

**CITY OF ST. JOHNS  
ORDINANCE NO. 692**

**AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND TITLE XV: LAND USAGE, CHAPTER 155: ZONING  
CODE REGARDING LANDSCAPE STANDARDS**

**THE CITY OF ST. JOHNS ORDAINS:**

**Section 1. Amendment to Title XV: Land Usage, Chapter 155: Zoning Code—Landscape Standards.** The City amends Title XV, Chapter 155 regarding Landscape Standards to read as follows:

**“§ 155.295 INTENT.**

(A) The intent of this subchapter is to promote the public health, safety and welfare by establishing minimum standards for the design, installation and maintenance of landscaping as buffer zones between zoning districts, along roadways, between adjacent buildings and in parking lots.

(B) The standards of this subchapter are intended to guide and encourage the protection and enhancement of the environment through requirements for site design and the use of landscape materials. Applicants are encouraged to provide landscaping in addition to the minimum requirements of this chapter to improve the function, appearance and value of their property.

**§ 155.296 APPLICATION.**

(A) The requirements set forth in this subchapter shall apply to all lots, sites, and parcels which are developed or expanded following the effective date of this chapter that are subject to site plan review, as described in Section 155.276. No site plan or land use shall be approved unless said site plan shall show landscaping consistent with the provisions of this subchapter.

(B) The approving body for a Site Plan Approval as described in Section 155.276 (Zoning Administrator, Site Plan Review Committee, or Planning Commission) may also determine that existing conditions of the parcel would prevent development of required buffer zones, , landscaping or green belts, without causing negative impacts on neighboring properties. If such a determination is made, the approving body may grant an exception from the landscaping provisions of this subchapter.

(C) The following are minimum landscape standards and the city may require additional landscaping based on individual circumstances. If applicable this determination will be made during site plan review.

**§ 155.297 MINIMUM BUFFER ZONES.**

(A) Buffering requirements. A buffering zone shall be established within the setback of the subject site, screening it from adjacent sites according to Table 10-1. Walls are prohibited from areas along a public street right-of-way or front yard.

The height of the wall or berm of the subject site shall be an effective height in relation to the adjacent site. Parking lot screening requirements in Section 155.297 shall be met in all applicable situations, regardless of Zoning District Plantings shall meet the standards described in Section 155.297.B, walls shall meet the standards described in § 155.297(E), and berms those of § 155.297(F). Buffers that utilize a combination of plant materials, berms, and walls shall be encouraged.

TABLE 10-1

		<b>District of Subject Parcel</b>				
		<b>R-1, R-2, R-3, R-MH</b>	<b>CBD, MC, P, T</b>	<b>MU</b>	<b>GC, O</b>	<b>I-1, I-2</b>
<b>District of Adjacent Parcel</b>	<b>R-1, R-2, R-3, R-MH</b>	No Required Buffer Zone.	Buffer Plantings (Subsection B)  OR Buffer Wall (Subsection E)	Buffer Plantings (Subsection B)  OR Buffer Wall (Subsection E)	Buffer Plantings (Subsection B)  OR Buffer Wall (Subsection E)	Buffer Plantings (Subsection B)  AND Buffer Berm (Subsection F)  Approving Body may approve Buffer Wall in lieu of Berm.
	<b>MU</b>	No Required Buffer Zone.	Buffer Wall (Subsection E)	Buffer Plantings (Subsection B)	Buffer Plantings (Subsection B)  OR Buffer Wall (Subsection E)	Buffer Plantings (Subsection B)  OR Buffer Wall (Subsection E)

	<b>CBD, MC, P, T</b>	No Required Buffer Zone.	No Required Buffer Zone.	No Required Buffer Zone.	No Required Buffer Zone.	Buffer Plantings (Subsection B)  OR Buffer Wall (Subsection E)
	<b>GC, O</b>	No Required Buffer Zone.	No Required Buffer Zone.	No Required Buffer Zone.	No Required Buffer Zone.	Buffer Plantings (Subsection B)
	<b>I-1, I-2</b>	No Required Buffer Zone.	No Required Buffer Zone.	No Required Buffer Zone.	No Required Buffer Zone.	No Required Buffer Zone.

(B) Buffer Plantings shall consist of two trees, either canopy and/or deciduous, and four shrubs per each 25 linear feet along the property line.

(C) When an adjacent property is zoned or used as a single-family residence, and is across a public street from the subject site, the Site Plan Approving Body may require additional landscaping to screen parking lots access drives, loading zones, outdoor display areas, storage yards, or accessory structures.

(D) Parking and storage.

(1) All loading and unloading areas which are visible from residential districts or public thoroughfares, shall be screened by a vertical screen consisting of structural or plant materials no less than six feet in height. Screening shall be sufficient to contain blowing debris and screen the loading and unloading areas from adjacent property owners.

(2) All storage areas (including areas for storage of refuse) shall be screened on four sides by a fence or wall no less than six feet in height. Three screened sides may be allowed with Planning Commission approval if the applicant can demonstrate just cause. The fence or wall shall not allow light to penetrate through it. The four sides screened shall be those sides where the potential visual impact of the storage areas is greatest for adjacent property owners.

(E) Buffer wall standards. Required walls shall comply with the standards listed below.

(1) Walls shall be located on the lot line except where underground utilities interfere and/or where this chapter requires conformance with yard setback lines.

(2) Walls shall have no openings for vehicular traffic or other purposes, except as otherwise provided in this chapter, unless specifically approved by the City Commission.

(3) Walls shall be constructed of decorative concrete block, brick, pressure treated wood, or comparable nonporous materials on the exterior sides facing an affected district.

(4) Walls shall be durable, weather resistant, rustproof and easily maintainable. Wood or wood products shall be high quality durable materials as approved by the Building Inspector. Wood fences shall be sight obscuring sufficient to shield light and block blowing debris. Masonry walls may be constructed with openings which do not in any square section (height and width) exceed 20% of the surface. Where walls are so pierced, the openings shall be so spaced as to maintain the obscuring character required and shall not reduce minimum height requirement.

(5) Walls must be maintained in good condition by the property owner.

(6) Curbing, bollards, or plant material shall be required where parking is adjacent to walls. Bumper blocks shall not be permitted.

(F) Buffer Berm standards. Required berms shall be constructed as landscaped earth mounds with a crest area at least four feet in width. The exterior face of the berm shall be constructed as an earthen slope. The interior face of the berm may be constructed as an earthen slope or retained by means of a wall, terrace or other means acceptable to the Building Department. Whenever an earthen slope is provided, it shall be constructed with a slope not to exceed one foot of vertical rise to three feet of horizontal distance (1:3) (see illustration). Free form naturalistic contouring and berm shaping is encouraged.

#### **§ 155.298 REQUIRED PARKING LOT TREES AND PARKING LOT ISLANDS.**

(A) Parking lots that exceed 16 spaces shall be landscaped with one tree per 8 spaces, subject to the requirements of this section.

<b>TABLE 10-3 Parking Lot Trees</b>	
<b><i>ZONING DISTRICT</i></b>	<b><i>Number of parking spaces</i></b>
<i>Multiple Family, Commercial and Industrial</i>	<i>1 canopy tree per 8 spaces</i>

(B) Tree location.

(1) All of the required parking lot trees shall be placed within an area including the parking surface and extending 15 feet from the surface edge. At least two-thirds (2/3) of the required trees shall be dispersed throughout the interior of the parking area. Tree requirements may be adjusted based on review by the Planning Commission.

(2) Parking lot tree calculations and interior parking lot tree requirements shall be rounded up.

(C) Tree base. Each tree shall be surrounded by an area of grass or living ground cover at least 150 square feet in size and a minimum of eight feet wide to provide for adequate resources of air and water. Tree plantings shall also be protected from automobiles with curbing or other suitable device.

(D) Design of parking lot islands.

(1) All parking lot islands shall contain decorative material and be curbed. Islands shall be at least 150 feet in area. Each island shall be at least ten feet wide, with a depth two feet shorter than the depth of the adjacent parking space.

(2) Islands shall have a minimum of ten feet radius at the ends facing main aisles. A minimum radius shall be two foot where island is not adjacent to main traffic aisle.

#### **§ 155.299 STREET FRONTAGE LANDSCAPING.**

The intent of street frontage landscaping is to provide a consistent buffer along vehicular corridors. A green belt shall be planted within or adjacent to the right of way of any public street. If planting in the right of way is not permitted by the road agency with jurisdiction in the right-of-way, or is not acceptable to a utility company, the green belt plantings shall be planted within the required setback. The approving body may allow such planting to be placed anywhere within the front yard if there is no front yard parking. The green belt shall meet the following standards.

(A) The green belt shall include only living materials and planting beds, except for approved sidewalks, signs, driveways and essential services.

(B) Green belts shall include one deciduous canopy tree per 30 linear feet of the frontage including any openings for driveways, sidewalks, or easements. The approving body may waive this requirement for roadways where City streetscape has been installed.

(C) Greenbelt trees should be arranged to simulate a natural setting such as massing or staggered rows, except where a more formal arrangement is determined to be more consistent with the existing character of the city.

(D) Landscaping materials arrangement shall insure adequate site visibility for motorists, adequate clearance for pedestrians and vehicles and accessibility to fire hydrants. Refer to the visibility controls section in §§ 155.180 through 155.197.

(E) Green belts shall be a minimum of eight foot wide. Trees shall not be planted closer than four feet from pavement, curb or other structures.

### **§ 155.300 PLANT MATERIAL SPECIFICATIONS.**

All plant material shall be free of disease and insects at time of planting, and conform to the American Standard for Nursery Stock of the American Association of Nurserymen ANZI Z60.1.

(A) Minimum plant material planting size.

- (1) Evergreen trees shall be a minimum of five feet in height.
- (2) Narrow evergreens shall be a minimum of three feet in height.
- (3) Ornamental trees shall be a minimum of ten feet in height or 1 3/4" caliper.
- (4) Large deciduous shrubs shall be a minimum of four feet in height.
- (5) Deciduous canopy trees shall be a minimum of 15 feet in height or 2" caliper.
- (6) Small evergreen or deciduous ornamental shrubs shall be a minimum of 18" - 24" spread.

(B) Plant material spacing.

- (1) Plant materials shall not be placed closer than four feet from the fence line or property line.
- (2) Where plant materials are placed in two or more rows, plantings shall be staggered in rows and/or grouped informally to create a naturalistic appearance.
- (3) Evergreen trees shall be planted not more than 15 feet on center.
- (4) Narrow evergreens shall be planted not more than six feet on center.
- (5) Deciduous canopy trees shall be planted not more than 25 feet on center.
- (6) Ornamental trees shall be planted not more than ten feet on center.
- (7) Large deciduous shrubs shall be planted not more than four feet on center.

(C) Plant material and design variety. The overall landscape plan shall demonstrate a variety of plant material with not more than 50% of any one species utilized throughout the design.

(D) Suggested (not required) plant materials.

- (1) Evergreen trees.
- (2) Juniper.
- (3) Hemlock.

- (4) Fir.
- (5) Pine. (Dwarf, Globe, Pendulous, species/Cultivars are not permitted.)
- (6) Spruce.
- (7) Douglas-Fir.
- (E) Narrow Evergreens. (Dwarf, Globe, Pendulous, species/Cultivars are not permitted.)
  - (1) Column Hinoki Cypress.
  - (2) Blue Columnar Chinese Juniper.
  - (3) Pyramidal Red-Cedar.
  - (4) Swiss Stone Pine.
  - (5) Pyramidal White Pine.
  - (6) Irish Yew.
  - (7) Douglas Arbor-Vitae.
  - (8) Columnar Giant Arbor-Vitae.
- (F) Ornamental trees.
  - (1) Flowering crabs.
  - (2) Service Berry.
  - (3) Dogwood.
  - (4) Redbud.
  - (5) Hornbeam.
  - (6) Hawthorn.
  - (7) Magnolia.
- (G) Large deciduous shrubs.
  - (1) Honeysuckle.
  - (2) Viburnum.
  - (3) Mock-Orange.
  - (4) Forsythia.
  - (5) Lilac.
  - (6) Ninebark.

- (7) Cotoneaster.
- (8) Hazelnuts.
- (9) Euonymus.
- (10) Privet.
- (11) Buckthorn.
- (12) Sumac.
- (H) Deciduous canopy trees.
  - (1) Oaks.
  - (2) Hard Maples.
  - (3) Hackberry.
  - (4) Birch.
  - (5) Beech.
  - (6) Ginkgo (male species only).
  - (7) Honeylocust (thornless and seedless cultivars only).
  - (8) Hop Hornbeam.
  - (9) Linden.
- (I) Trees not permitted (as credit for site plan review/landscaping requirements).
  - (1) Box Elder.
  - (2) Soft Maples (Silver).
  - (3) Elms.
  - (4) Poplars.
  - (5) Willows.
  - (6) Horse Chestnut (Nut Bearing).
  - (7) Tree of Heaven.
  - (8) Catalpa.

**§ 155.301 EXISTING TREE PRESERVATION INCENTIVES.**

(A) The standards outlined below are intended to encourage the preservation of quality and mature trees by providing credits, at City Commission approval, toward the required trees for green belts, buffer zones and within parking lots.

(B) All trees over eight inches caliper shall be identified on the site plan with notations of trees to be preserved and trees to be removed.

(C) Trees intended to be preserved shall be noted with a unique symbol on the site plan and be protected during construction through the use of construction fencing at or beyond the dripline of the tree or trees to be preserved.

(D) The approving body pursuant to site plan approval may allow credit for such plant material preservation if it will maintain and encourage the intent of the chapter. To obtain credit consideration the preserved trees shall be of a high quality and at least two inches caliper.

(E) To protect and encourage the continued health and vitality of the preserved trees, the ground within the dripline of the trees shall be maintained in the existing natural state. Storage of soils or other materials during or after construction within the tree dripline is prohibited.

(F) If preserved trees die within three years after construction the property owner shall replace with the number of trees that would have been required had the tree preservation credit not been provided. Said trees shall be replaced within 30 days of written notice from the city or within an extended time period as specified in said notice.

(G) After a site plan is approved, special permission by the Planning Commission will be required for the removal of trees proposed to be preserved on the site plan. The City Commission may condition their removal on their being replaced with the number of trees that would have been required had the tree preservation credit not been provided prior to site plan approval.

#### **§ 155.302 LANDSCAPE STANDARDS FOR PRINCIPAL STRUCTURES.**

These standards apply only to development which requires the site plan review process. Required principal structure landscaping shall be provided adjacent to or within close proximity to the perimeter of the principal structure. Landscape design is encouraged to face or be visible from public thoroughfares and principal structures on public accessways. The area of required landscape shall be based on the total ground floor square footage of the proposed principal structure:

TABLE 10-5  
Landscaping Around Principle Structures

Principal Structure

% Area of Required Landscape Based on Total Ground Floor Square Footage of Proposed Principal Structure

<b>District of Subject Parcel</b>
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<b>R-1, R-2, R-MH</b>	<b>R-3</b>	<b>CBD</b>	<b>MC, P, T</b>	<b>MU</b>	<b>GC, O</b>	<b>I-1, I-2</b>
0%.	Buildings with More than 4 Dwelling Units: 15%  Buildings with 4 or Fewer Dwelling Units: 0%	0%	10%	10%	10%	5%

(A) Plant material and planting design is encouraged to be ornamental in character and based on minimum ANSI standards for plant material type and spacing.

(B) Deciduous canopy trees and large evergreens will not be counted towards principal structure landscape requirements.

(C) Shredded hardwood, bark mulch, stone mulch, or vegetative ground covers shall be utilized within required landscape bed areas. Grass, lawn or sod will not be permitted.

(D) Area calculations shall be based on the limits of landscape beds. Applicants shall demonstrate that 2/3 of the bed will be occupied by mature plant material.

### **§ 155.303 MINIMUM STANDARD FOR INSTALLATION AND MAINTENANCE.**

(A) Installation . Landscaping shall be installed in a sound workmanlike manner and conform to the American Standard for Nursery Stock ANSI Z60.1. If building or paving construction is completed during a planting season, then no certificate of occupancy will be issued unless the landscaping meets the requirements herein provided. If building or paving construction is completed in an off planting season, the certificate of occupancy will be issued only after the owner provides a performance bond to ensure installation of required landscaping in the next planting season.

(B) Material removal . Tree stakes, guy wires and tree wrap are to be removed after one year.

(C) Maintenance. Greenbelt areas and plant materials required by this chapter shall be kept free from refuse and debris. Plant materials shall be maintained in a healthy growing condition, neat and orderly in appearance. If any plant material

required by this chapter dies or becomes diseased, they shall be replaced within 30 days of written notice from the city or within an extended time period as specified in said notice.

**”Section 2. Repealer Clause.**

All Ordinances or parts of Ordinances in conflict herewith are hereby repealed only to the extent necessary to give this Ordinance full force and effect.

**Section 3. Savings Clause.**

This Ordinance shall in no manner affect pending litigation, either civil or criminal, founded or growing out of any Ordinance, Resolution, Order, or parts hereof, hereby repealed, and this Ordinance shall in no manner affect any rights, claims, privileges, immunities, or causes of action of the City, or other person, either criminal or civil, that may have already occurred, accrued, or grown out of any Ordinance, Resolution, Order, or policy, or any part thereof, hereby repealed.

**Section 4. Validity and Severability.**

Should any portion of this Ordinance be found invalid for any reason, such a holding shall not be construed as affecting the validity of the remaining portions of this Ordinance.

**Section 5. Effective Date.**

This Ordinance shall be effective twenty (20) days from and after its adoption by the City of St. Johns City Commission and after its publication.

YEAS: Hufnagel, Gurski, Dzurka, Hyzer

NAYS: None

ABSTAIN: None

ABSENT: DeLiso

**CERTIFICATION**

As the City Clerk of the City of St. Johns, Clinton County, Michigan, I certify that this is a true and complete copy of an ordinance introduced by the St. Johns City Commission at a regular meeting held on February 24, 2025.

Scott Dzurka, Mayor \_\_\_\_\_

Mindy J. Seavey, Clerk \_\_\_\_\_

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