

AN ORDINANCE MODIFYING THE CITY’S ZONING REGULATIONS TO COMPREHENSIVELY AMEND THE CITY’S LANDSCAPING AND SCREENING REGULATIONS AND PROMOTE THE USE OF NATIVE SPECIES IN LANDSCAPING

WHEREAS, the City of Rolling Meadows is a home rule municipality in accordance with Article VII, Section 6 of the Constitution of the State of Illinois of 1970 and has the authority to exercise any power and perform any function pertaining to its government and affairs; and

WHEREAS, Section 122-394 (“Amendments”) of Chapter 122 (the “Zoning Ordinance”) of the Code of Ordinances, City of Rolling Meadows, Illinois (“City Code”) sets forth procedures for considering amendments to the map and text of the City’s Zoning Ordinance; and

WHEREAS, the City desires to amend the Zoning Ordinance in order to consolidate and comprehensively amend the various standards within the Zoning Regulations that require landscape and screening improvements in conjunction with private development in order to improve their ease of use and administration and, further, to promote the selection and use of native species that are adapted to the environment of northern Illinois so as to improve the City’s environment, sustainability, and climate resilience (collectively, the “Requested Amendment”); and

WHEREAS, the City’s Planning and Zoning Commission (“PZC”), after notice was provided as required by law, conducted a public hearing on August 6, 2025 to consider an application to consider the Requested Amendment; and

WHEREAS, after taking and considering all testimony presented at the public hearing, the PZC made the findings of fact enumerated in **Exhibit A** and recommended that the City Council approve the Requested Amendment; and

WHEREAS, the Corporate Authorities of the City of Rolling Meadows have determined that it would be in the best interests of the City to approve the Requested Amendment as set forth in this Ordinance.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT ORDAINED by the City Council of the City of Rolling Meadows, Illinois:

Section 1: Findings. The recitals set forth above and the findings of the PZC attached as **Exhibit A** are each incorporated herein by reference as the findings of the Corporate Authorities.

Section 2: Amendment to Section 122-157. Pursuant to Sections 122-394 (“Amendments”) and the City’s home rule authority, Section 122-157 (“Design and maintenance”) of Article IV (“Off-Street Parking and Loading”) of Chapter 122 (“Zoning”) of the City Code is hereby amended as follows [additions are **bold and double-underlined**; deletions are struck through]:

“Sec. 122-157 Design and maintenance.

* * *

- (6) Screening and landscaping. **Off-street parking areas shall provide and maintain screening and landscaping as set forth in Article IX, Landscape and Site Development Standards.** ~~It is the purpose and intent of this subsection to require adequate landscaping and site design of parking areas to protect adjacent property and surrounding neighborhoods against undesirable effects from the creation and operation of parking or loading areas through the screening~~

- a. All parking and loading areas, including any associated mechanical equipment shall be properly screened and landscaped as listed below, unless otherwise stated within this subsection.
- b. The zoning administrator shall have the authority to allow alternate landscape materials to those specified in this subsection upon finding that landscape materials are not available for installation or there otherwise exists unique circumstance or particular hardship. Also, in allowing for alternative landscape materials the zoning administrator shall find that such landscape materials will provide equivalent or better aesthetic character and effective screening as required by this chapter.
- e. General parking lot landscaping:
 - i. Lots with less than three parking spaces are not subject to the parking area landscaping provisions of this subsection.
 - ii. The landscaping shall include, to the extent necessary, ground cover, shrubs, hedges, ornamental trees and grasses, perennials, decorative walls, or fencing as listed below.
 - iii. All landscaping shall be permanently maintained in good condition, satisfactory to the city, with at least the same quality and quantity of landscaping as initially approved. In the event that landscaping should die, the property owner shall replace landscaping in a timely fashion, taking into consideration the season of the year.
 - iv. At the time of installation, landscaped materials shall be of the following sizes:
 - 1. Two and one half inches DBH for deciduous shade trees.
 - 2. Eight feet tall for evergreen trees and ornamental trees.
 - 3. Twenty four inch shrubs.
 - 4. Gallon sized perennials.
 - v. All parking and loading landscape requirements within this subsection and chapter 114 - Vegetation of the City Code shall be met at the time of planting.
- d. Interior parking lot landscaping
 - i. Required landscaping percentage (Table 4.2)
 - 1. Landscaping must be dispersed throughout the parking area. A portion of the required landscaping may be located so as to provide screening of loading areas.
 - 2. A landscaped area with at least one tree (as indicated in #5 below) shall be required at the end of all parking rows, and shall be equal to 180 square feet for a single row of parking or 360 square feet for a double row of parking.
 - 3. A landscaped area with at least one tree shall be installed and maintained a minimum every 20 parking spaces in order to avoid large expanses of landscaped areas within the parking lot. Landscape areas shall be equal to 180 square feet for a single row of parking or 360 square feet for a double row of parking.
 - 4. For every three double bays of parking in a parking area, an intermediate parking lot island a minimum of ten feet

wide shall be installed between two of the those parking rows for the length of said parking rows, and serve as a safe pedestrian connection leading toward the main entrance of the principal use.

- 5. A minimum of one shade tree must be provided for every parking lot island or landscaped area. In addition to the required shade trees, a minimum of 75 percent of every parking lot island or landscaped area must be planted in live groundcover, shrubs, perennials, or ornamental grasses.
- 6. In no case can there be less than one tree for every 3,000 square feet of parking area, including driveways and drive aisles.
- 7. No hedge, wall or berm shall exceed three feet in height within ten feet of any driveway opening.

Table 4-2: Required Landscaping Percentages

Size of Parking Lot	Percentage Required For Interior Landscaping
2,000 square feet or less	0%
3,000 to 4,999 square feet	5%
5,000 to 20,000 square feet	8%

² The required interior landscaping percentage shown above may include areas dedicated to tree planting islands, and those portions of the lot that are not dedicated to perimeter landscaping such as curbs, parking spaces and driveways.

- e. Perimeter parking lot landscaping
 - i. Frontage along the entirety of any parking or loading area adjacent to any public or private street shall be landscaped and protected so as to separate and screen any parking area from the adjacent streets or residential uses.
 - ii. Fencing may be provided, in addition to landscaping for parking areas having common property lines with residential uses, upon evidence from the applicant and approval from the zoning administrator finding that a landscape screen is impractical to maintain and unlikely to survive.
 - iii. A minimum 5-foot wide, landscaped area with a continuous three feet high row of shrubs or hedges must be provided between the property line and parking area. Plantings shall be no less than three feet within two years of planting.
 - iv. The use of earth sculpting or berms may contribute to screening requirements, provided these are designed in any area of enough size so as to avoid erosion, drainage or maintenance problems.
 - v. Existing vegetation which meets, in whole or in part, the purposes of perimeter landscaping above may be applied toward requirements.
- f. Transitional screening requirements
 - i. All parking areas adjacent to residential land uses shall install and maintain a 100 percent screen along all lot lines adjacent to such residential use. Except as otherwise provided, it shall have a total height at time of installation of not less than six feet. A screen

shall consist of one or more of the following types or as otherwise approved by the zoning administrator:

1. ~~Plants: Plant materials, when used as a screen, shall consist of dense evergreen plants and any mixture as the zoning administrator directs, in order to adequately shield adjacent residences from lights, noises, or other potential adverse impacts. The zoning administrator may require that additional plantings be installed if, two years after installation, plant materials have not formed a 100 percent screen or such a screen is not maintained.~~
2. ~~Fencing: Fencing type and location shall be as allowed by this ordinance, or in the case of a special use or planned development, as approved by the city council upon recommendation from the planning and zoning commission.~~

* * *

Section 3: Amendment to Section 122-561. Pursuant to Sections 122-394 (“Amendments”) and the City’s home rule authority, Section 122-561 (“Purpose”) of Article IX (“Landscaping and Site Development Standards”) of Chapter 122 (“Zoning”) of the City Code is hereby amended as follows [additions are **bold and double-underlined**; deletions are struck through]:

“Sec. 122-561 Purpose, Scope, and Applicability.”

~~This article establishes minimum site development and landscaping regulations for all regulated development, defined as commercial, office, and manufacturing uses and multiple family residential uses of six dwelling units or greater.~~

~~The regulations set standards for screening and protecting adjacent properties from more intensive uses, on-site landscaping and the maintenance thereof.~~

(a) This Article establishes minimum landscape and site development standards that are intended to:

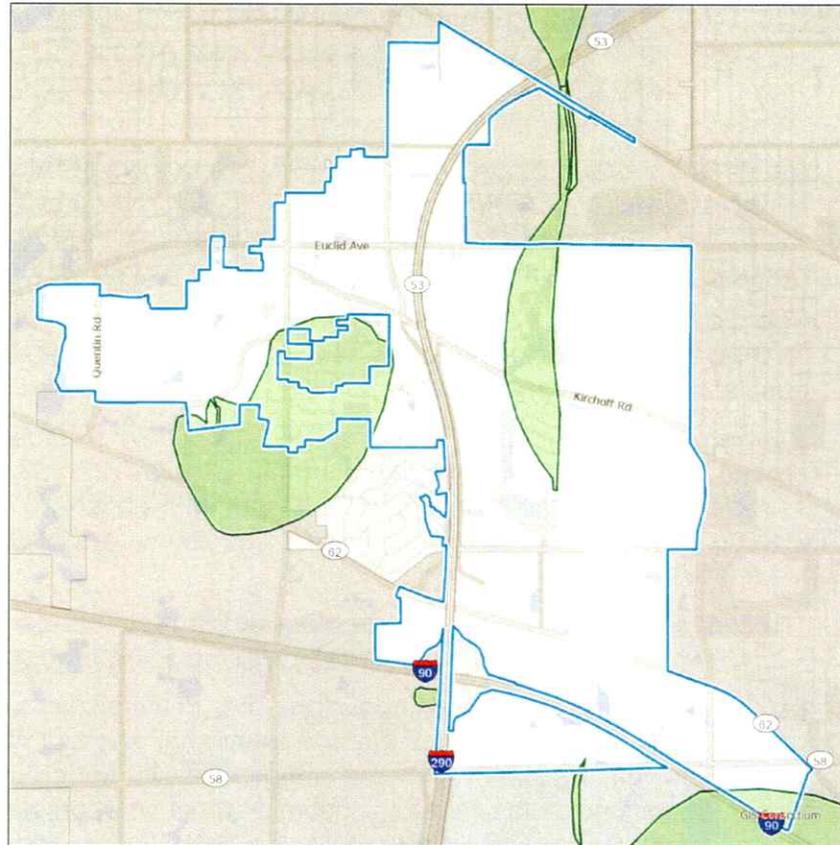
- (1) Mitigate incompatibilities between adjacent land uses and reduce the negative effects of higher intensity land uses and districts upon less intense adjacent land uses and districts.**
- (2) Provide visual buffering between higher and less intense uses and districts.**
- (3) Improve the value of property and the aesthetic appeal of the community through attractive landscaping and site design.**
- (4) Lessen the impact of development on the environment by preserving existing plants and topography, reducing glare and heat buildup, and restoring native plant species and the City’s tree canopy.**
- (5) Break up large expanses of pavement so as to reduce impervious surface area, stormwater runoff, and the level of pollutants discharged into watersheds from non-point sources.**

(b) This Article applies to all “regulated development,” which is:

- (1) Any “development,” as defined in this Chapter, except the development of exclusively residential uses totaling five or fewer dwelling units.**

ecosystems remain after the region's development. The use of white and red oak species native to Illinois is encouraged and should be prioritized for any appropriate planting site, especially near and within those areas of the City that were formerly oak forest.

Figure IX-2 – Pre-Settlement Oak Forests in Rolling Meadows



- (c) Minimum Plant Material Sizes at Time of Planting. At the time of installation, landscape materials shall be of the following minimum sizes:**
- i. Shade trees. Two and one-half inches DBH.**
 - ii. Evergreen and ornamental trees. Eight feet tall.**
 - iii. Shrubs. Twenty-four inches.**
 - iv. Perennials. Gallon-sized.**
- (d) Areas outside prescribed planting areas. All earthen areas outside of prescribed planting areas shall be covered with sod or other approved live ground cover. Stone and gravel are not approved surfaces except as may be approved by the Zoning administrator in planting beds where it is determined that planted material is unlikely to survive or cannot be adequately maintained.**
- (e) Maintenance required.**
- i. All screening and landscaping shall be permanently maintained in good condition, satisfactory to the Zoning administrator, and with at**

least the same quality and quantity as initially approved. Where no screening and landscaping plan had previously been approved by the City, all screening and landscaping provided for the property as of **September 9, 2025** shall be permanently maintained in good condition, satisfactory to the Zoning administrator, and with at least the same quality and quantity as existed on said date.

- ii. Areas within prescribed planting areas shall be spade edged and mulched or regularly spaded to eliminate weeds.
- iii. In the event that landscaping should die, the property owner shall replace landscaping in a timely fashion, taking into consideration the season of the year.
- iv. Screening and landscaping shall in no event become a nuisance or hazard to any person, personal property, or public or private utility, infrastructure, or improvement.

(f) Alternative compliance. Upon finding that there is a unique circumstance or particular hardship in implementing the strict letter of the regulations of this Article, the Zoning administrator shall have the authority to:

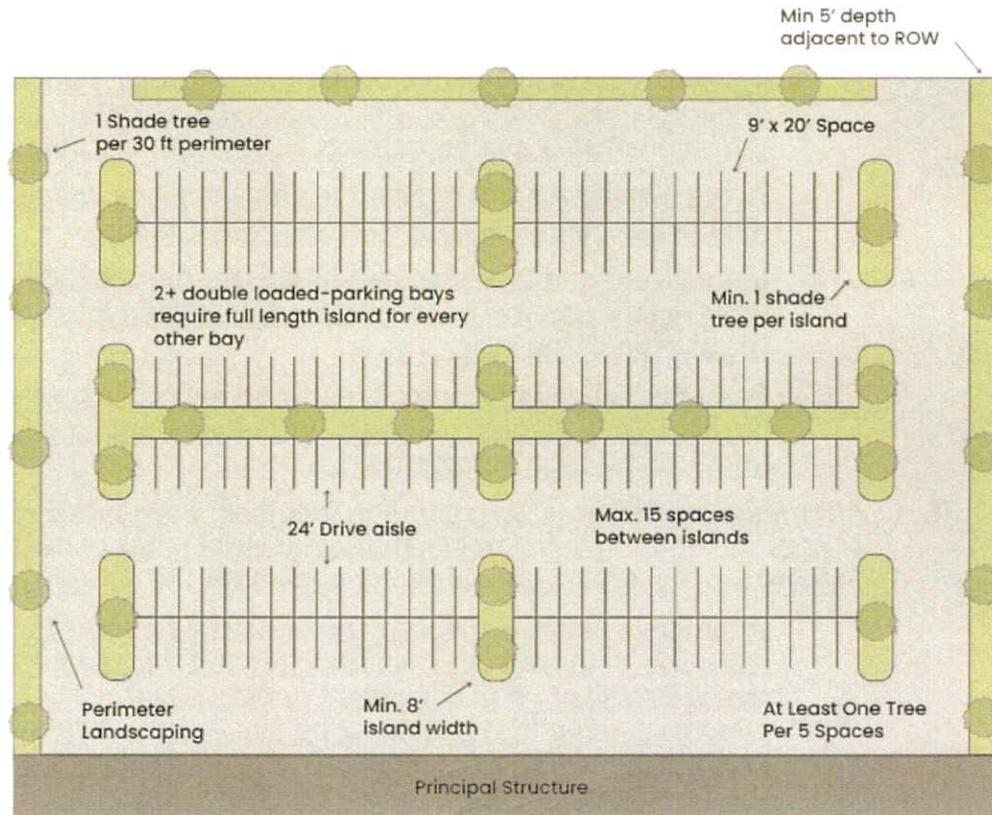
- i. Alternative materials. Approve alternative screening and landscape materials to those specified, upon finding that the alternative materials will provide equivalent or better aesthetic character and effective screening as required by this Article. Without limitation, existing screening and landscaping materials may be authorized by the Zoning administrator under this provision.
- ii. Redevelopment. Modify the standards of this Article as applied to a previously developed site in order to reasonably achieve the purposes of this Article within the scope of the work to be performed and the constraints of the site's design."

Section 5: Repeal of Section 122-565. Pursuant to Sections 122-394 ("Amendments") and the City's home rule authority, Section 122-565 ("Landscaping requirements") of Article IV ("Off-Street Parking and Loading") of Chapter 122 ("Zoning") of the City Code is hereby repealed in its entirety replaced with a new Section 122-565 entitled "Parking Lot Landscaping" as follows:

"Sec. 122-565 Parking lot landscaping.

- (a) *Applicability.* The landscape requirements of this Section shall apply to any parking lot with 10 or more parking spaces. Lots with less than ten parking spaces are not subject to this Section.

Figure IX-3 – Parking Lot Landscaping Requirements

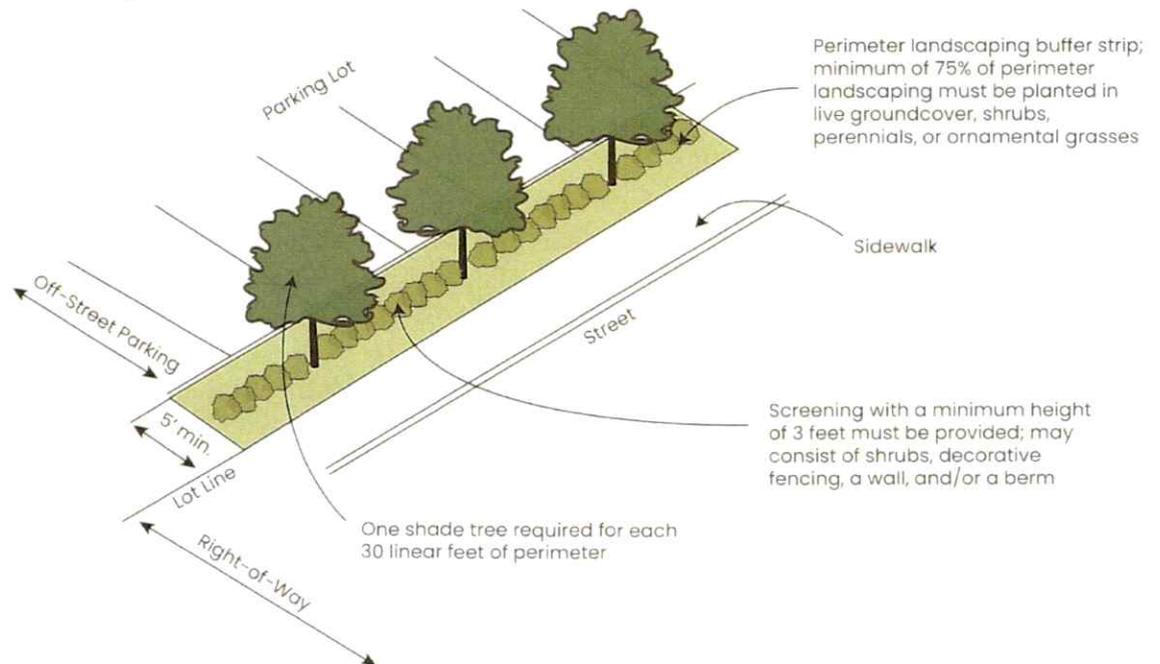


(b) Landscape islands.

- a. Landscape islands must be provided:
 - i. At the end of each parking row or aisle.
 - ii. Within parking rows as necessary to prevent more than 15 consecutive stalls in a row without an intermediate landscape island.
 - iii. Two or more interior double-loaded parking bays require an island within every other bay extending laterally for the full length of the bay or row.
- b. Landscape islands must have a minimum width of eight feet and minimum landscaped area of 180 square feet for a single row of parking or 360 square feet for a double row of parking.
- c. Landscape islands should coincide with and incorporate pedestrian paths through the parking lot in order to further separate pedestrians from vehicles.
- d. Landscape islands must include at least one shade tree and appropriate groundcover or shrubs. A minimum of 75 percent of every landscape island must be planted in live groundcover, shrubs, perennials, or ornamental grasses.

(c) Perimeter landscaping. Perimeter landscaping must be provided, consisting of:

Figure IX-4 – Parking Lot Perimeter Landscaping Requirements



- a. A landscaped area that is a minimum depth of five feet along the portion of the perimeter of a parking lot that is adjacent to a public or private right-of-way. The perimeter landscaping area extends from the edge of pavement to the property line. A minimum of 75 percent of the perimeter landscaping area must be planted in live groundcover, shrubs, perennials, or ornamental grasses.
 - b. One shade tree must be provided per 30 linear feet of perimeter, with trees distributed throughout the perimeter landscaping area.
 - c. Screening with a minimum height of three feet must be provided within the perimeter landscaping area in order to screen vehicles. Screening may consist of shrubs, a decorative fence, a wall, a berm, or these methods in combination.
- (d) *Transitional screening landscaping.* Transitional screening landscaping must be provided pursuant to Section 122-563.
- (e) *Gross landscape requirements.*
- a. The total landscaped area provided for the parking lot must equal at least 10 percent of the total paved parking area of the lot including, without limitation, parking stalls and drive aisles. The landscaped area calculation includes, without limitation, all: landscape islands, perimeter landscaping, and transitional screening landscaping provided in fulfillment of this Section.
 - b. At least one tree must be provided per five parking lot spaces.
- (f) *Drainage.* Landscape areas must be protected with concrete curbing and have a minimum height of six inches as measured from the parking lot surface. Curbing must contain inlets to accept drainage, unless it is determined by the Zoning

administrator that inlets would result in greater runoff inflow than could be supported by the landscape island.”

Section 6: Repeal of Section 122-566. Pursuant to Sections 122-394 (“Amendments”) and the City’s home rule authority, Section 122-566 (“Screening maintenance requirements”) of Article IV (“Off-Street Parking and Loading”) of Chapter 122 (“Zoning”) of the City Code is hereby repealed in its entirety and reserved for future use.

Section 7: Severability. If any provision of this Ordinance or part thereof is held invalid by a court of competent jurisdiction, the remaining provisions of this Ordinance shall remain in full force and effect, and shall be interpreted, applied, and enforced so as to achieve, as near as may be, the purpose and intent of this Ordinance to the greatest extent permitted by applicable law.

Section 8: Effective Date. This Ordinance shall be in full force and effect from and after its passage, approval, and publication in pamphlet form in the manner provided by law.

PASSED AND APPROVED by the City Council of Rolling Meadows, Cook County, Illinois this 9th day of September, 2025.

AYES: Koehler, McHale, Budmats, O'Brien, Vinezeano, Boucher, Reyez

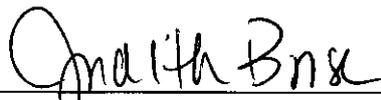
NAYS: 0

ABSENT: 0



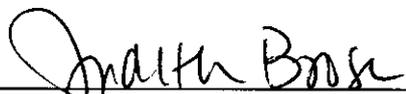
Lara Sanoica, Mayor

ATTEST:



Judith Brose, Deputy City Clerk

Published this 10th day of September, 2025.



Judith Brose, Deputy City Clerk

Exhibit A

PZC Findings of Fact

Text Amendment Standards

Potential Impact: *The amendment shall not adversely impact the overall zoning district purpose or intent of a code section proposed for amendment.*

Petitioner's Findings: The proposed amendment will not adversely impact the overall zoning district purpose or intent. The proposed landscaping standards are designed to enhance the visual and functional quality of development across all applicable land uses. The amendment supports the Zoning Code's broader goals of protecting adjacent properties, promoting public health and welfare, ensuring orderly development, and improving the community's aesthetic character. Landscaping functions as a buffer, screen, and stormwater management feature, helping mitigate potential impacts of development on neighboring uses.

Trend of Development / Consistency: *[...] In the case of a text amendment, the amendment shall be consistent with the overall zoning district purpose or intent of a code section proposed for amendment.*

Petitioner's Findings: The amendment is consistent with the purpose and intent of the zoning code and reflects trends in modern development practices. Contemporary site design emphasizes sustainability, green infrastructure, pedestrian comfort, and aesthetic cohesion. The amendment modernizes existing standards by incorporating best practices in plant selection (e.g., native, drought- and salt-tolerant species) and ensures abundant landscaping that would provide enhanced streetscapes and environmental performance. It also refines expectations for parking lot landscaping and screening, aligning zoning regulation with improved development patterns and urban design goals.

Externalities: *Relevant physical or market conditions that may have changed to make the existing zoning of a property inappropriate, or that make the proposed text amendment necessary for this chapter to be in keeping with the desirable development of the city shall be specified.*

Petitioner's Findings: The current code language provides several conflicting standards and complexities that have, at times, created undue confusion and differences of interpretation. The revised language is intended to remedy this inconsistency, as well as guide improved outcomes in the built environment that enhance the City and support improvements to the environmental sustainability of development.

City plans: *Amendments should be consistent with the City's Comprehensive Plan, Official Map, and all other plans and policies adopted by the city.*

Petitioner's Findings: The City's Comprehensive Plan and Sustainability Plan both call for improved site design, green infrastructure, and the protection of residential neighborhoods from incompatible adjacent uses. They also encourage beautification of corridors, high-quality redevelopment, and sustainability objectives. The proposed landscaping standards directly support these objectives through enhanced transitional screening and site design standards for parking lots, pedestrian-oriented landscape elements, and improved environmental performance of sites.

Zoning appropriateness: *The extent to which use of the subject property (or relevant properties in the case of a text amendment) is diminished by the current zoning standards or designation and is no longer suitable for the underlying zoning shall be specified.*

Petitioner's Findings: The revised Code language is intended to be consistent, enforceable, and provide ease of interpretation. These features are important for ongoing departmental administration of the code, as well as to provide clear direction for developers and property owners.