

COUNCIL ACTION FORM

SUBJECT: ZONING TEXT AMENDMENT RELATING TO THE DEPTH OF THE HIGH SCREEN LANDSCAPE STANDARD.

BACKGROUND

The City Council adopted the current landscaping standards in 2017. The complete standards are found in Section 29.403 of the Ames Municipal Code (Zoning Ordinance). The current standards were implemented after two years of community input and review from Planning & Zoning Commission and City Council.

Recently, staff discovered that the minimum depth of a High Screen planter area is only implied to be five feet rather than stated as a minimum. Staff has applied the standard for the past two years as a minimum of five feet and believes it is appropriate to clarify this expectation in the standards. A minimum of five feet of depth is also consistent with the prior buffer yard screen requirements.

The current standards require a High Screen when two dissimilar uses abut one another or around parking areas in residential zones. **Five feet is considered to be the minimum width for shrubs and trees to grow, maintain their health, and achieve the necessary height and width to provide effective screening, larger trees and landscaping types may require additional space. The current language in the landscape standards does not ensure that an appropriate planter width is required in all instances without specifying a minimum.**

PROPOSED TEXT AMENDMENT

Section 29.403(F) High Screen Dissimilar Use Transition and Parking Screen.

Generally, The High Screen landscape standard provides physical and visual separation between uses and improvements.

- (i) Required Landscape Elements. High shrubs shall be installed at a maximum distance of 6 feet on center to form a dense screen with a minimum mature height of 6 feet. In addition, one Landscape Tree is required per 50 lineal feet of landscaped area. Ground cover plants must fully cover the remainder of the landscaped area. The high shrubs must be at least 4 feet in height at the time of installation. **The minimum planter depth for a High Screen is 5 feet unless otherwise required to be greater by this ordinance.**

Planning & Zoning Commission Recommendation

At the March 4th Planning & Zoning Commission meeting the commission voted 6-0 to recommend the City Council approve the proposed text amendment.

ALTERNATIVES:

1. The City Council can adopt the proposed text amendments for High Screen landscaping in Section 29.403(3)(F).

2. The City Council can recommend alternative language for the proposed text amendment for High Screen landscaping.

CITY MANAGERS RECOMMENDED ACTION:

The proposed zoning text amendments clarify requirements and expectations for the minimum planter depth of High Screen planters. This language reinforces how staff has always applied the standard for the appropriate minimum planter depth of High Screen vegetation. **Therefore, it is the recommendation of the City Manager that the City Council approve Alternative #1.**

ORDINANCE NO.

AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND THE MUNICIPAL CODE OF THE CITY OF AMES, IOWA, BY AMENDING SECTION 29.403(3)(F) THEREOF, FOR THE PURPOSE OF SETTING THE MINIMUM DEPTH OF THE HIGH SCREEN LANDSCAPE STANDARD. REPEALING ANY AND ALL ORDINANCES OR PARTS OF ORDINANCES IN CONFLICT TO THE EXTENT OF SUCH CONFLICT; PROVIDING A PENALTY; AND ESTABLISHING AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

BE IT ENACTED, by the City Council for the City of Ames, Iowa, that:

Section One. The Municipal Code of the City of Ames, Iowa shall be and the same is hereby amended by amending Section 26.403(3)(F) as follows:

“Sec. 29.403. LANDSCAPING AND SCREENING.

...

3. General Requirements All Sites.

...

(F) High Screen Dissimilar Use Transition and Parking Screen.

~~Generally, the~~ high screen landscape standard provides physical and visual separation between uses and improvements.

(i) Required Landscape Elements. High shrubs shall be installed at a maximum distance of 6 feet on center to form a dense screen with a minimum mature height of 6 feet. In addition, one Landscape Tree is required per 50 lineal feet of landscaped area. Ground cover plants must fully cover the remainder of the landscaped area. The high shrubs must be at least 4 feet in height at the time of installation. The minimum planter depth for a High Screen is 5 feet unless otherwise required to be greater by this ordinance.”

...

Section Two. Violation of the provisions of this ordinance shall constitute a municipal infraction punishable as set out by law.

Section Three. All ordinances, or parts of ordinances, in conflict herewith are hereby repealed to the extent of such conflict, if any.

Section Four. This ordinance shall be in full force and effect from and after its passage and publication as required by law.

Passed this _____ day of _____, 2020.

Diane R. Voss, City Clerk

John A. Haila, Mayor