

TO: Planning Commission

FROM: Beth Novak-Krebs, Senior Planner

DATE: May 28, 2024

SUBJECT: Landscaping Text Amendment in the RM-2.5 Zoning District

BACKGROUND

In the past seven (7) years, there have been eight (8) multifamily developments approved in Eden Prairie in the RM-2.5 Zoning District. Six of these projects requested and received landscaping waivers (75%). This prompted Planning staff to review the landscaping requirements in the RM-2.5 Zoning District and determine if modifications are needed.

These approved projects are infill projects that include large buildings on relatively small sites. The majority of these approved projects have a floor area ratio of 1.0 or greater. This is an indication of the intensity of the development. The landscaping waivers that were granted for these projects waived anywhere between 29% to 55% of the total required caliper inches.

The issue is that large buildings have greater landscaping requirements, as the caliper inch requirements increase as the total square footage of the building increases. Projects with a higher floor area ratio have less area within which to plant the trees, shrubs, perennials, etc. and can have other factors that limit the placement of trees. Given this, it can be difficult to comply with the landscaping requirements.

Project Name	Site Area Acres	Number of Units	Gross Building Floor Area Sq. Ft.	FAR	Required Landscaping	Landscaping Provided	Waiver % of Total with 25% shrubs	Waiver % of Total with 50% shrubs
Smith Village								
Applewood Pointe (2019)	3.88	100	199,602	1.2	624	346	55	30
Trail Pointe Ridge (2019)	2	58	86,558	1.0	270	49		
Townhomes (2019)	1	6	25,000	0.6	78	41		
The Ellie (2022)	6.4	239	349,800	1.3	871	448	49	24
Paravel (2019)	4.96	246	420,240	1.9	914	648	29	3
Castle Ridge (2019)	6.8	274	444,160	1.5	1388	629	55	25
Southview of Eden Prairie (2018)	2.88	116	138,222	1.1	388	502	No Waiver	No Waiver
Prairie Bluff Senior Living (2017)	4.53	138	188,481	1.0	490	490	No Waiver	No Waiver

City Code currently* allows 25% of the required caliper inches to be substituted with shrubs and other

Staff Report – RM-2.5 Zoning District Landscaping Amendment
Page 2

plantings such as perennials. Most development projects include many more shrubs beyond the 25% that are counted toward the project’s caliper inch requirements. Shrubs provide value to the landscape, including screening, color and texture variety. Based on staff’s review and evaluation of the projects that were given waivers for landscaping, staff has concluded that certain projects should be allowed up to 50% of the required caliper inches to be substituted with shrubs without compromising the landscaping goals of the code. As an exercise, staff applied the 50% allowance to the projects with waivers and it brought many of the projects much closer to complying with the landscaping requirements and it would have reduced the waiver request. Staff recommends that in certain circumstances, the developer should be allowed to count a greater percentage of shrubs toward the required caliper inch requirements.

*Prior to 2016, only trees were counted toward the landscaping requirement.

PROPOSED AMENDMENTS

There are times when a site has limitations on the number of trees that can be used to comply with the landscaping requirements. In this situation, (high FAR), the proposed amendment allows shrubs to be counted toward compliance with the requirements. For a project to utilize a 50% allowance, the project must have a floor area ratio of 1.0 or greater and meet four or more of the design objectives outlined in the design guidelines. The City Council must find that the landscaping furthers the goals and objectives of the design guidelines. Most projects incorporate some of the recommendations in the design guidelines. With this amendment, the City expects the applicant to provide a design that quantifiably meets the design guidelines in exchange for being allowed to count a greater percentage of shrubs toward the total caliper inch requirements.

The proposal involves amending City Code Chapter 11, Section 11.42, Subdivision 5, by inserting a new Item F. and relettering the remaining items:

- F. *Shrub Substitution in RM-2.5 Zoning District.* An applicant may request to substitute up to 50% of the required landscape caliper inches with shrubs, if the project has a floor area ratio of 1.00 or greater and the City Council find that the landscaping plan furthers the goals and objectives of the City’s Design Guidelines by meeting five or more of the following criteria:
1. The project includes xeriscaping, raingardens/bioswales, rooftop gardens, public art, native landscapes, pollinator gardens, green roofs, garden plots or similar features to provide variety in meeting the landscaping requirements.
 2. At the entrances to the building, the landscaping activates the space, creates a human scale environment and makes the space inviting.
 3. The project provides screening that considers safety. Screening of the parking lots limits views of cars from the right-of-way and adjacent land uses.
 4. The project includes landscaping covering more than 75% of the lineal feet of the foundation.

Staff Report – RM-2.5 Zoning District Landscaping Amendment
Page 3

5. The project exceeds the required percentage of the parking lot covered in islands and/or exceeds the parking lot island size requirements.
6. The project utilizes landscaping to define and enhance outdoor spaces such as fire pit areas, outdoor kitchen areas, seating areas, pools, outdoor courts, walking paths etc.
7. The project utilizes plant material that preserves and conserves resources, reduces waste, and minimizes maintenance. Use a variety of plant materials that are drought tolerant, salt tolerant, pollinator friendly, disease resistant, native, low maintenance and shade producing. Use plant material that provides visual interest throughout the year including a variety of periods of blooming, leaf color, bark, and branching structure.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends approval of the code amendment to the Landscaping Requirements for the RM-2.5 Zoning District as represented in the May 28, 2024 staff report.