



# City of Salisbury Landscape Ordinance and Design Guidelines



**Department of Land Management and Development**  
**Salisbury, NC**  
**(704) 638-5240**

February 1997



# SALISBURY LANDSCAPE ORDINANCE

## DESIGN GUIDELINES

### PREFACE

During 1994 the Salisbury City Council, in three separate zoning cases, heard the concerns of neighborhood residents confronted with the prospect of commercial development adjacent to their property. In each case the developer would be removing vegetation that had for many years buffered the neighborhood from a busy highway, constructing commercial buildings, paving parking lots, installing security lighting and generally changing the character of established neighborhoods.

As a result of these clearly expressed concerns, the Council immediately recognized the need for additional tools to mitigate the potential conflict between vitally important commercial development and valid neighborhood interests. The Council turned to the *resource* that could best resolve this complicated issue - the citizens of *Salisbury*. A committee composed of members of the Planning Board, the Community Appearance Commission and the Salisbury Tree Board worked along with the City Planning and Development Services staff to draft a policy that was ultimately reviewed and adapted to an ordinance format by a full committee of the Planning Board. Subsequent public hearings, discussions with members of the development community and meetings with *individuals* helped further refine the ordinance.

From the outset, the basic goals of the Council were:

- ❖ to improve the aesthetic quality, environmental well-being and economic vitality of the community,
- ❖ to provide physical separation between zoning districts
- ❖ and to offer guidelines for developers to enhance the appearance of their property.

The ordinance was formally adopted to be effective September 19, 1996. These guidelines have been developed to graphically interpret the written language of the Salisbury Landscape Ordinance. It is our hope that this booklet will assist designers, developers and property owners as plans are made for physical changes to commercial, institutional, industrial and multi-family residential properties throughout our community. Further, we hope that these guidelines will serve present and future citizens by encouraging a cleaner, greener, more visually attractive and *better* Salisbury.



Margaret H. Kluttz, Mayor  
February, 1997



*We will ever strive for the ideals and sacred things of the city, both alone and with many; we will unceasingly seek to quicken the sense of public duty; we will revere and obey the city's laws; we will transmit this city, not less, but greater, better, and more bountiful than it was transmitted to us.*

from the Creed of the Ancient Athenians



# THE CITY OF SALISBURY LANDSCAPE ORDINANCE DESIGN GUIDELINES

## INTENT

The purpose of this document is to facilitate the use of the Landscape Ordinance by providing illustrations of key text requirements. The Ordinance text is printed in its entirety with the illustrations numbered to correspond to the appropriate text. In some instances, the illustrations are further described with written explanations in small text near the corresponding graphic. The illustrations and the explanations are intended to help the user understand the ordinance and/or to suggest possible design alternatives; however, the language of the ordinance itself is the controlling factor in determining compliance.



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## ARTICLE X. LANDSCAPING REGULATIONS

### Section 10.01 Purpose and scope.

This article is intended to establish minimum standards for the design of landscapes for uses other than single family and two-family residential so as to improve the community aesthetically, economically and environmentally. This Article improves the appearance of the community through the provision of and the preservation of trees in order to better control soil erosion, reduce the hazards of flooding, stabilize the ground water tables, absorb carbon dioxide, supply oxygen, provide shade for cooling, screen noise, dust, glare, and preserve, protect and enhance the natural environment.

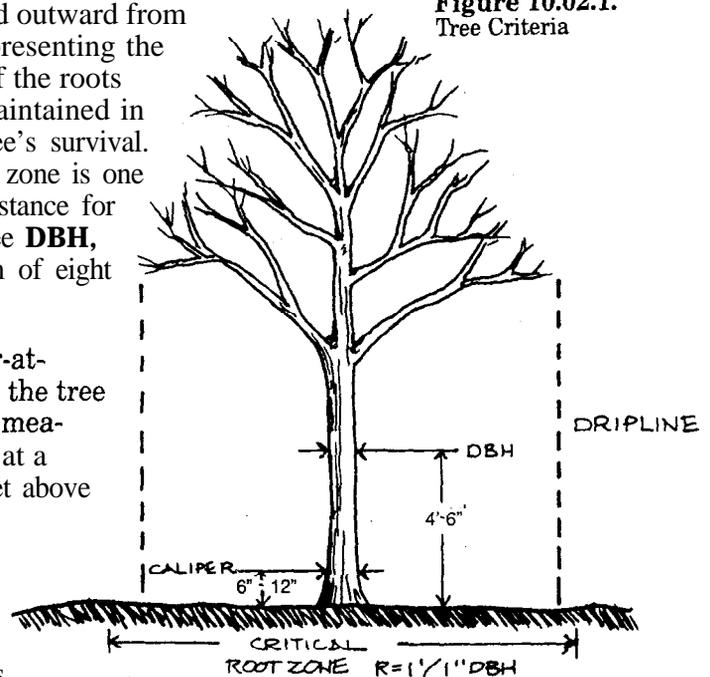
The **Planting Yard** regulations established herein are intended to minimize potential conflicts between abutting developments. The purpose of **Planting Yards** is to ensure that a natural area of appropriate size and density of plantings is located between zoning districts and/or uses.

### Section 10.02 Definitions

The following definitions shall apply to the regulation and control of **Landscaping** within this article:

- (1) **Caliper:** A standard trunk diameter measurement for nursery grown trees taken six inches above the ground for up to and including four-inch **Caliper** size, and twelve inches above the ground for larger sizes.
- (2) **Critical root zone (CRZ):** A circular region measured outward from a tree trunk representing the essential area of the roots that must be maintained in order for the tree's survival. The critical root zone is one foot of radial distance for every inch of tree **DBH**, with a minimum of eight feet.
- (3) **DBH: Diameter-at-breast-height** is the tree trunk diameter measured in inches at a height of 4.5 feet above the ground.
- (4) **Deciduous:** Those plants that annually lose their leaves.
- (5) **Drip Line:** A vertical line extending from the outermost edge of the tree canopy or shrub branch to the ground.

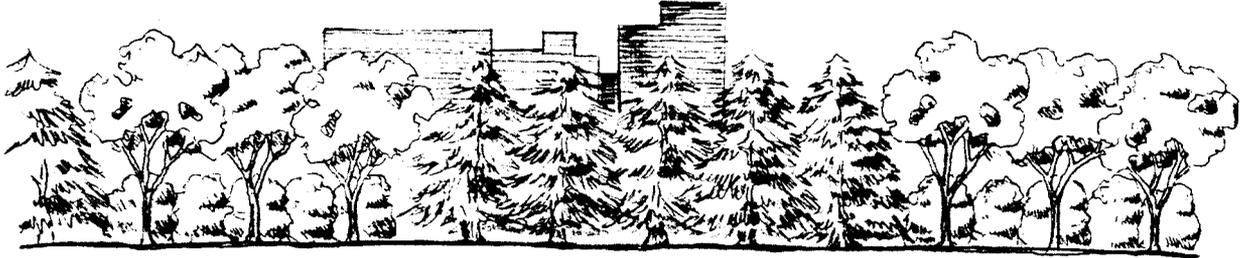
Figure 10.02.1.  
Tree Criteria



See Figure 10.02.1. above



- (6) Evergreen: Those plants that retain foliage throughout the year.
- (7) Evergreen Screen: A plant growing to over 20 feet in height at maturity that retains foliage year round that is planted to provide a dense vegetative screen for purposes of visual mitigation between zoning districts.  
See Figure 10.02.2



**Figure 10.02.2.** Evergreen Screen. An evergreen screen may vary in style according to site requirements and the designer's interpretation. A simple tall hedge of one plant species may be most appropriate in a setting where there is already a variety of visual elements or significant architectural character. However, where a site lacks visual detail or interest, as in the case of a nondescript commercial structure with an abundance of conspicuous parking area, a screen of mixed species might provide needed interest and visual diversion.

- (8) Ground Cover: A prostrate plant growing less than 2 feet in height at maturity that is grown for ornamental purposes. Ground Covers are used as an alternative to grasses. On slopes, Ground Covers control erosion while eliminating the maintenance of mowing on hillsides. Many Ground Covers survive in poor soils, shade and other adverse conditions.
- (9) Landscaping: The process or product of site development including grading, installation of plant materials, and seeding of turf or Ground Cover.
- (10) Parking Lot Plantings: Planting Areas within and adjacent to parking areas designed to shade and improve the attractiveness of large areas of pavement.
- (11) **Planting Area:** The area prepared for the purpose of accommodating the planting of trees, shrubs, and ground-covers.
- (12) Planting Yard: The required installation of Landscaping and screening materials between zoning districts and sometimes individual uses.  
See Figure 10.02.3 on page 4
  - (a) Type A Planting Yard: A planting strip having a minimum width of 8 feet which is intended to separate uses, provide vegetation in densely developed areas, and enhance the appearance of individual properties.



- (b) **Type B Planting Yard:** A low density screen having a minimum width of 10 feet which is intended to partially block visual contact between zoning classifications and create spatial separation.
  - (c) **Type C Planting Yard:** A medium density screen having a minimum width of 15 feet which is intended to partially block visual contact between zoning classifications and create spatial separation.
  - (d) **Type D Planting Yard:** A medium-high density screen having a minimum width of 20 feet which is intended to partially block visual contact between zoning classifications and create spatial separation.
  - (e) **Type E Planting Yard:** A high density screen having a minimum width of 25 feet which is intended to substantially block visual contact between zoning classifications and create spatial separation. **Type E Planting Yard** reduces lighting and noise that would otherwise intrude upon adjacent zoning classifications.
  - (f) **Type F Planting Yard:** A very high density screen having a minimum width of 30 feet which is intended to substantially block visual contact between zoning classifications and create spatial separation. **Type F Planting Yard** reduces lighting and noise that would otherwise intrude upon adjacent zoning classifications.
- (13) **Shrub, Large:** An upright plant growing 10 feet to 20 feet in height at maturity that is planted for ornamental or screening purposes.
  - (14) **Shrub, Medium:** A plant growing 5 feet to 10 feet in height at maturity that is planted for ornamental or screening purposes.
  - (15) **Shrub, Small:** A plant growing to less than 5 feet in height at maturity that is planted for ornamental purposes.
  - (16) **Staff Review Committee:** A committee consisting of a minimum of three staff members, designated by the Director of Land Management and Development, to review and approve plans submitted for alternate methods of compliance.
  - (17) **Street Tree:** A tree planted along the street behind the right-of-way.



- (18) Street Yard: A Planting Area parallel to a public street designed to provide continuity of vegetation along the right-of-way and to soften the impact of development by providing a pleasing view from the road.

See Figure 10.02.3

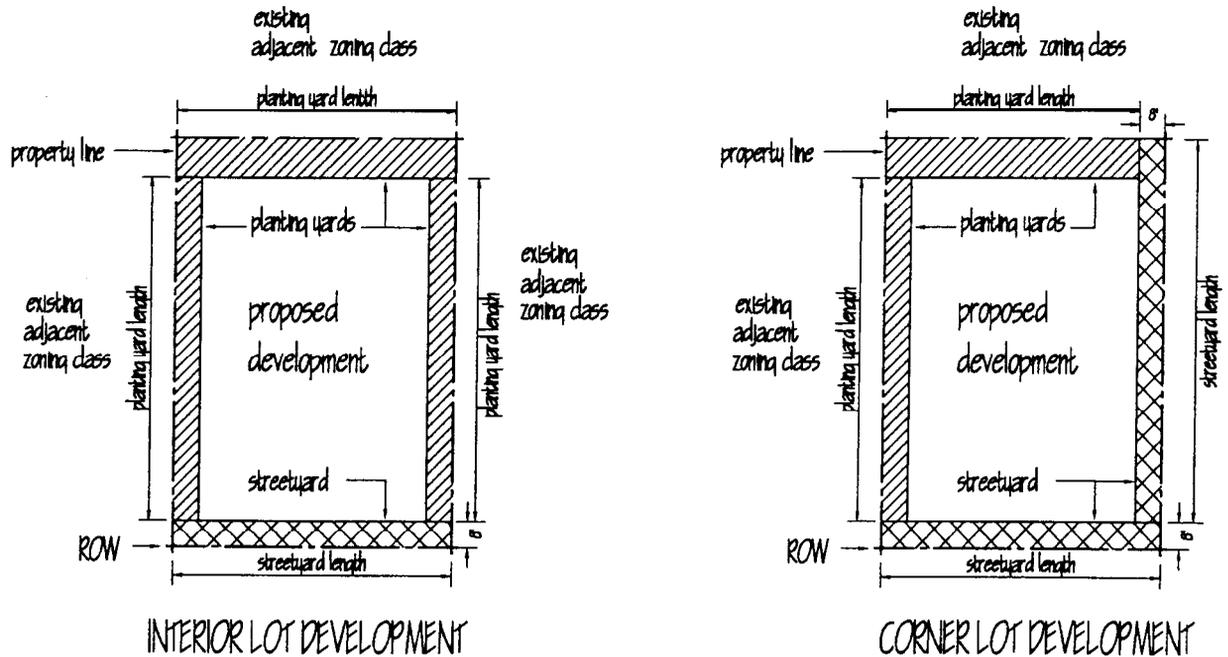


Figure 10.02.3 Street yards.

- (19) Tree, Ornamental: A small to medium tree, growing 15 feet to 40 feet in height at maturity, that is planted for aesthetic purposes such as colorful flowers, interesting bark, or fall foliage.
- (20) Tree, Shade: A large tree growing to over 40 feet in height at maturity, usually Deciduous, that is planted to provide canopy cover shade.
- (21) Vines: A woody plant that has a spreading pattern of growth. Vines may be used on the ground, on walls and on trellises.

See Figure 10.02.4 on Page 5

### Section 10.03 Applicability

The provisions of this ordinance shall apply to all uses other than single family and two-family residential.

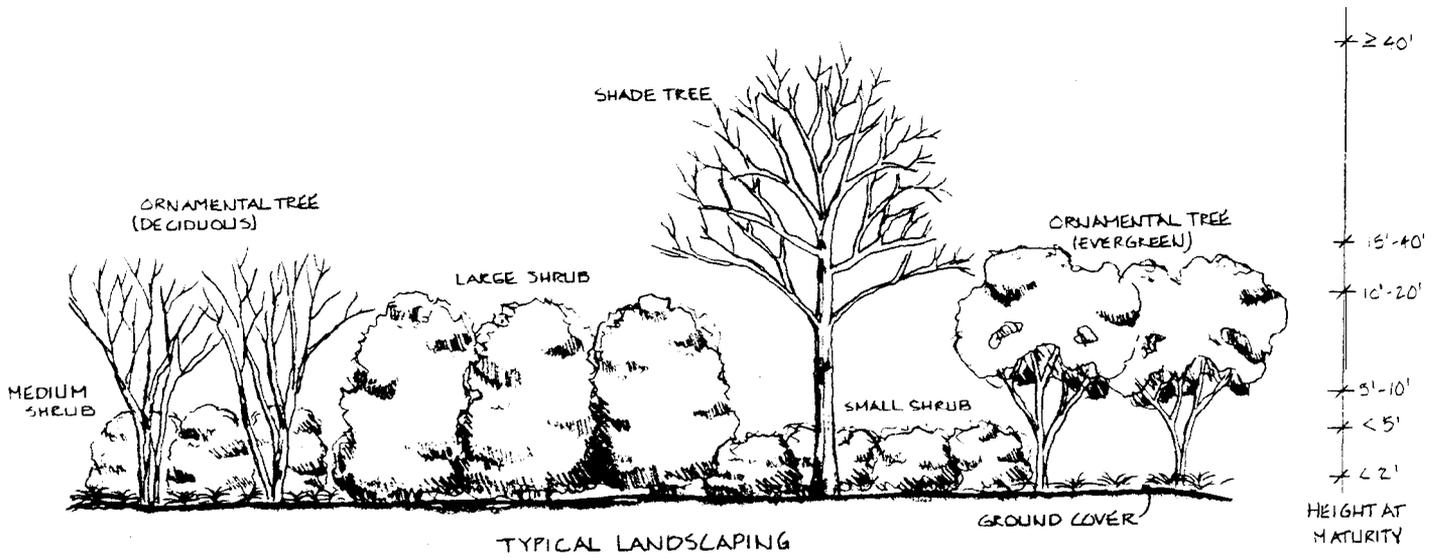


Figure 10.02.4. Plant Categories. See Appendix I-a, b and c for detailed descriptions of suggested species.

### NOTES



## Section 10.04 Planting Yards

Planting Yards are intended to separate different land uses and zoning districts from each other and are intended to eliminate or minimize potential nuisances such as dirt, litter, noise, glare of lights, signs, and unsightly buildings or parking areas. Planting Yard types are determined by six different levels based on zoning districts. The zoning districts have been divided into the following six levels:

### LEVEL 1:

#### RESIDENTIAL - SINGLE FAMILY AND TWO-FAMILY

- |                 |   |
|-----------------|---|
| A-1 and A-1-S   | Agricultural District and Special Agricultural District   |
| R-20 and R-20-S | Single Family-20 Residential District and Special Single Family-20 Residential District                     |
| R-15 and R-15-S | Single Family-15 Residential District and Special Single Family-15 Residential District                     |
| R-8 and R-8-S   | Single Family-8 Residential District and Special Single Family-8 Residential District                       |
| SFC and SFC-S   | Single Family Conservation Residential District and Special Single Family Conservation Residential District |
| LR-6 and LR6-S  | Limited Two-Family Residential District and Special Limited Two-Family Residential District                 |
| R-6 and R-6-S   | Two-Family Residential District and Special two-family Residential District                                 |

### LEVEL 2: RESIDENTIAL - MULTI-FAMILY

- |               |   |
|---------------|---|
| R-6A & R-GA-S | Multi-family Residential District and Special Multi-family Residential District   |
| RD-A & RD-A-S | Residential Development-A District and Special Residential Development-A District |
| RD-B & RD-B-S | Residential Development-B District and Special Residential Development-B District |

### LEVEL 3:

#### OFFICE INSTITUTIONAL AND RELATED CLASSES

- |               |   |
|---------------|---|
| B-1 and B-1-S | Office Institutional District and Special Office Institutional District                 |
| LO1 and LOI-S | Limited Office Institutional District and Special Limited Office Institutional District |
| PSP and PSP-S | Public/Semi-Public District and Special Public/Semi-Public District                     |
| CU and CU-S   | College and University District and Special College and University District             |



LEVEL 4:

COMMERCIAL - LOW AND MEDIUM INTENSITY

- B-CS & B-CS-S Convenience Service Business District and  
Special Convenience Service Business District  
B-2 & B-2-S Retail Business District and Special Retail  
Business District

LEVEL 5: COMMERCIAL - HIGH INTENSITY

- B-RT & B-RT-S Retail Trade Business District and Special  
Retail Trade Business District  
B-4 & B-4-S Highway Business District and Special  
Highway Business District  
B-5 & B-5-S Central Business District and Special Central  
Business District  
B-6 & B-6-S General Business District and Special General  
Business District  
B-7 & B-7-S Limited Business District and Special Limited  
Business District

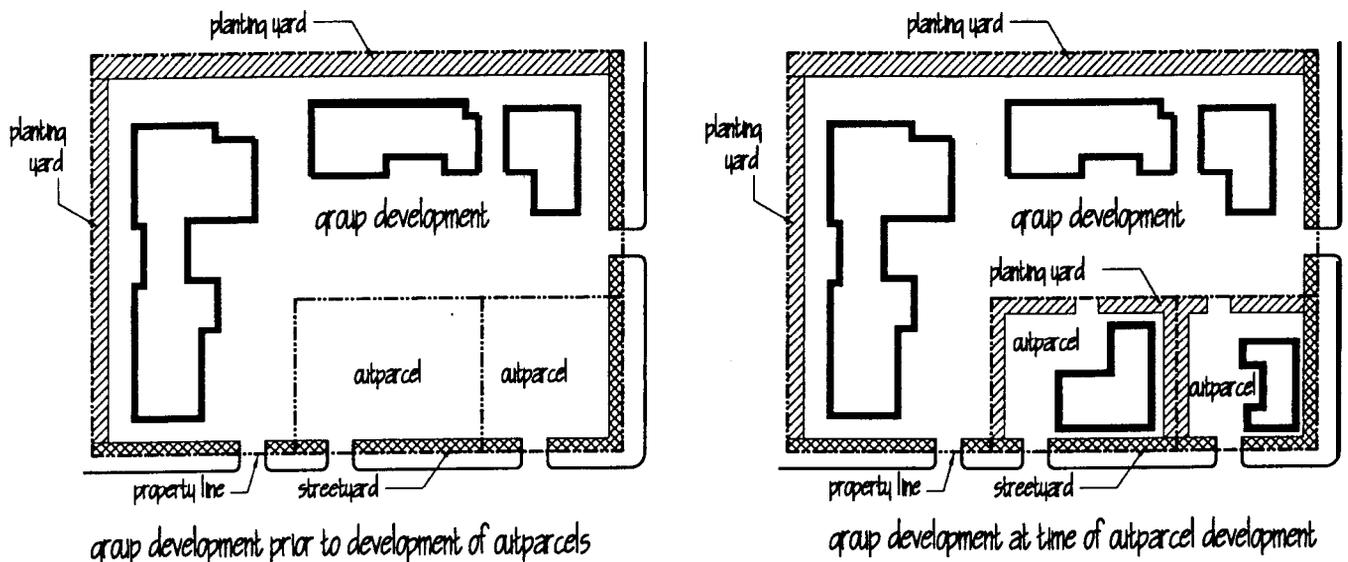
LEVEL 6: INDUSTRIAL

- LLI & LLI-s Limited Light Industrial District and Special  
Limited Light Industrial District  
LLI-2 & LLI-2-s Limited Light Industrial-2 District and  
Special Limited Light Industrial-2 District  
M-1 & M-1-S Light Industrial District and Special Light  
Industrial District  
M-2 & M-2-S Heavy Industrial District and Special Heavy  
Industrial District

Table 10-1 shows how the six different levels of zoning classifications relate to one another to determine the type of **Planting Yard** that is required. Table 10-2 shows the planting requirements of **Planting Yard Types** A-F and **Street Yards**. Each **Planting Yard** has a specified width, type of plant material and quantity of plant material which is required. The width and density of the **Planting Yard** increases as the difference in zoning classifications increase.

In the case of a group development, the outer boundaries shall be landscaped according to the requirements of Table 10-2 and Table 10-3. The interior boundaries abutting outparcels are not required to meet the requirements of Table 10-2. However, outparcels within a group development must comply with the requirements of Table 10-2 and Table 10-3 at the time of their development.

See **Figure 10.04.1 on Page 9**



group development prior to development of outparcels

group development at time of outparcel development

Figure 10.04.1. Group development with outparcels.

### TABLE 10-1 PLANTING YARD CHART

#### EXISTING ADJACENT ZONING DISTRICT LEVELS

		Least Intensive			Most Intensive		
		1	2	3	4	5	6
Least Intensive	<b>Zoning Level</b>						
	<b>1</b>	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	<b>2</b>	C <sup>1</sup>	A	B	B	B	B
	<b>3</b>	C <sup>1</sup>	B <sup>1</sup>	A	A	A	A
	<b>4</b>	D <sup>1</sup>	C <sup>1</sup>	B	A	A	A
	<b>5</b>	E <sup>1</sup>	D <sup>1</sup>	C	B	A	A
Most Intensive	<b>6 ; ;</b>	F <sup>1</sup>	E <sup>1</sup>	D <sup>1</sup>	C	B	A <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Complete visual separation required through the use of densely planted vegetation that would provide complete visual separation within three (3) years of planting or a six foot fence (constructed of masonry or pressure treated lumber). In either case, the requirements of Table 10-2 shall be met for the corresponding **Planting Yard**.

<sup>2</sup> Where industrial districts or uses abut one another, no planting of trees shall be required in the **Type A Planting Yard**.

**NOTE:**

(a) Where uses within the same district abut, there shall be a **Type A Planting Yard**, except for single-family and two-family uses.

(b) Where properties abut an alleyway the **Planting Yard** requirement shall meet the buffer requirement for the zoning district on the other side of the alley



**TABLE 10-2**

POINTS FOR PLANTING YARDS						
						POINTS
SHADE TREE						12
<b>ORNAMENTAL TREE</b>						6
LARGE <b>SHRUB</b>						3
MEDIUM <b>SHRUB</b>						2
SMALL <b>SHRUB</b>						1

PLANTING YARD LANDSCAPING						REQUIRED POINTS PER LINEAR FT.
YARD TYPE	MIN. WIDTH	TREES* SHADE (a) (e)	(c) ORN.	SHRUBS SMALL MED. LARGE		
A	8 <sup>**</sup>	N/A	1/100'	OPTIONAL	0.4	
B	10'	1/100' (b)	N/A	OPTIONAL	0.6	
C	15'	1/75'	1/100	OPTIONAL	0.7	
D	20'	1/50	1/100'	OPTIONAL	0.8	
E	25'	1/50'	1/75'	OPTIONAL	0.9	
F	30'	1/50'	1/50'	OPTIONAL	1.0	

\*or fraction thereof  
 \*\*Where like zoning abuts one another the planting yard requirement for the Type A Yard shall be a minimum average width of 8 feet, but at no time shall the width be less than four (4) feet.

**TABLE 10-3**

STREET YARD LANDSCAPING			
	MA? WIDTH	TREES* (c) (d) SHADE ORN. (e)	SHRUBS**
<b>REQUIREMENTS</b>	8	1/35 OR 1/25	OPTIONAL

\*or fraction thereof  
 \*\*Shrubs are optional, but the tree requirement must be met.

- (a) A wall or fence, a minimum of six (6) feet in height (constructed of masonry or pressure treated lumber) or densely planted vegetation a minimum of six (6) feet in height that would provide a complete visual separation within three (3) years of planting, may be used to reduce both the minimum width of the Planting Yards and the corresponding number of points per linear foot by 20%



(b) In **Type B Planting Yards**, **Ornamental Trees** may be substituted for **Shade Trees** at the rate of two (2) **Ornamental Trees** for each required **Shade Tree**.

(c) In the case of a conflict with utility lines, one (1) **Ornamental Tree** may be substituted for each required **Shade Tree** if approved by the Director of Land Management and Development or his designee and corresponding utility service(s).

See **Figure 10.04.2**.

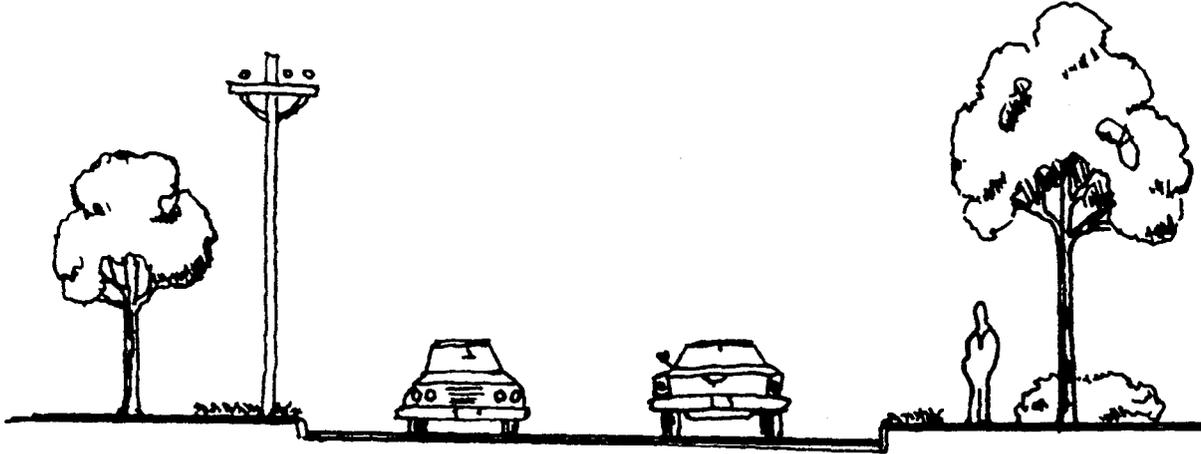


Figure 10.04.2. Conflict with utility lines. Ornamental trees may be substituted for shade trees under or adjacent to utility lines. See Table 10-3(c) of Ordinance.

(d) All trees in **Street Yards** shall be planted no closer than four (4) feet from any public right-of way.

(e) For the purpose of this section, building setbacks (as listed in Section 11.01) shall supersede **Planting Yard** landscaping requirements.

### **Section 10.05 Landscaping and Design Standards for Street Yards**

A **Street Yard** consists of a **Planting Area** parallel to a public street designed to provide continuity of vegetation along the right-of-way and to soften the impact of development by providing a pleasing view from the road.

1. **Street Yards** shall be a minimum of eight feet wide.
2. **Street Yards** shall contain one **Shade Tree/35** linear feet or one **Ornamental Trees/25** linear feet, except in the case of a conflict with utility lines. These trees shall be generally equally distributed along the street frontage, but they are not required to be at absolute equal intervals. This will



allow for some flexibility in design while discouraging long intervals without trees. Shrubbery may be planted in clusters where trees are not practical; however, the requirements of Table 10-3 shall be met.

3. No more than 20% of the **Street Yard** may be used for walkways or signs.
4. Parking, merchandise display and off-street loading are prohibited in the Street Yard.
5. No tree or shrub shall be planted within the Sight Triangle without the prior approval of the City Engineering Division.

See Figure 10.05.1. Landscape Yard Poster in foldout following Page 14.

See Figure 10.05.2 on Page 13.

### **Section 10.06 Standards for Landscaping within Parking Lots**

1. All new or expanded (to add 12 or more spaces) parking lots with 12 or more spaces shall comply with this section of the landscape ordinance.
2. If an existing parking lot (paved or unpaved) is expanded or improved to add 12 or more spaces, it shall comply with the parking lot requirements of the landscape ordinance within the expanded or improved portion.
3. If a parking lot is expanded or developed, then Street Yard, Planting Yard, and parking lot requirements shall be applicable.
4. In parking lots with 12 or more spaces, trees shall be planted at a rate of one Shade Tree or two Ornamental Trees for every 12 spaces or fraction thereof.
5. Required trees shall be located within or adjacent to parking lots as tree islands, medians, at the end of parking bays, traffic delineators, or between rows or parking spaces in a manner such that no parking space is located more than 60 feet from a parking lot tree.
6. Trees located within the Planting Yards or Street Yards cannot be credited toward the parking lot requirements.

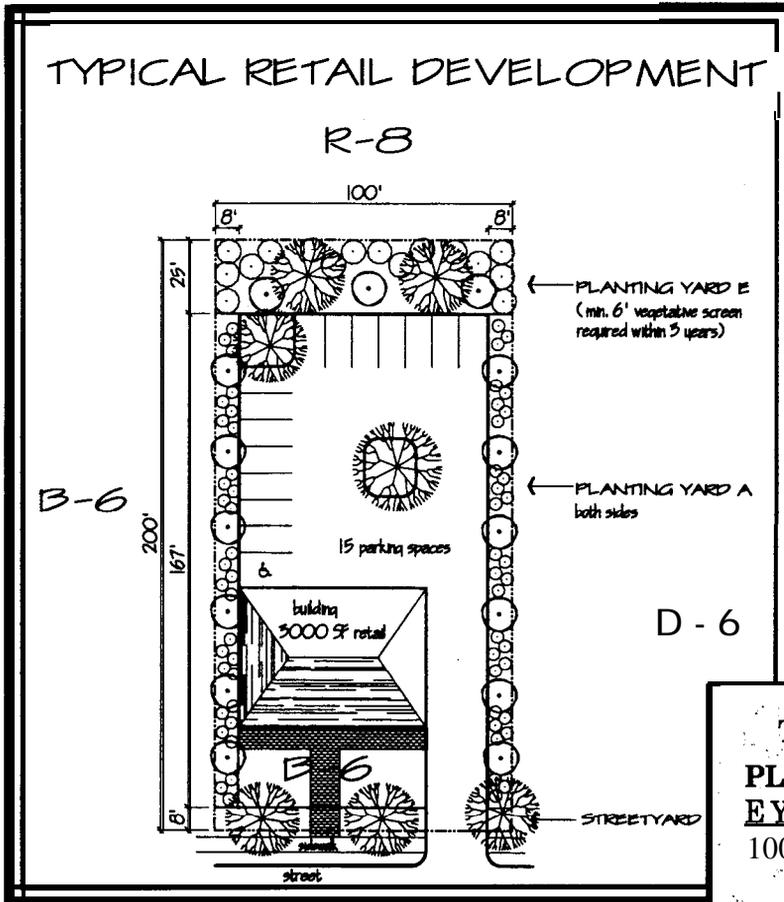


Figure 10.05.2. Typical Retail Development with landscape yards.

**TYPICAL RETAIL DEVELOPMENT:**

**PLANTING YARDS:**

**E YARD**  
 100 linear feet X .9 = 90 points required

2 Shade Trees (required) = 24 points  
 3 Ornamentals (2 required) = 18 points  
 16 Large Shrubs = 48 points  
**Total** = 90 points

**A YARD**  
 167 linear feet X .4 = 66.8 points required

6 Ornamentals (2 required) = 36 points  
 31 Small Shrubs = 31 points  
**Total** = 67 points

**STREETYARD:**  
 100 linear feet = 3 Shade Trees (shown) OR  
 4 Ornamentals (not shown),

**PARKING LOT**  
 15 parking spaces required = 2 Shade Trees (shown) OR  
 4 Ornamentals (not shown)



7. Planting Areas within the parking lots shall provide a minimum of 81 square feet with a minimum inside dimension of nine (9) feet and a minimum prepared depth of 18 inches.
8. Any parking lot containing 20 or more parking spaces may reduce the number of required parking spaces by as much as 10% if 50% of the reduced area is used for parking lot Landscaping, with no area less than the minimum required parking lot Planting Area (as stated in #7 above). This bonus Landscaping shall apply to industrial, commercial, and of&e/institutional districts only

Figure 10.05.1  
Landscape Yard Poster.  
Full-sized poster may be obtained from the Department of Land Management and Development or Development Services Division.

See Figure 10.06.1.

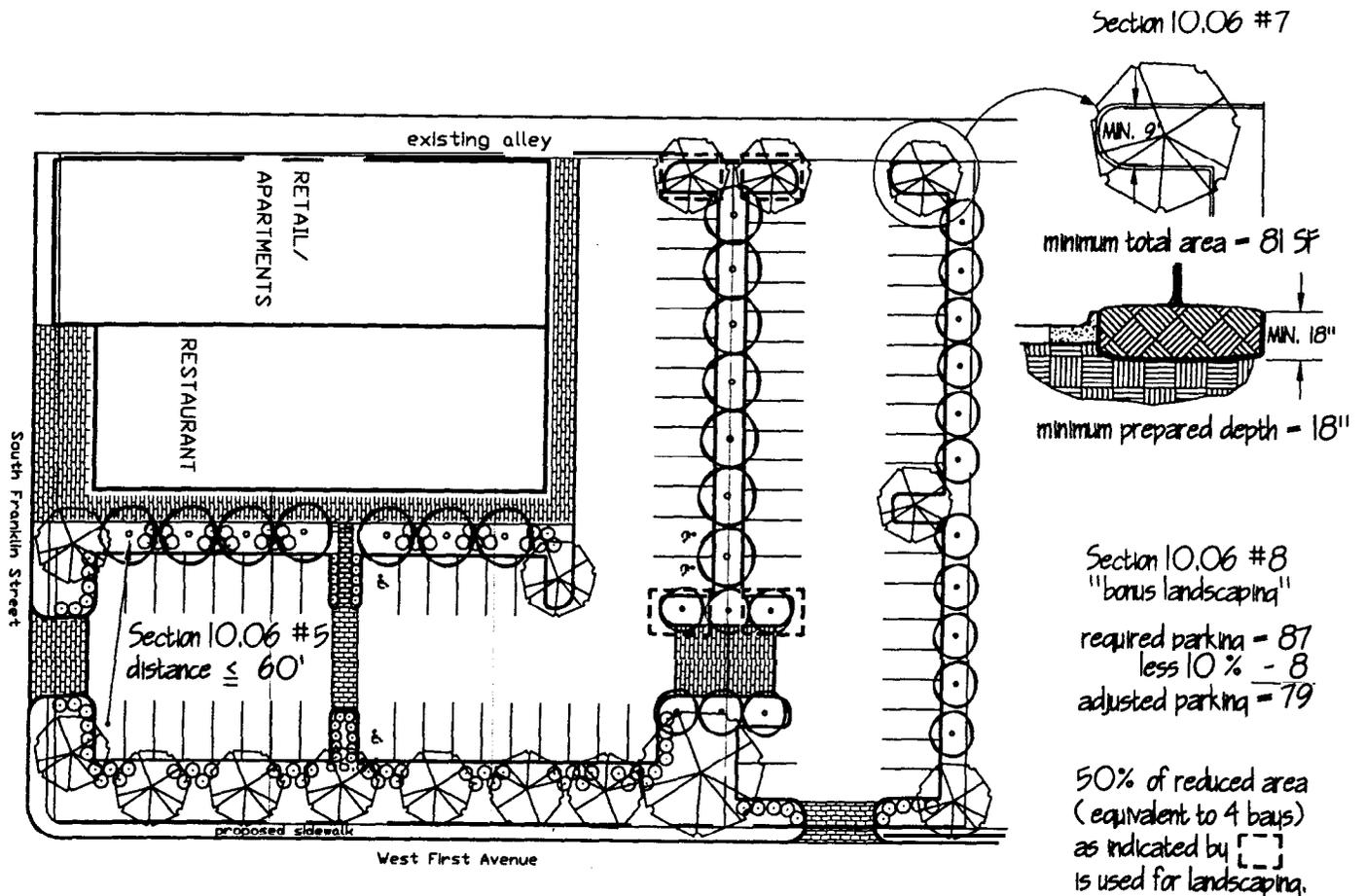


Figure 10.06.1. Parking lot landscaping. Effective landscaping can help make parking lots more habitable within as well as more appealing from the outside. Interior trees provide shade and visual relief for large expanses of asphalt. Exterior trees and shrubs and help screen cars and negative space for passersby. Though the Ordinance does not mandate screening on the street side of parking lots, it is a highly desirable feature. These buffers may be in the form of fences or masonry walls, planted berms, or shrub groups and hedges. For security and accessibility, shrubs should typically be no taller than 3 feet with tree limbs no lower than 7 feet.

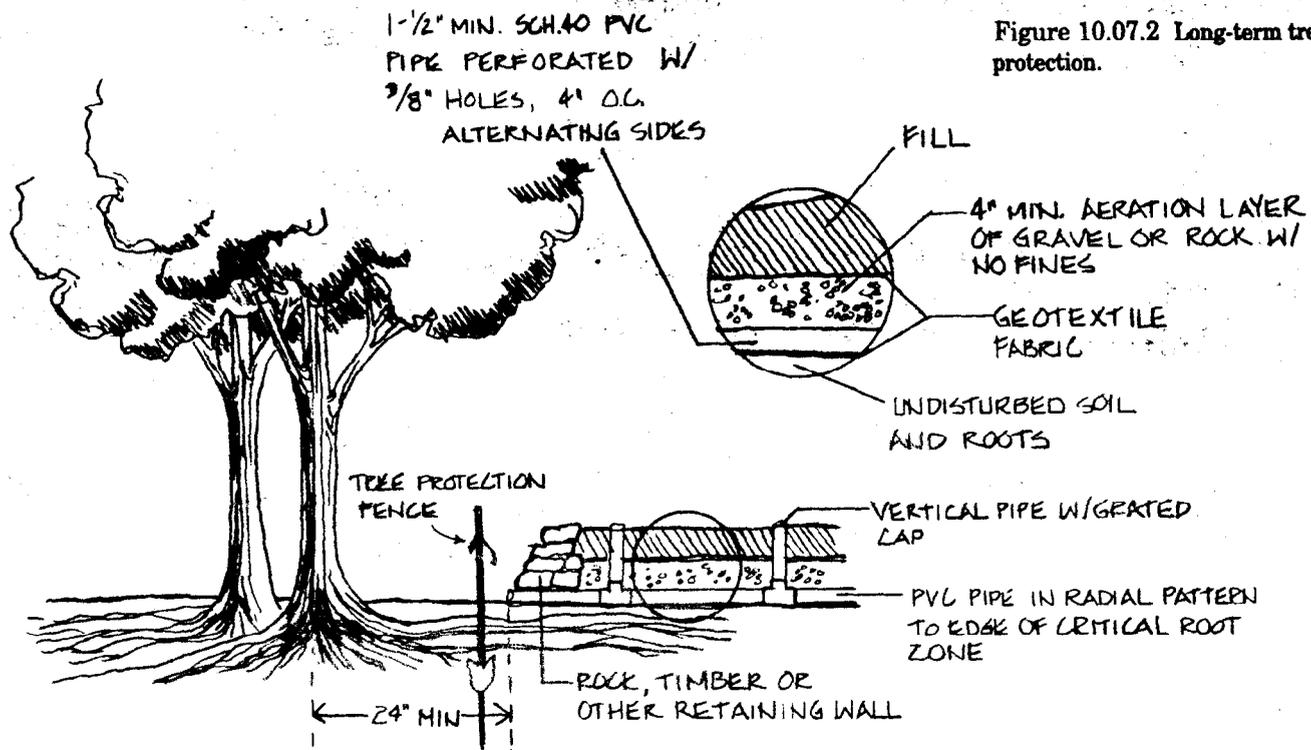


Figure 10.07.2 Long-term tree protection.

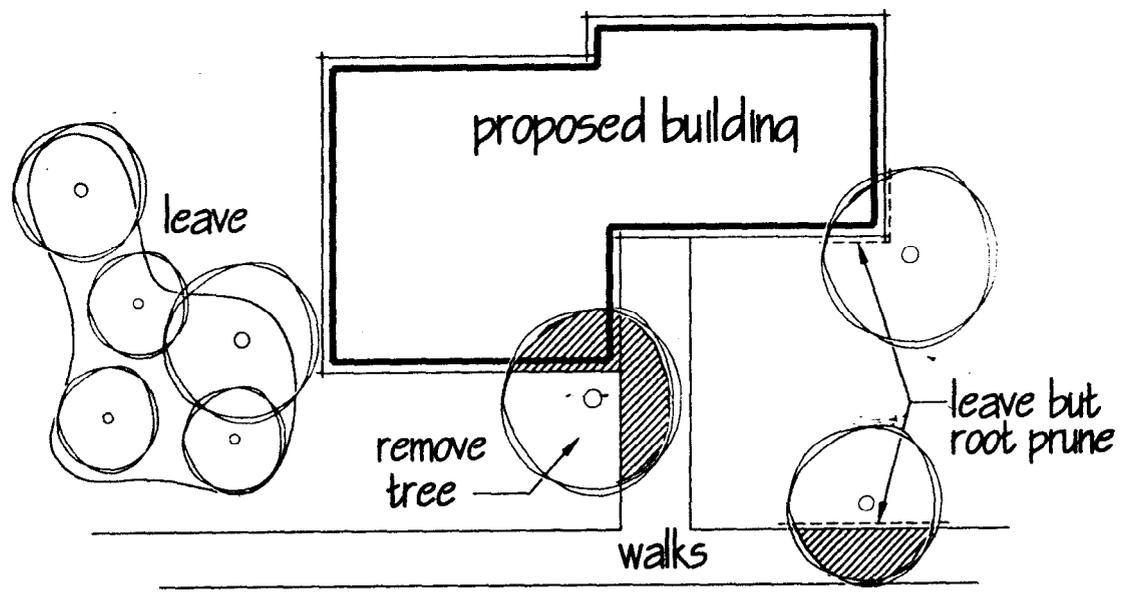


Figure 10.073 Selecting trees for preservation. Existing trees can add character, beauty and dollar value to a development. Some trees, however, are less likely to survive the construction process than others. It is important to **carefully** consider the likelihood of a successful tree preservation effort when evaluating *which trees* should be preserved. **Larger** trees are generally less adaptable and have large root zones which, without meticulous care during construction, are more likely to be irreparably damaged. Still, the benefits of preserving larger trees can, in many cases, outweigh the expense and effort to preserve them. Certain species *with shallow root systems*, such as beech, maple and dogwood, also require special **care**. Species which usually occur as *understory trees*, such as dogwood, are unlikely to survive once the overhead canopy of taller trees is removed. And *trees with pre-existing pest or disease problems* will most likely decline even more with the stress of construction.

A healthy tree standing alone prior to construction or, preferably, a *group of existing trees* with a sufficient root zone protected from compaction and excavation is the best choice for long-term survivability following construction. As in the forest, a combination of mature and younger trees growing in undisturbed soil, with adequate room for future growth, is the most desirable situation for meaningful tree preservation.