

# Article 12: Landscaping and Buffering

## Section 12.01 Purpose

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The purpose of this section is to protect and promote the public health, safety, general welfare, and beautification of Springfield Township through the township's ability to regulate land use in a method that utilizes the benefits of landscaping. Specifically, it is the purpose of this section to:

- (A) Protect privacy and provide buffering land uses of differing intensities;
- (B) Encourage the creation of an attractive appearance, provide interest and lessen the monotony along the public street;
- (C) Remove, reduce, lessen or absorb the impact between one use or zoning district and another;
- (D) Aid in noise, glare and heat abatement;
- (E) Contribute to the process of air purification, ground water recharge, and control of ground water runoff;
- (F) Encourage efforts to preserve large trees, natural wet lands, and/or other natural features;
- (G) Prevent tree loss by eliminating or reducing compaction, filling or excavation near tree roots;
- (H) Prevent or reduce soil erosion and sedimentation and stormwater runoff;
- (I) Enhance energy conservation;
- (J) Control the urban heat island effect; and
- (K) Increase and maintain property values.

## Section 12.02 Applicability

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- (A) For the purposes of this article, the Zoning Administrator shall be authorized to review and make decisions on landscaping plans as provided for in Section 519.171 of the Ohio Revised Code.
- (B) The development standards of this article shall apply to new property development and any collective substantial expansion of existing structures, except for individual single family dwellings and two family dwellings (duplexes) and parking lots of five spaces or smaller. Substantial expansion of existing structures shall be defined based on the criteria established in [Table 12.02-A](#).

TABLE 12.02-A: SUBSTANTIAL EXPANSION	
WHEN EXISTING STRUCTURE IS....	A SUBSTANTIAL EXPANSION IS...
0 - 1,000 Sq. Ft.	50% or Greater
1,001 - 10,000 Sq. Ft.	40% or Greater
10,001 - 25,000 Sq. Ft.	30% or Greater
25,001 - 50,000 Sq. Ft.	20% or Greater
50,001 Sq. Ft. and larger	10% or Greater

- (C) [Section 12.06: Buffering Between Land Uses](#) shall apply to any size expansion of a structure where such expansion will decrease the setback between the structure and a residential zoning district, the buffering and screening standards of this article shall apply.

(D) Where there is no expansion of a structure but the vehicular use area is expansion, this article shall apply to any new vehicular use areas.

## **Section 12.03 Landscaping and Buffer Plan**

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### **(A) LANDSCAPING AND BUFFER PLAN REQUIREMENT**

(1) Any property to which this article applies shall illustrate all proposed landscaping and buffer, including the proposed landscaping material, on a site plan or on a separate landscaping and buffer plan as part of the application for a zoning certificate.

(2) All plans shall include a table listing the existing plant material that will be retained and all proposed plant materials within the landscaping and buffer areas. This shall include the common and botanical names, sizes and other remarks as appropriate to describe the landscaping material selection.

### **(B) APPROVAL OF A LANDSCAPING AND BUFFER PLAN**

Criteria for the approval of a landscaping and buffer plan shall be as follows:

(1) No zoning certificate shall be issued without approval of a landscaping and buffer plan.

(2) Failure to implement the landscaping and buffer plan within 12 months of the issuance of a zoning certificate shall be deemed a violation of this resolution.

(3) The township may seek professional advice from a landscape architect or licensed nurseryman in the review of the submitted plans. The cost of such consultation may be passed on the applicant.

### **(C) CHANGES TO AN APPROVED LANDSCAPING AND BUFFER PLAN**

The Zoning Administrator may authorize minor changes from the requirements of this article.

(1) For purposes of this subsection, minor changes shall be defined as changes to the landscaping plans that are not visible and do not affect the theme or character established for the subject development project.

(2) A revised plan shall be submitted to the Zoning Administrator for review.

## **Section 12.04 Landscaping Materials and Standards**

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### **(A) RESPONSIBILITY FOR INSTALLATION OF LANDSCAPING MATERIALS**

All landscaping and buffering shall be provided by the person in charge of or in control of developing the property, whether as owner, lessee, tenant, occupant or otherwise.

### **(B) USE OF LANDSCAPED AREAS**

(1) Vehicle parking shall not be permitted in landscaped areas.

(2) All screening shall be free of advertising or other signs, except for pertinent directional or instructional signs for the efficient flow of vehicles.

### **(C) EASEMENTS**

Nothing shall be planted or installed within any underground or overhead utility, drainage, or gas easement without the consent of the utility provider, easement holder, or the township.

### **(D) LANDSCAPING MATERIALS**

The following items are suitable for landscaping materials used individually or in combination with each other, subject to review and approval by the Zoning Administrator.

**(1) Existing Landscape Material**

- a) Unless otherwise noted, existing landscape material in healthy condition can be used to satisfy the requirements of this article in whole or in part provided they meet all requirements of this article.
- b) The Zoning Administrator shall determine satisfaction of this requirement.

**(2) Walls and Fences**

- a) Walls and fences shall be constructed of weatherproof materials, including pressure treated wood, redwood, cedar, synthetic lumber, or vinyl, and aluminum or galvanized hardware. Except as specifically noted, chain link fences with or without wooden or synthetic slat material shall not be allowed when used to satisfy landscaping and screening requirements.
- b) Chain link fences with or without wooden or synthetic slat material shall not be allowed when used to satisfy the buffer requirements of this article.
- c) Walls and fences may be designed with a finished side on both sides of the fence, but where only one side is finished, the wall and fence shall be designed to orient that finished side away from the subject lot so the finished side faces the adjacent lots.

**(3) Plants**

- a) All plants shall be living and hardy within the United States Department of Agriculture's Hardiness Zone 5, and thriving in Summit County. Plant materials used in conformance with the provisions of this section shall conform to the standards of the American Association of Nurserymen and shall have passed any inspection required under state regulations.
- b) Trees shall be balled and burlapped or in containers. Shrubs, vines, and ground covers can be planted as bare root as well as balled and burlapped or from containers.
- c) All landscaping materials shall be free of noxious weeds, disease, and pests.
- d) Nursery stock identification tags shall not be removed from any planting prior to inspection and approval of final installation by the township.
- e) A plant list has been established for Springfield Township and lists prohibited street trees and recommended plant types for the township. The plant list is maintained by the Zoning Administrator.
- f) The following are specific standards for landscaping materials.

**(i) Deciduous Trees**

- A. Deciduous trees shall have a minimum caliper of at least two inches Diameter-at-Breast-Height (DBH) and a clear trunk height of six feet that conforms to acceptable nursery industry procedures at the time of planting.
- B. If deciduous trees are to be used for screening purposes, additional materials listed in this article shall be used to create a dense buffer.

**(ii) Ornamental and Understory Trees**

Ornamental and understory trees shall have a minimum height of four feet or a minimum caliper of at least 1.5 inches DBH that conforms to acceptable nursery industry procedures at the time of planting.

**(iii) Evergreen Trees**

- A. Evergreen trees shall be a minimum of six feet in height at the time of planting.

- B. Evergreen plantings used for buffering shall be planted at a maximum distance of 20 feet on center to provide an effective buffer.
- C. White pine trees are not acceptable trees for screening/buffering purposes.

**(iv) Shrubs and Hedges**

- A. Shrubs shall be at least 20 inches in height at the time of planting and have a mature height of not less than 36 inches.
- B. Hedges shall be at least 36 inches in height at the time of planting.
- C. All hedges shall be designed to provide an effective, dense screen and mature height of at least six feet within four years after the date of the final approval of each planting when used for perimeter landscaping or screening applications.

**(v) Grass and Ground Cover**

- A. Grass of the fescue, bluegrass or perennial rye families shall be planted in species normally grown as lawns in Summit County.
- B. In swales or other areas subject to erosion, solid sod, erosion reducing net or suitable mulch shall be used and grass seed shall be sown for immediate protection until complete coverage is achieved.
- C. Grass sod shall be clean and free of weeds and noxious pests or diseases.
- D. Ground cover shall be planted in such a manner as to provide 75 percent complete coverage after two growing seasons.

**g) Additional Landscaping Beyond the Minimum Requirements**

Once the minimum landscape requirements have been met, any size plant may be installed on a lot to supplement the minimum requirements.

**(4) Species Diversity**

- a) When fewer than 40 trees are required on a site, at least two different species shall be utilized, in roughly equal proportions.
- b) When 40 or more trees are required on a site, at least three different species shall be utilized, in roughly equal proportions.
- c) Required shrubs shall utilize the same species diversity requirements.
- d) Nothing in this subsection shall be construed so as to prevent the utilization of a more diverse number of different species than specified above.

**(5) Earth Mounds or Berms**

Earth mounds or berms may be used as buffers, however, differences in natural elevation between areas requiring a buffer does not constitute an earth mound. Earth mounds shall be constructed of earthen materials and shall conform to the following:

- a) Mounds or berms shall conform to any county grading requirements. The maximum slope shall be a maximum of one foot in height for every three feet in length.
- b) Mounds and berms shall be designed with physical variations in height and alignment throughout its length.
- c) Landscaping plant materials may be installed on mounds or berms and shall be arranged in an irregular pattern to accentuate the physical variation and achieve a natural appearance.

- d) The landscaping and buffer plan shall show sufficient detail to demonstrate compliance with the above provisions, including a plan and profile of the mound or berm, soil types and construction techniques.
- e) Mounds and berms shall be located and designed to minimize the disturbance of existing trees located on the site or adjacent thereto.
- f) No part of any mound shall be elevated more than 30 inches above natural grade within 10 feet of any right-of-way or property line, and the toe of such mound shall be located a minimum of three feet from any right-of-way or property line.
- g) Adequate ground cover shall be used and maintained to prevent erosion of the earth mound and to achieve a natural appearance.
- h) No mound wastewater treatment system or other similar on-site wastewater treatment system shall count toward the buffering requirement.

**(6) Grade Changes**

In cases where grading is necessary that results in a parking lot lower in elevation than the surrounding area or adjacent right-of-way, the resulting embankment shall be planted with low shrubs and shade or ornamental trees. The type and variety of plantings shall be based on the steepness of the slope. The maximum slope shall be a maximum of one foot in height for every 2.5 feet in length for landscaping between the lot line and the parking lot.

**(7) Measurements**

Whenever there is a height measurement related to landscaping and buffering, such measurement shall be taken from the highest finished adjacent grade to the top of the material.

**Section 12.05 Landscaping Along Streets and in Front Yards**

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All areas within the required building and parking setback, excluding driveway openings, shall be landscaped and maintained with the following minimum requirements:

- (A) Within this area, three deciduous trees and ten shrubs for every 100 linear feet of street frontage, not including drive entrances.
- (B) Areas not devoted to trees and shrubs shall be planted with grass, ground cover, or other live landscape treatment, excluding paving or gravel, including land in the street right-of-way that is not occupied by street or sidewalk pavement, or mulch.
- (C) Landscaping materials shall not be fruit or nut bearing nor have thorns or briars.
- (D) Landscaping materials may be placed in any manner and do not have to be equally spaced. Applicants are strongly encouraged to locate trees and shrubs in a manner that will prevent damage from salt and other materials used to melt snow from the roads.

**Section 12.06 Buffering Between Land Uses**

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Development shall provide a buffer between land uses in accordance with this section. The buffer shall have the width, amount of vegetation, and other features to properly mitigate the negative effects of contiguous incompatible uses.

**(A) BUFFER LOCATION**

- (1) Buffer areas shall be located between the uses for which they are required to buffer or screen.

(2) The buffer areas shall be placed on the property being developed, regardless of ownership.

**(B) STRUCTURES**

No structure shall be permitted within a required buffer area other than a wall, fence, mound, or earth berm. Driveways may cross perpendicularly across a buffer area, disturbing the least amount of buffer.

**(C) REQUIRED BUFFER AREA**

Buffer areas shall be provided as set forth below:

(1) When a development in a C-1, C-2, C-3, O-R, or MUPD district abuts a residential district, a buffer area with a minimum width of 25 feet shall be provided unless a greater setback is required as part of a variance or conditional use.

(2) When a development in a I-1, I-2, or PIPD district abuts a residential district, a buffer area with a minimum width of 35 feet shall be provided unless a greater setback is required as part of a variance or conditional use.

(3) When a use other than single-family, two-family, attached dwellings, or conservation developments are permitted in any residential district, a buffer area with a minimum width of 20 feet shall be provided unless a greater setback is required as part of a variance or conditional use.

(4) Where the minimum setback for the applicable zoning district differs from the required buffer yard, the more restrictive standard shall apply.

**(D) SCREENING**

Screening within the buffer area shall consist of one or a combination of two or more of the following in order to form a solid continuous visual screen:

(1) A dense vegetative planting incorporating trees/evergreens/hedges of a variety that are equally effective in winter and summer.

(2) A non-living opaque structure such as a brick, slump block, stucco masonry wall, or a solid fence that is compatible with the principal structure.

(3) A fence having openings with a landscaped area at least 10 feet wide.

(4) A maintained, landscaped earthen berm at least 10 feet wide.

(5) Maintenance of the existing natural vegetation that forms a screen with a height not less than six feet and shall be equally effective in winter and summer.

**(E) HEIGHT OF SCREENING**

The height of screening shall comply with the following:

(1) Visual screening walls, fences, mounds, or earthen berms and fences in combination shall be a minimum of six feet high measured from the natural grade, in order to accomplish the desired screening effect.

(2) Vegetation shall be a minimum of six feet high measured from the natural grade, in order to accomplish the desired screening effect. The required height shall be achieved no later than twelve months after the initial installation.

**(F) PLACEMENT OF SCREENING**

The location of the wall, fence, or vegetation shall be placed within the buffer area to maximize the screening effect. Trees, evergreens, and/or hedges shall be adequately spaced and appropriately staggered to meet the screening objectives within two years after the initial installation. The landscaping and buffer plan shall indicate the specific type of option(s) to be used.

**(G) ADDITIONAL SCREENING REQUIRED**

Whenever a lot with a lower elevation than the abutting residential parcel requires screening and buffering, the height of the required screening shall be sufficient to adequately screen the site from the adjacent residential lot. The Zoning Administrator, and BZA when applicable, may, in its review of the landscaping plan, require more than the minimum requirements specified in this section in order to accomplish the desired screening effect.

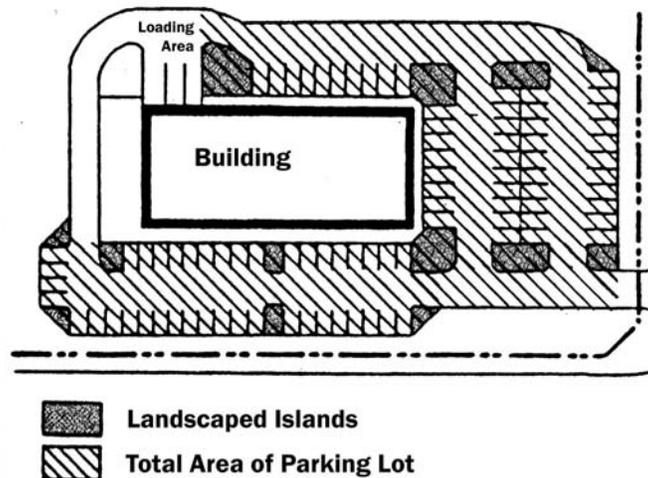
## **Section 12.07 Landscaping and Screening of Vehicular Use Areas**

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**(A) INTERIOR LANDSCAPING OF PARKING LOTS**

**(1) Amount of Landscaping Required**

- a) For all parking areas with 5 to 50 parking spaces, a total of five percent of the paved area (not including loading spaces or stacking lanes/spaces) shall be landscaped under the provisions of this section.
- b) For all parking areas with more than 50 parking spaces, a total of 10 percent of the paved area (not including loading spaces or stacking lanes/spaces) shall be landscaped under the provisions of this section.



*Figure 12.07-1: Parking Lot Interior Calculation*

- (2)** The required landscaping shall be located within landscaped islands. Landscaped areas that extend into parking areas from the perimeter landscaping may count toward this requirement but only that area that extended into the parking area. See [Figure 12.07-1](#). See also [Figure 12.07-2](#).



Figure 12.07-2: Landscaping and screening is intended to soften the appearance of large expanses of parking areas and can also provide areas for stormwater management.

- (3) Landscaped islands shall be developed and distributed throughout the parking lot to define major circulation aisles and driving lanes; and to provide visual and climatic relief from broad expanses of pavement.
- a) Each island shall have a minimum dimension of four feet by nine feet.
- b) There shall be a minimum of one deciduous tree and one shrub provided for every 15 parking spaces; such trees shall be planted within the required landscaped islands but not all islands are required to have a tree or shrub.
- c) Additional shrubs or low, spreading plant materials may be planted within the required landscaped islands provided there is no impairment to the visibility of motorists or pedestrians.
- (4) Landscaped areas on the site that are outside of any vehicular use area and do not touch the parking area shall not be counted as interior parking lot landscaped areas.
- (5) The landscaped islands shall be protected by the installation of continuous curbs or wheel stops with a height of six inches.
- (6) The landscaped islands should be designed, to the maximum extent feasible, to accommodate stormwater runoff. The use of porous pavement and/or specially designed brick or block is encouraged to increase on-site water detention for plant material and ground water supplies and to reduce problems associated with runoff.

## **Section 12.08 Screening of Outside Storage Areas or Other Service Areas**

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### **(A) INTENT AND APPLICABILITY**

In addition to all other landscaping standards in this section, screening shall be required to conceal specific nonresidential areas of high visual or auditory impact. Such areas shall be screened at all times, unless otherwise specified, regardless of adjacent uses, districts, or other landscaping material.

### **(B) ITEMS TO BE SCREENED**

The following areas shall be screened in accordance with this section:

- (1) Large waste receptacles (dumpsters) and refuse collection points (including large recycling containers);

- (2) Loading and service areas;
- (3) Outdoor freezers or other accessory structures;
- (4) Outdoor storage areas (including storage tanks) not subject to the outdoor storage requirements of [Section 5.04\(S\): Outdoor Storage](#);
- (5) Mechanical equipment and utility meters not located on, and screened by, the building or structure.

**(C) SCREENING REQUIREMENTS**

- (1) All screening shall be approved during zoning certificate review.
  - (2) All items to be screened shall be shielded from view from public roads and adjoining residential zoned property.
  - (3) All items to be screened shall be located in the side or rear yards.
  - (4) All items to be screened shall be provided with a visual screen consisting of fences, walls, berms or approved plant materials or a combination thereof. The screening shall be at least one foot higher than the item to be screened but not less than six feet in height and shall extend along three sides of the items to be screened. For dumpster, a gate shall be required on the fourth side where access is provided to the dumpster. The gate shall be opaque enough to shield from view the interior of the service area.
  - (5) All plant materials used for required screens around service areas shall be of an evergreen variety.
  - (6) If an adjacent building provides screening on one side of the service area, only two sides need to be screened, bermed, or walled, with a gate required in front of the service area. The gate shall be opaque enough to shield from view the interior of the service area.
  - (7) Roof mounted mechanical equipment shall be screened by parapet walls or other screening device with height not lower than six inches below the height of mechanical equipment (See also [Figure 10.04-4.](#)).
- (8) Fence or Wall Screens**
- a) Fences or walls shall be compatible with the architectural materials and patterns of the principal structure. See [Figure 12.08-1.](#)
  - b) Under no circumstances shall a wall be constructed of unfinished concrete or cinder block.



*Figure 12.08-1: Use of a wall and fencing for screening that is architecturally compatible with the principal building.*

## **Section 12.09 Installation and Maintenance**

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- (A)** Required yards and all other portions of the lot not covered by permitted structures shall be landscaped with grass, trees, shrubbery and/or other appropriate ground cover or landscaping material, which at all times shall be pruned, trimmed, and maintained in good and healthy condition.
- (B)** All landscaping materials shall be installed and maintained according to accepted nursery industry procedures. The property owner shall be responsible for continued, perpetual maintenance of all landscaping materials, and shall keep them in a proper, neat and orderly appearance, free from refuse, debris, and noxious and unsightly weeds at all times.
- (C)** The landscaping shall regularly be kept clean and free of debris, litter, and weeds.
- (D)** All unhealthy or dead plant material shall be replaced within 30 days, or by the next planting period, whichever comes first. Replacement material shall conform to the original intent of the landscaping and buffer plan.
- (E)** Violation of installation provisions or failure to maintain the landscaping shall constitute a violation of this resolution. Such violation be grounds for the Zoning Administrator to require replacement of the landscape material or initiate legal proceedings to enforce the provisions of this resolution.