
***ITEM #3** Provo City Development Services requests Ordinance Text Amendments to Chapter 15.20, landscaping requirements. Citywide Application. Hannah Salzl (801) 852-6423
hsalzl@provo.org PLOTA20230079

Applicant: Development Services

Staff Coordinator: Hannah Salzl

ALTERNATIVE ACTIONS

1. **Continue** to a future date to obtain additional information or to further consider information presented. *The next available meeting date is May 10, 2023 at 6:00 P.M.*
2. **Recommend Denial** of the requested Ordinance Text Amendment. *This action would not be consistent with the recommendations of the Staff Report. The Planning Commission should state new findings.*

Relevant History: Recent discussions about water use and further urban canopy expansion led to a review of landscaping codes to clarify language and standardize requirements among yards, parkstrips, and parking lots. These proposed amendments were developed in collaboration with the Power, Public Works, and Parks Departments.

Neighborhood Issues: There has not yet been a neighborhood meeting on this item and staff has not received any feedback on the request at the time of this report.

Summary of Key Issues:

- Subsection 15.20.060(6)(a) currently requires a minimum of 35% vegetative coverage in yards, not including trees and weeds. 15.20.120(1)(b) currently limits non-vegetative coverage to 60% in parkstrips wider than four feet.
- Subsections 15.20.090(3)(a)(i-iii) and 15.20.100 require that landscaped strips and diamonds in parking lots be at least five feet wide, despite the City's requirement for seven-foot-wide parkstrips to allow for bigger trees.
- Staff has found that the requirements for perimeter parking lot landscaping in 15.20.100 is ambiguous and could benefit from clear graphics and tables.

Staff Recommendation: That the Planning Commission recommend approval of the proposed text amendments to the Provo City Council.

OVERVIEW

Parkstrips are currently limited to 60% nonvegetative coverage while xeric landscaping in front yards requires a minimum of 35% vegetative coverage (not including trees and weeds). By amending the requirements for both parkstrips and yards to a minimum of 40% vegetative coverage (not including trees), the City can standardize language while slightly increasing the amount of vegetation required for xeric landscaping. Staff recommend that the minimum vegetative coverage requirement for interior landscaping strips in a parking lot be increased from 35% to 40% to remain consistent.

Provo City has worked to expand the city's urban tree canopy over the last several decades. As part of this effort, the City expanded park strip widths from four to seven feet. The seven-foot parkstrips have allowed for larger trees with wider canopies. This has increased shade, which reduces the amount of water needed for plants under the canopy and also reduces ambient temperatures by mitigating the urban heat island effect.

However, perimeter and interior landscaping strips in parking lots still have a minimum width of five feet in 15.20.090(3)(a)(i-iii) and 15.20.090(1)(a). By widening the landscaping strips to parkstrip widths to allow for bigger trees, we should see similar benefits. To offset the larger strips, staff recommend requiring five stall widths between landscaped islands rather than three (15.20.090(3)(ii)).

Staff also propose prohibiting diamond landscaping areas for two reasons. First, a seven-by-seven-foot diamond renders the surrounding stalls unusable. Second, the diamonds make snow removal challenging and can damage plows.

Other minor clarifications include:

- Adding permeable pavers to the list of permitted materials in parkstrips narrower than four feet in 15.20.120(1)(a),
- Removing the requirement that poured concrete in parkstrips narrower than four feet must use a decorative pattern in 15.20.120(1)(a),
- Changing the list of permitted trees in parking lot interior landscaping to instead reference the list of Class II trees in the City of Provo Tree Selection Guide,
- Encouraging subsurface irrigation and drought-tolerant species of turf in parking lot landscaping,
- Adding graphics to 15.20.100 to clarify perimeter parking lot landscape requirements, and
- Moving Table 15-20-1 from the end of the chapter to the section where it is referenced (15.20.100).

FINDINGS OF FACT

1. General Plan goal Transportation 4.c. calls for the City to “Increase the urban tree canopy and consider looking at the size of parkstrips to accommodate larger trees.”
2. General Plan goal Resource Management 1.g. calls for the City to “Increase the urban tree canopy.”
3. The General Plan reads, “To avoid becoming a concrete and asphalt-paved community, the city should continue to require developments to meet landscaping standards. Best practices for incorporating water-wise landscape or xeric landscaping design should be used where possible” (pg 27).
4. Best practices for xeric landscaping encourage vegetative coverage.
5. Permeable pavers in parkstrips narrower than four feet reduce water use in the parkstrip while maintaining stormwater permeability.
6. The proposed text amendments include standardizations and clarification that will make the sections easier to understand and apply.
7. Larger trees absorb more stormwater runoff, provide more shade, and capture more air pollution than smaller-stature trees.
8. The proposed text amendments do not remove the requirement that parking lots with more than six stalls have 50% tree canopy coverage within 20 years of planting.
9. Diamond-shaped landscape strips in parking lots are difficult to navigate with snow plows.

STAFF ANALYSIS

Staff support the City’s goal to increase vegetative coverage generally and urban tree canopy coverage specifically.

Provo City Code Section 14.02.020(2) sets forth the following guidelines for consideration of ordinance text amendments.

Before recommending an amendment to this Title, the Planning Commission shall determine whether such amendment is in the interest of the public, and is consistent with the goals and policies of the Provo City General Plan. The following guidelines shall be used to determine consistency with the General Plan:

- (a) Public purpose for the amendment in question.

Staff response: The amendment would support the City’s goals to increase tree canopy coverage, encourage the growth of larger trees, and create beautiful and varied landscapes. It also standardizes requirements and language to make the landscaping code more consistent and easier to understand.

(b) Confirmation that the public purpose is best served by the amendment in question.

Staff response: Staff believes that the proposed amendments serve the public, who will benefit from larger shade trees in parking lots and more consistent landscaping codes.

(c) Compatibility of the proposed amendment with General Plan policies, goals, and objectives.

Staff response: The proposed amendments are consistent with General Plan policies, goals, and objectives as listed in Findings of Fact 1-3.

(d) Consistency of the proposed amendment with the General Plan's "timing and sequencing" provisions on changes of use, insofar as they are articulated.

Staff response: There are no timing and sequencing issues related to this proposal.

(e) Potential of the proposed amendment to hinder or obstruct attainment of the General Plan's articulated policies.

Staff response: This proposal does not hinder or obstruct attainment of the General Plan's articulated policies.

(f) Adverse impacts on adjacent land owners.

Staff response: Staff do not foresee any adverse impacts from the xeric landscaping and parkstrip amendments. Depending on tree layout, larger trees in parking lots' perimeter landscaping could drop more leaves onto neighboring properties.

(g) Verification of correctness in the original zoning or General Plan for the area in question.

Staff response: This proposal does not affect the zoning of any areas. It addresses landscaping standards citywide.

(h) In cases where a conflict arises between the General Plan Map and General Plan Policies, precedence shall be given to the Plan Policies.

Staff response: There is not a conflict.

CONCLUSIONS

The proposed amendments have been developed in collaboration with the Power, Public Works, and Parks Departments in order to increase vegetative and tree canopy coverage, encourage larger shade, trees in parking lots, and standardize and clarify code requirements for landscaping. Staff recommend approval of the amendments.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Proposed Language 15.20.060 (Design Standards)
2. Proposed Language 15.20.120 (Parkways)
3. Proposed Language 15.20.090 (Parking Lot Landscaping)
4. Proposed Language 15.20.100 (Required Perimeter Parking Lot Landscape Improvements)

Attachment 1 – Proposed Language 15.20.060 (Design Standards)

15.20.060 Design Standards.

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(6) Xeric landscaping and water wise landscaping is encouraged in all yards if the landscaping plan for yards adjacent to a street meets the following criteria:

(a) Living vegetation including turf grass, shrubs, perennials, ornamental grasses or artificial turf grass shall cover a minimum of ~~thirty-five~~ ~~forty~~ percent (3540%) of the unbuilt surface area within three (3) years of planting. Tree canopy and weeds may not count toward this percentage;

(b) The remaining unbuilt area not covered by living vegetation or artificial turf grass shall be covered by bark or wood mulch, decorative rock, hardscape or any combination of these materials. Living plants should be ~~dispersed~~ ~~grouped~~ aesthetically throughout the yard;

(c) Living plants in the parkway area shall not be included in the minimum coverage requirement. Landscaping requirements for parkways shall be followed as defined in Section [15.20.120](#), Provo City Code.

(d) Artificial turf grass may be used in landscaping so long as it meets the following requirements:

(i) Artificial turf grass in yards adjacent to a street must have a blade length between two (2) inches and three (3) inches, have a natural green color, and be water permeable;

(ii) Artificial turf grass must be installed on top of a minimum of three (3) inches of sand, rocks, gravel, or similar product for drainage. Rocks, gravel or similar products shall range in size from three-eighths (3/8) inch to three-fourths (3/4) inch;

(iii) Artificial turf grass used for landscaping may not include rubber infill in a yard adjacent to a public street;

(iv) Outdoor green carpet shall not be used in landscaping;

(v) Upon request, specifications for installed artificial turf grass shall be provided to the Development Services Department.

Attachment 2 – Proposed Language 15.20.120 (Parkways)

15.20.120 Parkways.

The intent of this Section is to maintain the appearance of parkways, protect the public by prohibiting the use of materials that may cause harm or injury to pedestrians or vehicles, provide for safe and convenient access across parkways, expand landscape flexibility while not unreasonably inhibiting access for repair and maintenance of public utilities, encourage water conservation and generally improve environmental conditions along the City streets. All parkways shall be landscaped in conformance with the provisions of this Section.

(1) Parkway Landscaping.

(a) Parkways less than four (4) feet in width shall be landscaped with materials including bark, decorative stone, brick pavers, concrete pavers, permeable pavers, poured concrete or vegetative ground cover. ~~If poured concrete is used, a decorative pattern shall be used.~~

(b) Parkways four (4) feet or more in width shall be landscaped. Living vegetation including ~~T~~turf grass, vegetative materials ~~(not exceeding twenty-four (24) inches in height at maturity)~~ or artificial turf grass shall cover a minimum of forty percent (40%) of the unbuilt surface area within three (3) years of planting. Tree canopy and weeds may not count toward this percentage. Vegetative materials (excluding trees) shall not exceed twenty-four (24) inches in height at maturity. ~~as well as o~~Other materials including brick pavers, permeable pavers, or decorative stone may be used. Stone or rock smaller than one (1) inch in diameter presents a hazard to vehicular and pedestrian traffic and poses a clogging risk to City storm drains and shall not be allowed in parkway strips. ~~When non-vegetative materials are used, they are not to exceed sixty percent (60%) of the parkway surface area.~~ Thorn bearing plant species, asphalt or poured concrete shall not be permitted.

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Attachment 3 – Proposed Language 15.20.090 (Parking Lot Landscaping)

15.20.090 Parking Lot Landscaping.

(1) All parking lots designed for six (6) or more parking spaces shall provide landscaping in accordance with the provisions of this Section. Parking lots designed for five (5) or fewer parking spaces shall not be required to provide landscaping other than yard area landscaping and landscaped buffer requirements as specified in other sections of this Chapter.

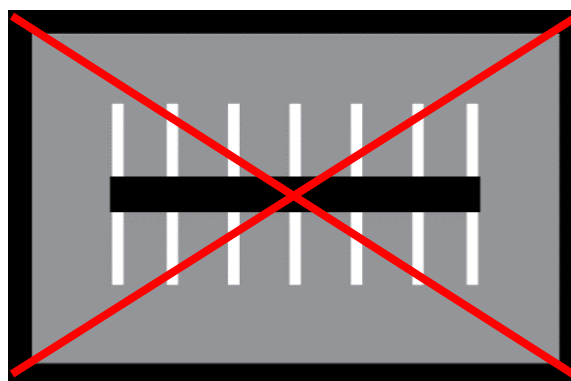
(2) Parking areas shall be landscaped at a rate of at least forty (40) square feet of landscaping per off-street parking stall. Landscaping areas located along the perimeter of a parking lot (beyond the curb or edge of pavement of the parking lot, up to a depth of ten (10) feet) may be included toward satisfying this requirement. Deciduous trees shall be planted within said parking area landscaping in a manner such that, at maturity of said trees, at least fifty percent (50%) of the paved surface area of the parking area will be shaded when the sun is directly overhead during the summer solstice.

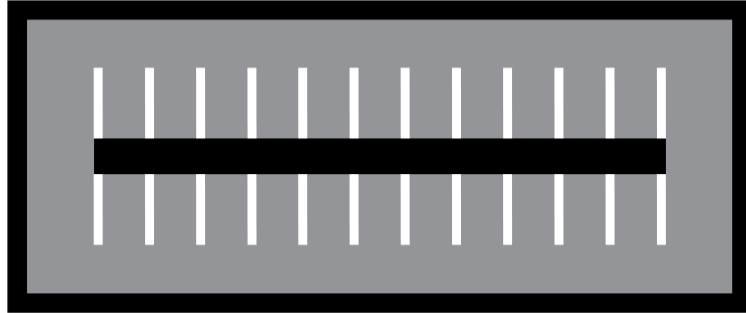
(3) Landscaped areas shall be improved in conformance with the following requirements:

(a) Interior landscape design shall meet one (1) of the following options and must be designed to provide fifty percent (50%) tree canopy coverage within twenty (20) years of planting:

(i) Landscaped strips perpendicular to the parking spaces with a minimum width of ~~five~~ seven (57) feet shall be required in front of or between rows of parking spaces, except when using vegetated drainage swales the minimum width shall be eight (8) feet;

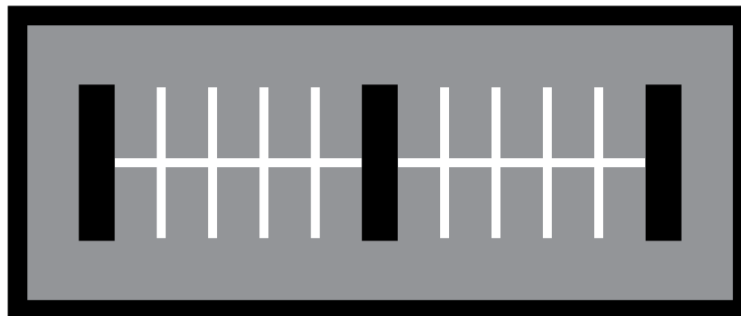
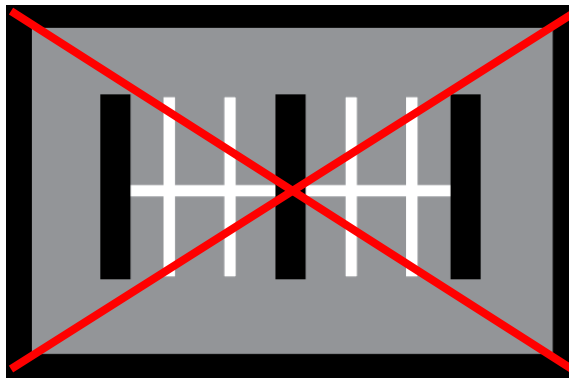
Figure 1. Landscaped Strips





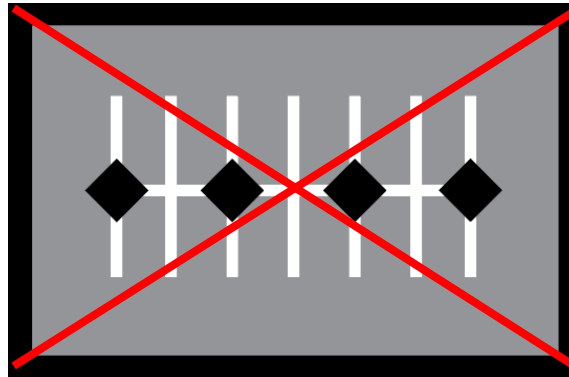
(ii) Landscaped islands with a minimum width of seven (7) feet parallel to the parking spaces at a spacing of every ~~three~~ five (35) stalls shall be required. ~~;~~ ~~or~~

Figure 2. Landscaped Islands



~~(iii) Landscaped diamonds, a minimum of five (5) feet by five (5) feet, shall be required at the intersection where the corner of four (4) parking spaces meet when neither landscaped strips nor islands are feasible.~~

Figure 3. Landscaped Diamonds



- (b) Two (2) feet of a parking space may have a clear overhang and count toward the required length of the parking space.
 - (c) Landscaped areas shall be sloped concavely to allow storm water infiltration.
- (4) The plants used to improve the landscape areas defined above shall conform to the following:
- (a) Primary plant materials used in the interior parking lot landscaping shall be deciduous shade trees.
 - (i) Ornamental trees, shrubbery, hedges, and other plants may be used to supplement the shade tree plantings in perimeter planting areas, but shall not be the only plants used in such landscaping.
 - (ii) Only [tree species identified in the City of Provo Tree Selection Guide in the Class II list](#) ~~the following shade tree species~~ shall be planted in parking lot landscaping: ~~Streetkeeper Honeylocust, Shademaster Honeylocust, English Hawthorne, Golden Raintree, Flowering Chokecherry, Green Vase Zelkova, Musashino Zelkova, Lacebark Elm, Littleleaf Linden, Common Hackberry, European Beech, Tricolor Beech, Silver Linden, Mountain Ash, and Pioneer, Frontier, Accolade, Homestead, and Patriot Elm hybrids~~ unless otherwise approved by the City Forester.
 - (iii) [Drought-tolerant species of turf are encouraged.](#)
 - (iv) [Sub-surface irrigation is encouraged.](#)
 - (b) One (1) shade tree shall be provided for every four (4) parking spaces; and
 - (i) When low impact development infiltration is infeasible (according to the Storm Drainage System Design and Management Manual, Chapter 11),

the area of LID designs with underdrains or impermeable liners may be credited towards the required numbers of trees at the rate of two hundred (200) square feet of LID area equal to one (1) tree; up to fifty percent (50%) of the number of required trees.

(c) Interior parking lot landscaping area shall be planted with ground cover at a density that will achieve ~~thirty-five~~ forty percent (~~35~~40%) cover within two (2) years.

(5) Six (6) inch by six (6) inch minimum poured concrete curb controls with drainage inlets or parking stops shall be installed around all required landscaping within the interior of parking lots for the protection of the landscaping.

Attachment 4 – Proposed Language 15.20.100 (Required Perimeter Parking Lot Landscape Improvements)

15.20.100 Required Perimeter Parking Lot Landscape Improvements.

(1) **Perimeter parking lot landscaped strips and islands must have a minimum width of seven (7) feet.** The landscape requirements identified in Table 15-20-1, Required Perimeter Parking Lot Landscape Improvements ([see \(f\) below](#)), provide for the enhancement of parking lots by recognizing two (2) distinct conditions. The first is where parking lots are located in front and side street areas, and a uniform scheme of landscaping is required to protect the aesthetics along public streets. The second condition is where parking lots are located within rear and interior side yards, and minimum requirements for beautification of both residential and nonresidential uses are the City's goal.

(a) The intent of this Section is to require a higher level of landscaping for residential uses (principally multifamily uses) than for nonresidential uses.

(b) The improvements established in Table 15-20-1 shall be required only for parking lots with six (6) or more stalls and where the lot is located within a required yard or within twenty (20) feet of a lot line. For reduction of impacts between dissimilar uses, see Sections [14.34.300](#) and [15.20.110](#), Provo City Code.

(c) Where both parking lot landscaping and landscape buffers are required, the more restrictive shall apply.

(d) In no case shall parking be allowed in a required front or street side yard setback.

(e) **Landscaped strips shall meet one (1) of the following options:**

(i) **Landscaped strips perpendicular to the parking spaces with a minimum width of seven (7) feet, except when using vegetated drainage swales the minimum width shall be eight (8) feet;**

Figure 3. Landscaped Strips



(ii) Landscaped islands with a minimum width of seven (7) feet parallel to the parking spaces at a spacing of every five (5) stalls.

Figure 4. Landscaped Islands



(f)

Table 15-20-1. Required Perimeter Parking Lot Landscape Improvements

Required Landscaping	Front Yards and Side Yards Abutting a Street	
Shade Trees	1 tree per 50 feet of yard length, measured to the nearest whole number (in addition to required parkway trees).	
Shrubs	1 shrub per 3 feet, on center along 100% of the yard length. Shrubs with mature height not more than 3 feet unless lower shrub height is specifically required in this Chapter for front yard areas.	
Ground Cover	Landscape area outside of shrub masses shall be established in turf or other ground cover.	
Required Landscaping	Rear and Interior Yards	
	Residential Use (including institutional residential uses)	Nonresidential Use
Shade Trees	1 tree per 30 feet of yard length, measured to the nearest whole number.	1 tree per 50 feet of yard length, measured to the nearest whole number.
Shrubs	1 shrub per 3 feet, on center along 100% of the yard length. Shrubs shall have a mature height not less than 3 feet.	1 shrub per 6 feet, on center along 100% of the yard length. Shrubs shall have a mature height not less than 3 feet.
Ground Cover	Landscape area outside of shrub masses shall be established in turf or other ground cover.	Landscape area outside of shrub masses shall be established in turf or other ground cover.