

## Chapter ~~17~~18.34 Landscaping Standards

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### ~~17~~18.34.010 - Purpose

This Chapter establishes requirements for landscaping to enhance the appearance of development projects, reduce heat and glare, control soil erosion, conserve water, screen potentially incompatible land uses, preserve the integrity of neighborhoods, improve air quality, and improve pedestrian and vehicular traffic and safety.

~~17~~18(Ord. 930, § 2, passed 06-12-2017)

### ~~17~~18.34.020 - Applicability

~~This Chapter shall govern the review and approval of Use Permits, coastal development permits, and all other applicable planning permits.~~

~~**A.**—**New projects.** Each new nonresidential and multi-family residential project shall provide landscaping in compliance with this Chapter. All residential development projects shall provide street trees in compliance with Section 17.34.060.B.2.d(3).~~

~~**B.**—The provisions of this Chapter apply to all land uses as follows:~~

~~**A.**—**Existing development.** The approval of a Coastal Development Permit, Minor Use Permit, Use Permit, Minor Variance, Variance, or application for Design Review for physical alterations and/or a change in use within an existing development may include conditions of approval requiring compliance with specific landscaping and irrigation requirements of this Chapter.~~

~~**C.**—**Timing of installation.** Required landscape and irrigation improvements shall be installed before final building inspection. The installation of landscaping for a residential project may be deferred for a maximum of 90 days in compliance with Section 17§ 18.76.060 (Performance Guarantees).~~

~~**D.**—**Alternatives to requirements.** The review authority may modify the standards of this Chapter, with the exception of the standards of Section 17.34.060(E), to accommodate alternatives to required landscape materials or methods, where the review authority first determines that the proposed alternative will be equally or more effective in achieving the purposes of this Chapter. The review authority may also modify the requirements of this Chapter to accommodate an affordable housing project in compliance with Chapters ~~17~~18.31 (Density Bonuses and Affordable Housing Incentives), and ~~17~~18.32 (Inclusionary Housing Requirements).~~

~~17~~18(Ord. 930, § 2, passed 06-12-2017)

### ~~17~~18.34.030 - Definitions

Definitions of certain technical terms and phrases used in this Chapter are under ““Landscaping Standards”” in Article 10 (~~Glossary & Index~~Definitions) of this Development Code.

~~17~~18(Ord. 930, § 2, passed 06-12-2017)

**18.34.040 - Landscape and Irrigation Plans**

**A. Preliminary ~~Landscape Plan~~ landscape plan.** A ~~Preliminary Landscape Plan~~ preliminary landscape plan shall be submitted as part of each application for new development, or the significant expansion (e.g., 25-percent% or more of floor area), or redevelopment of an existing use, as determined by the Director.

**B. Final ~~Landscape Plan~~ landscape plan.** After planning permit approval, a ~~Final Landscape Plan~~ final landscape plan shall be submitted as part of the application for a Building Permit. A ~~Final Landscape Plan~~ A final landscape plan shall be approved by the review authority before the start of grading or other construction, and before the issuance of a Building Permit.

**C. Content and preparation.**

**1. Required information.** ~~Preliminary Landscape Plans~~ landscape plans and ~~Final Landscape Plans~~ final landscape plans shall contain the information required for landscape plans by the Department. However, at a minimum, the plans shall include the following information:

**a. Preliminary ~~Landscape Plans~~ landscape plans.** Location of proposed materials, including the identification of ~~ground covers~~ groundcovers, shrubs, and trees.

**b. Final ~~Landscape Plans~~ landscape plans.** Detailed drawings and specifications clearly identifying the name, size, and precise location of all materials, ~~as well as the precise location and technical description of the irrigation system and its individual components.~~

**2. Preparation by qualified professional.** Each landscape plan for ~~five~~ 5 or more dwelling units, or a ~~non-residential~~ nonresidential project submitted in compliance with this Chapter shall be prepared by a California licensed landscape architect, licensed landscape contractor, certified nurseryman, or other professional determined by the Director to be qualified.

**D. Review and approval.** After initial application, the Director shall review each ~~Preliminary Landscape Plan~~ preliminary landscape plan and ~~Final Landscape Plan~~ final landscape plan to verify its compliance with the provisions of this Chapter. The Director may approve the submittal in compliance with this Chapter, or may disapprove or require changes to a submittal if it is not in compliance.

**E. Statement of surety.** When required by the Director, security in the form of cash, performance bond, letter of credit, or instrument of credit, in an amount equal to 150-percent% of the total value of all plant materials, irrigation, installation, and maintenance shall be posted with the City for a ~~two~~ 2-year period. The Director may require statements of surety for phased development projects, a legitimate delay in landscape installation due to seasonal requirements (including adverse weather conditions) and similar circumstances where it may not be advisable or desirable to install all approved landscaping before occupancy of the site.

**F. Changes to approved landscape plans.** The Director may authorize minor changes from the requirements of this Chapter ~~and the approved landscaping plan~~.

1. For purposes of this Section, “minor changes” shall be defined as changes to the ~~Final Landscape Plans~~ final landscape plans that ~~are not visible and do not effect~~ affect the landscaping theme or character established for the subject development project.

2. If the Director determines that a requested change does not comply with the definition of “minor” in Subsection (F-)(1, ~~above~~) of this Section, the requested change may only be approved by the review authority that originally approved the plans.

**17G. Projects with 2,500 square feet or more of landscaped area.** All projects with 2,500 square feet or more of landscaped area must comply with the State of California Model Water Efficient Landscaping Ordinance (Government Code Sections 65595 and 65596). The model ordinance is available from the Community Development Department or can be found online.

(Ord. 930, § 2, passed 06-12-2017)

**18.34.050 - Landscape Location Requirements**

Landscaping shall be provided in all areas of a site subject to development with structures, grading, or the removal of natural vegetation, as follows:

**A. Setbacks.** The setback and open space areas required by this Development Code, and easements for utilities and drainage courses shall be landscaped, except where:

1. Occupied by approved structures or paving;
2. They are retained in their natural state, and the review authority determines that landscaping is not necessary to achieve the purposes of this Chapter.

**B. Unused areas.** Any area of a project site not intended for a specific use, including a commercial pad site intended for future development, shall be landscaped unless retained in its natural state, and the review authority determines that landscaping is not necessary to achieve the purposes of this Chapter.

**C. Parking areas.** ~~Parking~~ All parking areas shall be landscaped as follows:

**1. Landscape materials.** Landscaping shall be provided throughout the parking lot as a combination of ~~ground cover~~ groundcover, shrubs, and trees.

**2. Curbing.** Areas containing plant materials ~~shall~~ may be bordered by a ~~concrete curb at least six inches high and six inches wide. The review authority may approve when constructed as part of a parking lot.~~ However, alternative barrier designs, to protect landscaped areas from damage by vehicles, and to allow infiltration of parking lot stormwater runoff into landscaped areas, are preferred.

**3. Runoff detention, retention, or infiltration.** The design of landscaped areas for parking lots shall consider, and may, where appropriate, be required to include provisions for the on-site detention, retention, and/or infiltration of stormwater runoff, which reduces and slows runoff, and provides pollutant cleansing and groundwater recharge. Where landscaped areas are designed for detention, retention, and/or infiltration of stormwater runoff from the parking lot, the following provisions shall apply:

**a. Recess landscaped areas.** Landscaped areas shall be recessed below the surface of the pavement, to allow stormwater runoff from the parking lot to flow into the landscaped area and infiltrate into the ground.

**b. Provide curb cuts.** Curb cuts shall be placed in curbs bordering landscaped areas, or else curbs shall not be installed, to allow stormwater runoff to flow from the parking lot into landscaped areas.

**4. Perimeter parking lot landscaping.** All surface parking areas shall be provided a fence, or landscape buffer between the parking area, and streets and adjoining properties, and the open areas between the property line and the public street right-of-way shall be landscaped.

**a. Adjacent to streets and only where allowed by ~~Section 17.34.090~~ Section 18.36.090 or preexisting conditions.**

i) A parking area for a nonresidential use adjoining a public street, where allowed by ~~Section 17.34.090~~ Section 18.36.090(A) (Parking Design and Development Standards - Location of parking) shall be designed to provide a landscaped planting strip between the street right-of-way and parking area equal in depth to the setback required by the applicable zoning district or ~~15~~ 5 feet, whichever is more.

ii) A parking area for a residential use, except for a single-family dwelling or duplex, shall be designed to provide a landscaped planting strip between the street right-of-way and parking area equal in depth to the setback required by the applicable zoning district.

iii) The landscaping shall be designed and maintained to screen cars from view from the street to a minimum height of 36 inches, but shall not exceed any applicable height limit for landscaping within a setback.

- iv) Screening materials may include a combination of plant materials, earth berms, solid decorative masonry walls, raised planters, or other screening devices which meet the intent of this requirement.
- v) Shade trees shall be provided at a minimum rate of one for every 25 linear feet of landscaped area, or other spacing as determined by the review authority to be appropriate to the site and surrounding development.
- vi) Plant materials, signs, or structures within a traffic safety sight area of a driveway shall comply with ~~Section 17.34.18.30.060-(E)~~ (Height limit at street corners).

**b. Adjacent to side or rear property lines.** Parking areas for nonresidential uses shall provide a perimeter landscape strip at least eight feet wide (inside dimension) where the parking area adjoins a side or rear property line. ~~The Director of Public Works may waive this landscaping requirement for a landscape strip may be satisfied by a setback or buffer area that is otherwise required.~~ parking spaces accessed directly from an alley. Trees shall be provided at the rate of one for each 25 linear feet of landscaped area, or other spacing as determined by the review authority to be appropriate to the site and surrounding development.

**c. Adjacent to structures.** When a parking area is located adjacent to a nonresidential structure, a minimum eight-foot-wide (inside dimension) landscape strip shall be provided adjacent to the structure, exclusive of any building entries, or areas immediately adjacent to the wall of the structure that serve as pedestrian accessways. The required width of the landscape strip may be reduced by the review authority where it determines that overall site area is insufficient to accommodate allowable structures and required parking.

**d. Adjacent to residential use.** A parking area for a nonresidential use adjoining a residential use shall provide a landscaped buffer setback with a minimum 10-foot width between the parking area and the common property line bordering the residential use.

- i) A solid decorative masonry wall or solid fence, ~~except for approved pedestrian access, and landscape buffer~~ shall be provided along the property line to address land use compatibility issues (e.g., nuisance noise and light/glare) as determined by the review authority.
- ii) Trees shall be provided at the rate of one for each 25 linear feet of landscaped area, or other spacing as determined by the review authority to be appropriate to the site and surrounding development.

## 5. Interior parking lot landscaping.

**a. Amount of landscaping.** ~~Multi-family~~ Multifamily, commercial, and industrial uses shall provide landscaping within each outdoor parking area at a minimum ratio of 10 ~~percent~~ % of the gross area of the parking lot. The review authority may grant an exception for small, infill parking lots where compliance with this standard is not feasible without significantly reducing the number of parking spaces. Trees not less than five feet in height and 15-gallon container in size shall be planted throughout the parcel and along any street frontage. ~~At a minimum, one shade tree shall be provided for every five parking spaces as required by the review authority.~~

**b. Location of landscaping.** Landscaping shall be evenly dispersed throughout the parking area, as follows:

- i) ~~Orchard style planting (the placement of trees in uniformly spaced rows) is encouraged for larger parking areas.~~
- ii) Parking lots with more than 50 spaces shall provide a concentration of landscape elements at primary entrances, including, at a minimum, specimen trees, flowering plants, enhanced paving, and project identification.

~~iii~~i) Landscaping shall be located so that pedestrians are not required to cross unpaved landscaped areas to reach building entrances from parked cars. This shall be achieved through proper orientation of the landscaped fingers and islands, and by providing pedestrian access through landscaped areas that would otherwise block direct pedestrian routes.

~~D. Subdivisions. A new subdivision shall be designed and constructed to provide landscaping as follows.~~

~~1. Residential subdivisions. A residential subdivision shall be provided:~~

~~a. Landscaping in the form of one street tree for each 30 feet of street frontage, in the planter strip or other location approved by the review authority, or a windrow elsewhere on the site as authorized by the review authority based on the character of streets in the site vicinity and the location of the site relative to existing development;~~

~~b. Landscaping with irrigation facilities for any common areas or other open space areas within the subdivision; and~~

~~c. Any additional landscaping required by the review authority.~~

~~The species of street trees shall be as required by the review authority, and plantings within a public right-of-way shall comply with the City's standard specifications.~~

~~2. Nonresidential subdivisions. Nonresidential subdivisions shall be provided landscaping as required by the review authority.~~

~~17c. Groundwater recharge. See requirements in Subsections (C)(1) through (3) of this Section.~~

~~(Ord. 930, § 2, passed 06-12-2017; Am. Ord. 1008, § 4, passed 04-14-2025)~~

### 18.34.060 - Landscape Standards

**A. Landscape design.** The required landscape plan shall be designed to integrate all elements of the project (e.g., buildings, parking lots, and streets) to achieve their aesthetic objectives, desirable microclimates, stormwater runoff infiltration objectives, and ~~minimization of~~minimize water and energy demand.

**1. Plant selection and grouping.** Plant materials shall be selected for: low water demand and drought tolerance; adaptability and relationship to the Fort Bragg environment, and the geological and topographical conditions of the site; color, form, and pattern; ability to provide shade; and soil retention capability. At least 50% of landscaping plants shall be locally native plants. Invasive plants are prohibited.

a. Plants having similar water use shall be grouped together in distinct hydrozones.

b. The protection and preservation of native species and natural areas is encouraged, and may be required by conditions of approval as a result of project review in compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

c. Fire prevention shall be addressed on sites in any wooded or vegetated area of the City identified by the Fire Department as being fire prone, by reducing fuel between development areas and naturally vegetated areas, as identified by the Director.

**2. Minimum dimensions.** Each area of landscaping shall have a minimum interior width of ~~eight~~eight feet within the residential and commercial zoning districts, and ~~five~~five feet in the industrial zoning districts. These dimensions may be reduced where the review authority determines they are infeasible because of limited site area. Wherever this Development Code requires a landscaped area of a specified width, the width shall be measured within any curb or wall bordering the landscaping area.

**3. Height limits.** Landscape materials shall be selected, placed on a site, and maintained to not:

- a. Exceed a maximum height of 42 inches within a traffic safety visibility area required by ~~Section 17§ 18.30.060-(E)~~, except for ~~one~~one or more trees with the lowest portion of their canopy maintained at a minimum height of ~~six~~six feet above grade; or
- b. Interfere with the proper operation of solar energy equipment or passive solar design on adjacent parcels.

**4. Protective curbing.** Required landscaping shall be protected with a minimum ~~six~~six-inch-high concrete curb or other barrier, except where adjacent to bicycle paths, or where the landscaped area is designed to infiltrate stormwater runoff from adjacent impermeable surfaces, or where otherwise deemed unnecessary by the Director.

**5. Safety requirements.** Landscape materials shall be located so that at maturity they do not:

- a. Interfere with safe sight distances for vehicular, bicycle, or pedestrian traffic;
- b. Conflict with overhead utility lines, overhead lights, or walkway lights; or
- c. Block pedestrian or bicycle ways.

**6. Water features.** Decorative water features (e.g., fountains, ponds, waterfalls) shall have ~~recirculating~~recirculating ~~re-circulating~~ water systems and shall minimize use of potable water.

**B. Plant material.** Required landscape shall include trees, shrubs, and ~~ground covers~~groundcovers, as follows:

**1. Size at time of planting.** Plant materials shall be sized and spaced to achieve immediate effect and shall not be less than a 15-gallon container for trees, ~~five~~five-gallon container for specimen shrubs and ~~six~~six-inch pots for mass planting, unless otherwise approved by the review authority on the basis that the alternate size will achieve the desired immediate effect equally well.

**2. Trees.** Tree planting shall comply with the following standards:

- a. Trees shall not be planted under any structure that may interfere with normal growth (for example, an eave, overhang, balcony, light standard or other similar structure).
- b. Trees in landscape planters less than 10 feet in width or located closer than ~~five~~five feet from a permanent structure shall be provided with root barriers/root barrier panels.
- c. Trees shall be staked ~~in compliance with standards provided by the Department~~.
- d. At a minimum, the required landscape shall include the following number of trees:
  - i) Parking area: refer to ~~Section 17§ 18.34.050-(C)~~ (Parking areas).
  - ii) Street setbacks: ~~one~~one per 200 square feet of landscaped area.
  - iii) ~~Street trees: one per 30-foot length of right-of-way. The review authority may modify this requirement depending on the chosen tree species and its typical spread at maturity.~~

**3. Groundcover and shrubs.** The majority of areas required to be landscaped shall be covered with groundcover, shrubs, turf, or other types of plants that are predominantly drought tolerant. At least 50% of landscaping plants shall be locally native plants.

- a. A minimum of ~~two~~two, ~~five~~five-gallon size shrubs shall be provided for every ~~six~~six feet of distance along street setbacks, or as approved by the Director.
- b. Groundcover shall be provided throughout the landscaped area and shall be spaced to achieve full coverage within ~~one~~one year.

- c. Artificial groundcover or shrubs shall not be allowed.
  - d. Crushed rock, redwood chips, pebbles, stone, and similar materials shall be allowed up to 15-~~percent%~~ of the total required landscape area. Artificial or synthetic ~~ground covers~~groundcovers are not allowed.
  - e. Nonturf areas (e.g., shrub beds) shall be top dressed with a bark chip mulch or approved alternative.
- 4. Turf.** Turf shall be limited to ~~50 percent~~25% of the total landscaped area on the site where the applicant provides calculations approved by the Director that demonstrate that the irrigation requirements will not exceed standard low water usage-, and where the turf is required for active play areas. No turf shall be allowed:
- a. In any area of 10 feet or less in width; or
  - b. On any slope exceeding 10-~~percent%~~ (25-~~percent%~~, where other project water-saving techniques compensate for the increased runoff). A level buffer zone of 18 inches shall be provided between bermed turf areas and any hardscape (e.g., any street, walkway, or similar feature).

**5. Soil conditioning and mulching.**

- a. A minimum ~~one~~1-foot depth of uncompacted soil shall be available for water absorption and root growth in each planted area.
- b. A soil test for horticultural suitability shall be required at time of landscape installation in each landscaped area. Soil shall be prepared and/or amended to be suitable for the landscape to be installed.
- c. A minimum of ~~two~~2 inches of mulch shall be added in each nonturf area to the soil surface after planting. Any plant type that is intolerant to mulch shall be excluded from this requirement. Nonporous material shall not be placed under the mulch.

**C. Irrigation system requirements.** ~~All landscaped areas except those approved for maintenance with intentionally unirrigated native plants shall include an automatic irrigation system.~~ All landscaped areas shall be designed with native plantings such that they do not require an automatic irrigation system once the plantings are established (after 2 years). An automatic irrigation system may be approved by the review authority if: (1) the applicant provides a compelling case to the review authority for an automatic irrigation system; and/or (2) provides irrigation water from an on-site well. If an automated irrigation system is installed it shall comply with the following:

1. Water-efficient systems (e.g., drip, mini-spray, bubbler-type, or similar system) shall be used ~~unless infeasible.~~ Low-flow sprinkler heads with matched precipitation rates shall be used when spray or rotor-type heads are specified for watering shrubs and ~~ground cover~~groundcover areas. Turf areas shall be sized and shaped so they can be efficiently irrigated. Spray or run-off onto paved areas shall be avoided.
2. Dual or multi-program controllers with separated valves and circuits shall be used when the project contains more than ~~one~~1 type of landscape treatment (e.g., lawn, ~~ground cover~~groundcover, shrub, tree areas), or a variety of solar aspects. Soil moisture-sensing devices and rain sensors shall be used on larger projects (50,000 plus square feet of landscaped area) to minimize or eliminate over-watering.
3. Watering shall be scheduled during the early morning, at times of minimal wind conflict and evaporation loss.
4. Sprinkler heads must have matched precipitation rates within each valve zone.
5. Check valves are required where elevation differential may cause low head drainage.

**D. Certification of landscape completion.** The completion of required landscaping and irrigation improvements shall be certified by the author of the landscape and irrigation plan, through a signed statement submitted to the Director.

~~E. — **Environmentally Sensitive Habitat Areas.** All development located within or adjacent to environmentally sensitive habitat areas shall be conditioned to:~~

- ~~1. — Require all proposed plantings be obtained from local genetic stocks within Mendocino County. If documentation is provided to the review authority that demonstrates that native vegetation from local genetic stock is not available, native vegetation obtained from genetic stock outside the local area, but from within the adjacent region of the floristic province, may be used. If local genetic stocks within the floristic province are unavailable, the Director may authorize use of a commercial native mix, provided it is clear of problematic and/or invasive seed. Director may also authorize use of a seed mix that is selected for rapid senescence to be subsequently complimented or replaced with native stock; and~~
- ~~2. — Require an invasive plant monitoring and removal program; and~~
- ~~3. — Prohibit the planting of any plant species on the property that is (a) listed as problematic and/or invasive by the California Native Plant Society, the California Invasive Plant Council, and/or by the State of California, or (b) listed as a “noxious weed” by the State of California or the U.S. Federal Government.~~

~~17~~(Ord. 930, § 2, passed 06-12-2017)

**18.34.070 - Maintenance of Landscape Areas**

**A. Maintenance required.** All site landscaping shall be maintained in a healthful and thriving condition at all times. Irrigation systems and their components shall be maintained in a fully functional manner consistent with the originally approved design and the provisions of this Chapter. Regular maintenance shall include checking, adjusting, and repairing irrigation equipment; resetting automatic controllers; aerating and dethatching turf areas; adding/replenishing mulch, fertilizer, and soil amendments; pruning; and weeding all landscaped areas.

**B. Maintenance agreement.** ~~Prior to final building inspection or the issuance of a certificate of occupancy, and prior to the recordation of a final subdivision map where applicable, the applicant shall enter into a landscape maintenance agreement with the City to guarantee proper maintenance in compliance with Subsection A. The form and content of the agreement shall be approved by the City Attorney and the Director.~~

**C. — Water waste prohibited.** ~~Water waste in existing developments resulting from inefficient~~inefficient landscape irrigation leading to excessive runoff, low head drainage, overspray, and other similar conditions where water flows onto adjacent property, ~~non-irrigated~~nonirrigated areas, walks, roadways, or structures is prohibited.

**DC. Enforcement.** Failure to maintain landscape areas in compliance with this Section shall be deemed a nuisance, and shall be subject to abatement in compliance with the Municipal Code, and/or the applicable planning permit may be revoked.

(Ord. 930, § 2, passed 06-12-2017)