

indicate what material is proposed for use in a landscape planter. Pictures of rock and organic mulch planter examples are attached for reference.

The proposed change affects the following section of the City's General Development Standards of Article IV of the Chapter 29 Zoning Ordinance (new language is underlined).

29.403 (3) (D) Minimum planting standards.

(7) All required planters, bufferyards, and islands must include living groundcover. Foundation planters may use inorganic or non-living materials for ground cover. Organic mulch may be used in lieu of living ground cover beneath or around shrubs and trees.

a. An exception to utilize decorative landscape rock materials, in lieu of organic mulch, may be approved for areas within required planters immediately around decorative plantings, shrubs and trees. Details of the landscape rock material type and location shall be specified on the landscape plan. Decorative plantings may be required within planters along with the use of decorative landscape rock.

Decorative landscape rock in and of itself does not meet the definition of landscaping, therefore, it may not be utilized in lieu of landscape plantings and is to be confined to defined planter areas with shrubs, trees, and decorative plantings.

b. Decorative landscape rock materials are subject to the standards and limitations of other zoning districts, such as CSC and the University Impact Overlays.

Planning and Zoning Commission:

The Planning and Zoning Commission reviewed the proposed text amendment at its November 5 meeting. Commissioners discussed the examples of planters with rock materials compared to mulch. Commissioners expressed concerns about the general health of plantings, depth and type of rock used for mulch, the appearance of rock planters (specifically if landscape material died or were not present), and the overall aesthetics of the proposal. Staff described that code enforcement does not prioritize landscape maintenance and a refresh of plantings typically does not occur unless a subsequent permit for the site is requested. **The Commission voted 5-1 to recommend denial of the text amendment.** Generally, the Commissioners were concerned about its city-wide application to parking lot and front yard landscaping and believed the current standard was a better standard.

ALTERNATIVES:

1. Approve on first reading an ordinance amending the allowed landscaping planter mulch requirements to allow use of decorative rock landscape material as mulch consistent with the attached draft ordinance.
2. Direct staff to modify the proposed standards and approve the ordinance on first reading.
3. Request additional information from staff and take no action to approve on first reading.
4. Deny the application for a zoning text amendment. (Planning and Zoning Commission Recommendation)

CITY MANAGER'S RECOMMENDED ACTION:

The issue of landscape planter materials is a city-wide issue and not unique to any one zoning district. As such, the request would modify standards city-wide and benefit ISURP as the applicant. The use of decorative rock versus organic mulch is primarily a balancing of aesthetics, plant vitality, and cost.

Staff believes that with intentional landscape design focused on the base requirements of planting and limited use of mulch combined with the organic soil content requirements, the decorative rock mulch option will likely be a successful alternative for developments. Therefore, it is the recommendation of the City Manager that the City Council approve Alternative No. 1, as described above.

ATTACHMENT(S):

[Rock Mulch Attachment Landscape Examples.pdf](#)

[Ordinance-ZTA Minimum Planting Standards-Mulch.PDF](#)