes existing building on small lots in neighborhoods that do not historically have large open areas between lots. The R4C district also has small side setback requirements (12 feet).

The proposed amendments will not change the requirement to provide conflicting land use buffers for new development in the R3, R4A, R4B, R4D, and R4E zoning districts. Under this amendment, properties in the R4C zoning district will be exempt from this side and rear yard buffer requirement, but must still provide a conflicting land use requirement for parking lots and solid waste collection areas.

Prepared by Jeff Kahan
Reviewed by Wendy Rampson

11/30/11

Attachments: 11/29/11 Draft Amendments