

**COUNCIL ACTION FORM**

**SUBJECT: DIRECT STAFF TO PUBLISH NOTICE FOR A TEXT AMENDMENT TO CORNER LOT TREE PLANTING STANDARDS FOR NONRESIDENTIAL SITES**

**BACKGROUND:**

On August 14<sup>th</sup> staff presented an option for City Council to considered reducing tree planting requirements for corner lots. The City Council discussed the implications of the matter for site design and ultimately directed staff to proceed with drafting a zoning text amendment by a 3-3 vote of the Council with a tie breaking fourth vote by the Mayor. **While this issue was brought up during the discussion of the new Fareway store in Downtown, Council should remember that staff introduced this as a city-wide issue raised by some developers that could be addressed separate from the Fareway project.**

**The City's new 2017 landscape standards created a higher expectation of aesthetics and sustainable site features than the previous standards. The goal of increasing parking sustainability was addressed with the requirements for larger overstory trees, increases in the total number of trees to increase the shading percentage, and an option to reduce the number of parking stalls for increased landscaping.**

The parking lot tree planting requirements on corner lots are currently the same as an interior lot and require additional trees compared to interior lots. This situation was anticipated at the time of adoption of the new ordinance. **Through the review of projects over the last year, some developers have had to redesign sites to accommodate required trees with a reduction in parking spaces. This has become an issue particularly when a certain number of parking spaces are desired by the developer that may exceed the City's minimum standards. Although all the projects have been approved and there has been no direct reduction in the scope of a project, the issue of parking design flexibility could be addressed with a narrowly scoped amendment to reduce tree planting ratios.**

Staff prepared two options as possible changes to the tree planting standards for Planning & Zoning Commission review at the September 5th meeting. The options are described in greater detail in the addendum to the report. The Commission considered staff's recommendation to reduce front yard tree requirements by 50% and heard comments from Scott Renaud of Fox Engineering asking for more indepth review of standards of the landscape ordinance. **The Commission determined that after only one year of implementation of the landscape standards it was premature to**

**reduce the planting standards and voted 6-0 to recommend the Council decline to approve a zoning text amendment.** As a separate motion, the Commission voted to recommend the City Council initiate a review of the landscape ordinance in greater depth at an appropriate time in the future to determine what is working well and what is not.

**With City Council's recent direction to consider contentious items prior to noticing public hearings, staff has brought this item forward for City Council direction. If the City Council is interested in amending the landscape ordinance standards two options are defined within this report. The first option is to reduce front yard landscaping for corner lots to align with the planting requirements by 50%. The second option is to consider reducing parking lot landscaping tree requirements by 25%.**

#### **ALTERNATIVES:**

1. The City Council can direct staff to publish a public hearing notice for consideration of a zoning text amendment to reduce front yard tree planting requirements by 50%.
2. The City Council can direct staff to publish a public hearing notice for consideration of a zoning text amendment to reduce the parking lot tree planting requirements by 25%.
3. The City Council can recommend alternative language for the proposed text amendment and direct staff to publish notice for zoning text amendment.
4. The City Council can direct staff to not proceed with a zoning text amendment **(Commission Recommendation)**.

#### **CITY MANAGER'S RECOMMENDED ACTION:**

Based upon staff's analysis of site plan examples, the impact of a reduction would vary greatly for sites due to differences in the overall size of site and its parking area and the amount of street frontage. Staff is most supportive of reducing the front yard tree planting requirement compared to reducing parking lot tree planting ratios. This option maintains parking lot tree planting standards across all sites regardless of street frontage, which keeps the shading and overall landscaping design of parking lots the same. However, as noted by the Commission the ramifications of the new standards on meeting the City's goals to enhance aesthetics and site design sustainability are not well understood with the limited number of examples of sites that have been approved and completed construction in the past year.

**Therefore, it is the recommendation of the City Manager that the City Council approve Alternative #4, which is the recommendation of the Planning and Zoning Commission, to take no action on a landscaping zoning text amendment at this time. However, if the City Council should desire to proceed with a zoning text amendment for our current landscaping requirements, the recommendation would be for Alternative #1.**

## **Addendum**

The goal of the proposed text amendment is to balance the objectives of the landscape ordinance with some developer's preferences in site design. The following list of current standards are the primary influences on overall tree planting requirements beyond just the planting ratios.

1. Parking and maneuvering areas must have 10% of the gross area with landscaping in or around it.
2. Required landscaping must be within 10 feet of the parking and maneuvering area.
3. A parking lot over-story tree is required at a rate of 1 tree for every 200 square feet of required parking lot landscaping (i.e. the 10% requirement above, this equates to approximately 1 tree for every 5 parking stalls)
4. Front yards shall have 1 tree for every 50 linear feet of frontage, and no more than 50% of the front yard over-story trees can be substituted with other trees.
5. Over-story trees must be spaced a minimum of 20 feet on center.

Staff has proposed two options to reduce tree planting requirements. Staff believes changing the corner lot front yard planting standard is the most direct way to equitably address the concern of multiple street frontages. It also allows in some instances for required parking lot trees to be placed in front yard areas if there is available space.

### **Option A – Allow for a reduction of up to 50% of the required front yard overstory trees.**

This approach reduces total trees required on the site for the front yard calculation and does not directly reduce the parking lot tree requirement. This option maintains a priority on parking lot sustainability features with the same number of required parking lot trees, but would allow more options to place some trees in the front yard due to availability of more space. This option most directly relates to the developer concern of tree planting requirements because of additional street frontages compared to an interior lot. The reduction would take into account any credit otherwise given, such as credit for existing trees. This option is the most advantageous for sites with more than two street frontages.

### **Option B - Reduce parking lot tree planting ratio by 25%**

The second option proposes to change the current parking lot overstory tree planting ratio from 1 tree per 200 square feet of required area to 1 tree per 250 square feet of required area. This change of planting ratio would apply only to corner lots. Interior lots would maintain the original parking lot overstory tree planting ratio. The current planting ratio was developed with the goal of having approximately 25% of the parking lot shaded by tree canopy. Reducing the required overstory tree ratio could cause a small reduction in shading coverage within parking lots. This option maintains the front yard planting density but reduces trees within the parking lots. This option scales to the size of the parking lot versus the length of street frontage.

The table below compares the current standards with new standards allowing trees in the front yard to credit toward parking lot trees. Attachment B shows a hypothetical site with front yard parking as it would be required today under the current standards. Attachment C shows the same site with scenarios based on the two options presented above. One with the allowed front yard tree credit factored in as well as another with the lower tree planting ratio factored. These illustrate the differences in total trees both within the parking lot and on site with the options discussed in this report.

### Comparison of Landscape Standard Small Site

**Commercial Front Yard Prototype**

**Parking Summary**

**80 parking space lot (200x140)**

**28,000 sq. ft. parking lot,**

**site size 1 to 3 acres**

**(Assumes 235 ft. linear feet along street frontages per front)**

Requirement	Current Interior Lot (235 feet of frontage)	Current Corner Lot (2-fronts)	Corner-Option 1 Reduce Front Yard Trees By 50%	Option 2 Reduce Parking Lot Trees by 25%
Landscape Area % of Parking Lot	10% of total, including loading areas	10% of total, including loading areas	10% of total, including loading areas	10% of total, including loading areas
Front Yard trees**	1 per 50 LF of site frontage.	1 per 50 LF of site frontage.	<b>1 per 100 LF of site frontage.</b>	1 per 50 LF of site frontage.
Parking Lot Trees	1/200 sq ft	1/200 sq ft	1/200 sq ft	<b>1/250 sq ft</b>
Est. Canopy Coverage for parking lot shading (mature avg. 30 ft diameter)	25%	25-30%	25%	20-25%
Est. Landscape Area (Req. Parking and Front)	15-17%	17-20%	17-20%	15%
<b>Total Landscaping Front and Parking Area</b>	<u>Total Trees: 19</u> Front 5, Parking 14	<u>Total Trees: 24</u> Front 10, Parking 14	<u>Total Trees: 19</u> Front 5, Parking 14	<u>Total Trees: 21</u> Front 10, Parking 11