

Chapter 14

LANDSCAPING AND SCREENING

SECTION 14.1 PURPOSE

It is the intent of this Chapter to require buffer zones, landscaping and screening to reduce the negative impact between incompatible land uses. It is further intended to preserve and enhance the aesthetic qualities, character, privacy and environment of the Township.

SECTION 14.2 REQUIRED BUFFER ZONES

- A. A buffer shall be required on any parcel proposed for development that borders a different Zoning District as indicated in 13.2-E. Where the adjacent Zoning District is more intensive, for example, Commercial District bordering Residential District, the required buffer shall be installed only on the property which is in the more intensive District. This does not, however, preclude the least intensive District from being landscaped, nor does it override other requirements of this Ordinance pursuant to required setbacks and landscaping thereof.
- B. The specified buffer shall be required on the subject parcel even if the adjacent parcel is unimproved land. A performance bond may be submitted in lieu of the required buffer where adjacent land is unimproved. The buffer shall be installed when the adjacent property begins development and completed prior to any occupancy of the adjoining use.
- C. When any developed parcel existing as of the date of this Ordinance or amendment thereto is rezoned to a less restrictive Zoning District, for example, High Density Residential to Low Density Residential, any required buffer shall be installed in compliance with this Chapter within six months of the effective date of the rezoning.
- D. If two Zoning Districts requiring a buffer are separated by a street, the design of the required buffer zone shall be reduced by one level, for example, a required Major Buffer shall be reduced to a Moderate Buffer. Notwithstanding the foregoing, the minimum buffer installed shall be a Minor Buffer.

E. The following chart defines the required buffers between adjacent Zoning Districts:

BUFFER ZONE	ADJACENT DISTRICT								
	AG	SR	WR	UR	MHP	OSC1&2	GC	RC	IND
AG	NR		Moderate			Major			
SR	NR		Moderate			Major			
WR	NR			Moderate			Major		
UR	Moderate		NR		Moderate		Major		
MHP	Moderate			NR	Moderate		Minor		Moderate
OSC1&2	Moderate			NR			Minor		Moderate
GC	Major			Minor	NR			Moderate	
RC	Major			Minor			NR		Moderate
IND	Major			Moderate				NR	

NR = None Required

F. Buffer Zone Development Standards

1. Required buffer zones shall comply with and be maintained to the following standards:

Buffer Requirements	Major	Moderate	Minor
Minimum width	50 feet	30 feet	10 feet
Equivalent of two rows of approved trees staggered at a maximum of	20-foot intervals	20-foot intervals	30-foot intervals
Six-foot high continuous obscuring screen	Required	Required	Required

2. The required six-foot high continuous obscuring screen may be comprised of plant material, berming, screen walls or fences or any combination of these elements in addition to the required plant materials.
3. If berming is used for all or part of the obscuring screen, all required plant materials shall be placed on the top and both sides of the slope.
4. If a screen wall or fence is used for all or part of the obscuring screen, the equivalent of four shrubs is required per 20 linear feet on each side of the wall or fence.
5. The balance of the required buffer shall be covered with grass or approved permanent vegetative ground cover in accordance with this Chapter.
6. Any plant material, berm, obscuring screen or other landscape feature shall be installed in such a manner as to not create negative impact on drainage patterns on the site or on adjacent properties, obstruct vision for reasons of safety, ingress or egress or cause damage to utility lines (above and below ground) and public roadways.

SECTION 14.3 GENERAL LANDSCAPE DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS

A. Minimum Plant Material Standards

1. All plant materials shall be certified to be hardy to Montcalm County, free of disease and insects and conform to the standards of the American Association of Nurserymen. All landscaping shall be maintained in a healthy, neat and orderly state, free from refuse and debris. Any dead or diseased plants shall be replaced.
2. Minimum Plant Size at Time of Installation:

Tree Type	Minimum Size at Planting
Deciduous Canopy Tree	2-1/2 inch caliper
Deciduous Ornamental Tree	2 inch caliper
Evergreen Tree	6 foot height
Deciduous Shrub	2 foot height
Upright Evergreen Shrub	2 foot height
Spreading Evergreen Shrub	12-24 inch spread

3. Should the Zoning Administrator determine upon inspection that adequate landscaping screen on a site already exists or that a landscaping screen is not required, the applicable provisions of this Chapter may be waived in whole or in part. Criteria that shall be used when considering a landscaping screen waiver shall include, but shall not be limited to:
 - a. Topography variations
 - b. Existence of natural vegetation
 - c. Existing and proposed building placement
 - d. Sight distances
 - e. Adjacent land uses
 - f. Existence of floodplain and areas of poor soil
4. Plant materials shall not consist of more than 50% of any one plant species.
5. The following trees are not permitted as they split easily, their wood is brittle and breaks easily, their roots clog drains and sewers and they are unusually susceptible to disease or insect pests:

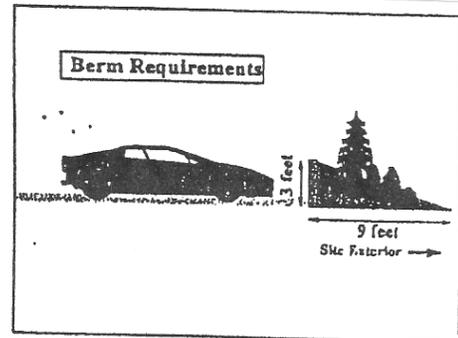
<u>Common Name</u>	<u>Horticultural Name</u>
Boxelder	Acer Negundo
Ginkgo	Ginko Biloba, female only
Honey Locust	Gleditsia Triacanthos (with thorns)
Mulberry	Morus Species
Poplar	Populus Species
Black Locust	Robinia
Willow	Salix Species
American Elm	Ulmus Americana
Siberian Elm	Ulmus Pumila

Slippery Elm/Red Elm
Chinese Elm

Ulmus Rubra
Ulmus Parvifola

B. Minimum Standards for Berms

1. Berms shall maintain a side slope not to exceed a one-foot rise to a three-foot in width ratio.
2. Berm areas not containing planting beds shall be covered with grass or approved permanent vegetative ground cover maintained in a healthy growing condition.
3. If a berm is constructed with a retaining wall or by terracing, the earthen slope shall face the exterior of the site.



C. Minimum Standards for Obscuring Screen Walls and Fences

1. All obscuring screen walls and fences shall be constructed with new, durable, weather-resistant, easily maintained materials. Chain link and barbed wire fences are not permitted.
2. The obscuring screen wall or fence may be constructed with openings that do not exceed 20% of the wall surface. The openings shall not reduce the intended obscuring effect of the wall.

D. Detention/retention areas shall be permitted within buffer zones provided they do not hamper the screening intent of the buffer or jeopardize the survival of the plant materials.

E. Outdoor solid waste dumpsters shall be screened by a continuous opaque screen at least six feet high. The screen may be comprised of berming, plant material, screen walls or fences or any combination of these elements. Dumpsters may be installed within buffer zones.

F. If a project is constructed in phases, the landscape screen may also be constructed in phases. The Zoning Administrator shall determine the extent of the landscaping required for each phase based on:

1. Adjacent land uses
2. Distance between land uses
3. Operational characteristic both on- and off-site
4. Building heights
5. Physical characteristics of the site such as topography and existing vegetation

G. If weather conditions or other factors are determined by the Zoning Administrator to be sufficient to warrant a delay in installing landscaping, a performance guarantee of an adequate amount to ensure the installation of all required landscaping within a reasonable period of time shall be required.

H. Pursuant to this chapter (14) of landscaping and screening, all required items, whether living (e.g., shrubs, lawns) or non-living (e.g., fences, curbs),

shall be maintained for posterity by the property owner in all zones. If maintenance is lacking, the Township will send a letter to the property owner stating he has 30 days to begin maintenance, and an additional 30 days to complete maintenance – for a total of 60 days. If maintenance is not completed within this timeframe, the property owner will be in violation of ZO 79.

SECTION 14.4 PARKING LOT LANDSCAPING

A. Applicability

1. This Section is applicable to parking lots serving any non-residential or multiple-family use in any District. A parking lot landscape plan shall be submitted with any application for site plan review, zoning permit, building permit or when otherwise required by this Ordinance.
2. Landscaping required by this Section shall comply with the applicable provisions of this Chapter except that the requirements of this Section shall be waived if the area normally required to be landscaped is located in a required buffer area.

B. Existing Parking Areas

1. These requirements shall be met for any existing parking lot which is expanded more than 25% of its original existing area after the adoption of this Article, or when any parking area is substantially altered (e.g., removal and replacement of existing pavement).
2. Any landscaping existing within or bordering any existing parking area shall be waived if the area normally required to be landscaped is located in a required buffer area.
3. Any landscaping existing within or bordering any existing parking area shall not be removed unless replaced with landscaping meeting the requirements of this Chapter.

C. General Requirements

1. Landscaping shall be planned and installed such that, when mature, it does not obscure traffic signs, fire hydrants or lighting and does not create negative impact on drainage patterns on the site or on adjacent properties, does not obstruct vision for reasons of safety, ingress or egress or cause damage to utility lines (above or below ground) and public roadways.
2. Any landscaped area required by this Chapter shall be constructed outside any public or private street right-of-way.
3. Any required landscaped areas, including perimeter areas, shall be protected by a raised or rolled concrete curb.

D. Frontage Landscaping

1. Where any parking area directly abuts or faces a public or private street, a screen shall be required between the parking area and the road right-of-way. Such screen shall consist of, at a minimum, one of the following:

- a. A strip of land at least five feet in width and a solid screen comprised of a hedge or decorative wall, or any combination thereof, which measures at least three feet in height, or
 - b. A strip of land at least 10 feet in width containing landscaping equivalent to a Minor Buffer, as described in Section 14.2-F, except that the obscuring screen need not be provided.
 - 2. The required area of any parking lot shall incorporate the equivalent of one planting island or peninsula.
- E. Interior Landscaping
 - 1. Interior landscaping shall be provided for any parking area containing 12 or more parking spaces.
 - 2. The interior of the parking lot shall begin at the outside boundary of the parking area.
 - 3. The interior area of any parking lot shall incorporate one planting island or peninsula per each 24 parking spaces or parts thereof.
 - 4. Each planting island or peninsula shall be at least 90 square feet in area with a minimum single dimension of nine feet; however, planting islands and peninsulas may be combined to meet the overall minimum requirement.
 - 5. Landscaped islands may be used to separate pedestrian areas, maneuvering areas and drives.
 - 6. At least one approved tree shall be included in each planting island with the balance of the island covered with grass or approved shrubs or ground cover.

SECTION 14.5 ADDITIONAL LANDSCAPING AND SCREENING

- A. Where deemed appropriate by the Planning Commission or other approving authority for site plans, where screening is needed to minimize visual, noise or other impacts from the proposed development or where there may be some other adverse effect caused by the use being reviewed, or where otherwise required by this Ordinance, additional landscaping or screening may be required. Such adverse effect may include, but shall not be limited to, noise, lighting, hazard, traffic conflict or other such effect.
- B. The nature of such landscaping or screening shall be that required by Section 14.2. The Planning Commission or other approving authority for site plans may designate which buffer is appropriate for the required landscaping or screening.
- C. All other provisions of this Chapter shall be met.
- D. The parking and maneuvering areas of any drive-thru site shall be fenced and screened from the view of any abutting Residential District or use by a decorative fence or wall, or a landscaped equivalent.
- E. Outdoor speakers at a drive-thru facility shall be located in a way that minimizes sound transmission toward adjacent property.

SECTION 14.6 RESIDENTIAL LANDSCAPING INSTALLATION

- A. Any site on which a use permitted by this Ordinance is established shall install a lawn or other type of living ground cover for all land areas not covered by impervious surfaces within 12 months following the issuance of a Certificate of Occupancy. A performance guarantee may be required by the Township to ensure that landscaping is installed within the 12-month period. No landscape materials other than lawn and street trees approved by the Zoning Administrator shall be planted within any public or private road right-of-way.

Residential landscaping shall comply with the applicable provisions of this Chapter.