

## **ARTICLE 5.00**

# **LANDSCAPING AND SCREENING**

## **Section 5.01 -- INTENT AND SCOPE OF REQUIREMENTS**

### **A. Intent**

Landscaping enhances the visual image of the Township, preserving natural features, improving property values, and alleviating the impact of noise, traffic, and visual distraction associated with certain uses. Screening is important to protect less intensive uses from the noise, light, traffic, litter and other impacts of more intensive, nonresidential uses. These provisions are intended to set minimum standards for the design and use of landscaping, greenbelts, and screening, and for the protection and enhancement of the Township's environment. More specifically, the intent of these provisions is to:

1. Improve the appearance of off-street parking areas, vehicular use areas, and property abutting public rights-of-way,
2. Protect and preserve the appearance, character, and value of the neighborhoods that abut non-residential areas, parking areas, and other intensive use areas, thereby protecting the public health, safety and welfare,
3. Reduce soil erosion and depletion, and
4. Increase soil water retention, thereby helping to prevent flooding.

### **B. Scope of Application**

No site plan shall be approved unless it shows landscaping consistent with the requirements of this Article. A building permit shall not be issued until the required landscape plan is submitted and approved, and a certificate of occupancy shall not be issued unless provisions set forth in this section have been met or a performance guarantee has been posted in accordance with the provisions set forth in Section 2.18. The requirements in this Article shall not apply to single family detached homes, unless otherwise specifically noted.

### **C. Minimum Requirements**

The requirements in this Article are minimum requirements, and under no circumstances shall they preclude the developer and the Township from agreeing to more extensive landscaping.

### **D. Design Creativity**

Creativity in landscape design is encouraged. Accordingly, required trees and shrubs may be planted at uniform intervals, at random, or in groupings, depending on the designer's desired visual effect and, equally important, the intent of the Township to coordinate landscaping on adjoining properties.

### **E. Summary of Regulations**

The following table summarizes the landscaping regulations contained in this Article:

## SUMMARY OF MINIMUM LANDSCAPING REQUIREMENTS [1]

	<u>Landscaping Ratio</u>	<u>Minimum Height</u>	<u>Minimum Width</u>	<u>Planting Requirements</u>		
				<u>Deciduous or Evergreen Trees</u>	<u>Ornamental Trees</u>	<u>Deciduous or Evergreen Shrubs</u>
<b>General Site Landscaping</b>	--	--	--	1 per 3,000 sq. ft.[2]	--	--
<b>Landscaping Adjacent to Roads</b>	--	--	20 ft.	1 per 40 lineal ft.	1 per 100 lineal ft.	8 per 40 lineal feet
<b>Greenbelts</b>	--	--	20 ft.	1 per 30 lineal ft.	--	[3]
<b>Greenbelts used for Screening</b>	--	6 ft.	20 ft.	[4]	--	--
<b>Berms in Front Yard</b>	--	[5]	[5]	1 per 40 lineal ft.	1 per 100 lineal ft.	8 per 40 lineal ft.
<b>Berms used for Screening</b>	--	3 ft.	[5]	[4]	--	--
<b>Parking Lot Landscaping</b>	10 sq. ft. per space	--	5 ft.[6]	1 per 300 sq. ft.	--	--

Footnotes

[1] See Sections 5.02 and 5.03 for detailed requirements.

[2] General Site Landscaping for: mobile home parks: 2 trees plus 4 shrubs per lot.  
multiple family uses: 2 trees plus 4 shrubs per dwelling unit.

[3] Eight shrubs may be substituted for each tree.

[4] Evergreens must be closely spaced (no further than fifteen (15) feet apart) to form complete visual barrier within three (3) years.

[5] Berms shall have slopes no steeper than 1 foot vertical for each 3 feet horizontal. Thus, the minimum width is equal to total height multiplied by 3. Maximum height of berms in the front yard: three (3) feet.

[6] Minimum area of each parking lot landscaped area: 150 sq. ft.

**Example of Landscaping Adjacent to Roads**

- Length of Road Frontage: 250 feet minus 30-foot driveway = 230 feet

	<b><u>Required Number of Plants</u></b>	
Deciduous or Evergreen Trees	230 ft./40 ft.	= 6
Shrubs	230 ft./40 ft. x 8	= <u>46</u>
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>52</b>

**LANDSCAPING ADJACENT TO ROADS**

**Section 5.02, sub-section B**

# Section 5.02 -- GENERAL LANDSCAPING REQUIREMENTS

## A. General Site Requirements

All developed portions of the site shall conform to the following general landscaping standards, except where specific landscape elements, such as a greenbelt, berms, or screening are required:

1. All unpaved portions of the site shall be planted with grass, ground cover, shrubbery, or other suitable live plant material, which shall extend to any abutting street pavement edge. Grass areas in the front yard of all non-residential uses shall be planted with sod or hydro-seeded.
2. A mixture of evergreen and deciduous trees shall be planted on non-residential parcels at the rate of one (1) tree per 3,000 square feet or portion thereof of any unpaved open area for which specific landscaping requirements do not appear later in this Article. Required trees may be planted at uniform intervals, at random, or in groupings.

## B. Landscaping Adjacent to Roads

### 1. Planting Requirements

Where required, landscaping adjacent to roads shall comply with the following planting requirements (see diagram):

<u>Type</u>	<u>Requirements</u>
Deciduous or evergreen tree	1 per 40 lineal feet of road frontage
Shrubs	8 per 40 lineal feet of road frontage

For the purposes of computing length of road frontage, openings for driveways and sidewalks shall not be counted. Trees and shrubs may be planted at uniform intervals, at random, or in groupings.

### 2. Location and Dimensions

Required landscaping adjacent to roads shall be located totally on private property within a planting strip adjacent to the road right-of-way. The minimum width of the planting strip shall be fifteen (15) feet.

## C. Berms

Where required, berms shall conform to the following standards:

### 1. Dimensions

Unless otherwise indicated or appropriate, required berms shall be measured from the grade of the parking lot or flat ground adjacent to the berm, and shall be constructed with slopes no steeper than one (1) foot vertical for each three (3) feet horizontal (33 percent slope), with at least a two (2) foot flat area on top. Berms may undulate in height, subject to review and approval of berm design as shown on the site plan. Unless otherwise indicated, the maximum height of required berms shall be three (3) feet.

### 2. Protection from Erosion

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Any required berm shall be planted with sod, ground cover, or other suitable live plant material to protect it from erosion so that it retains its height and shape. The use of railroad ties, cement blocks, and other types of construction materials to retain the shape and height of a berm shall be prohibited unless specifically reviewed and approved by the Planning Commission.

### **3. Required Plantings**

- a. Berms located in the front yard of non-residential parcels  
Berms located in the front yard of non-residential parcels shall be landscaped in accordance with the requirements for Landscaping Adjacent to Roads, Section 5.02, sub-section B.
- b. Berms used for screening other than in the front yard  
Berms used for screening other than in the front yard shall be landscaped in accordance with the requirements for Screening, Section 5.02, sub-section E.

### **4. Measurement of Berm Length**

For the purposes of calculating required plant material, berm length shall be measured along the exterior edge of the berm.

## **D. Greenbelts**

Where required, greenbelts shall conform to the following standards:

### **1. Measurement of Greenbelt Length**

For the purposes of calculating required plant material, greenbelt length shall be measured along the exterior edge of the greenbelt.

### **2. General Planting Requirements**

- a. Grass or Ground Cover Requirements  
Grass, ground cover, or other suitable live plant materials shall be planted over the entire greenbelt area, except where paved walkways are used.
- b. Tree and Shrub Requirements  
Except where the greenbelt is used for screening, a minimum of one (1) deciduous or evergreen tree shall be planted for each thirty (30) lineal feet or portion thereof of required berm, or, alternatively, eight (8) shrubs may be substituted for each required tree. Trees and shrubs may be planted at uniform intervals, at random, or in groupings.
- c. Distance from Sidewalk  
Plant materials shall not be placed closer than four (4) feet to the right-of-way line where the greenbelt abuts a public sidewalk.

### **3. Greenbelts Used for Screening**

Greenbelts used for screening shall be landscaped in accordance with the requirements for Screening, Section 5.02, sub-section E.

## **E. Screening**

### **1. General Screening Requirements**

## ***Landscaping and Screening***

Unless otherwise specified, wherever an evergreen or landscaped screen is required, screening shall consist of closely-spaced evergreen plantings (i.e., no farther than fifteen (15) feet apart) which can be reasonably expected to form a complete visual barrier that is at least six (6) feet above ground level within three (3) years of planting. Deciduous plant materials may be used provided that a complete visual barrier is maintained throughout the year. Wherever screening is required adjacent to residentially zoned or used property, the screening must be installed prior to the beginning of site grading and general construction, except where such activity would result in damage to the screening.

### **2. Screening of Equipment**

Mechanical equipment, such as air compressors, pool pumps, transformers, sprinkler pumps, satellite dish antennae, and similar equipment shall be screened on at least three (3) sides. Insofar as practical, said screening shall exceed the vertical height of the equipment being screened by at least six (6) inches within two (2) years of planting.

## **F. Parking Lot Landscaping**

In addition to required screening, all off-street parking areas shall be landscaped as follows:

### **1. Landscaping Ratio**

Off-street parking areas containing greater than ten (10) spaces shall be provided with at least twenty (20) square feet of interior landscaping per parking space. Whenever possible, parking lot landscaping shall be designed to improve the safety of pedestrian and vehicular traffic, guide traffic movement, and improve the appearance of the parking area.

### **2. Minimum Area**

Landscaped areas in parking lots shall be no less than five (5) feet in any single dimension and no less than two hundred (200) square feet in area. Landscaped areas in or adjacent to parking lots shall be protected with curbing or other means to prevent encroachment of vehicles.

### **3. Other Landscaping**

Required landscaping elsewhere on the parcel shall not be counted in meeting the parking lot landscaping requirements.

### **4. Required Plantings**

Requirements for plant material shall be based on the location, size, and shape of the parking lot landscaped area. A minimum of one (1) tree shall be planted per three hundred (300) square feet or fraction thereof of interior landscaped area. At least fifty percent (50%) of each interior landscaped area shall be covered by living plant material, such as sod, shrubs, ground cover, or trees. Plantings within parking lots shall comply with the requirements for unobstructed sight distance set forth in Section 2.09. The landscape plan shall indicate the types, sizes, and quantities of plant material proposed for such area.

## **G. Landscaping of Rights-of-Way**

Public rights-of-way located adjacent to required landscaped areas and greenbelts shall be planted with grass or other suitable live ground cover, and shall be maintained by the owner or occupant of the adjacent property as if the rights-of-way were part of the required landscaped areas or greenbelts. No plantings except grass or ground cover shall be permitted closer than three (3) feet from the edge of the road pavement.

## **H. Maintenance of Unobstructed Visibility For Drivers**

No landscaping shall be established or maintained on any parcel or in any parking lot that will obstruct the view of drivers. Accordingly, all landscaping shall comply with the provisions concerning Unobstructed Sight Distance set forth in Section 2.09.

**I. Potential Damage to Utilities**

In no case shall landscaping material be planted in a way that will interfere with or cause damage to underground utility lines, public roads, or other public facilities. Species of trees whose roots are known to cause damage to public roadways, sewers, or other utilities shall not be planted closer than fifteen (15) feet from any such roadways, sewers, or utilities. Trees shall be setback from overhead utility lines as indicated in the following chart:

<u>Tree Height</u>	<u>Minimum Distance from Center of Trunk to Nearest Utility Line</u>
Up to 15 feet	10 ft.
15 to 25 feet	20 ft.
Over 25 feet	30 ft.

**J. Landscaping of Divider Medians**

Where traffic on driveways, maneuvering lanes, private roads, or similar vehicle accessways is separated by a divider median, the median shall be curbed and have a minimum width of ten (10) feet. A minimum of one (1) deciduous or evergreen tree shall be planted for each thirty (30) lineal feet or portion thereof of median. Trees may be planted at uniform intervals, at random, or in groupings, but in no instance shall the center-to-center distance between trees exceed sixty (60) feet.

**K. Irrigation**

The site plan shall indicate the proposed method of watering landscaped areas. Although not required, installation of an in-ground irrigation/sprinkler system is encouraged, particularly in front yards.

**Section 5.03 -- SPECIFIC LANDSCAPING REQUIREMENTS FOR ZONING DISTRICTS**

**A. Requirements for Commercial, Office, and Industrial Districts**

All lots or parcels of land located in the OS-1, B-1, B-2 and I-1 zoning districts shall comply with the following landscaping requirements:

**1. General Site Landscaping**

All developed portions of the site shall conform to the General Site Requirements in Section 5.02, sub-section A, except where specific landscape elements are required.

**2. Landscaping Adjacent to Road**

All commercial, office, and industrial developments shall comply with the requirements for landscaping adjacent to the road in Section 5.02, sub-section B.

**3. Berm Requirements**

A berm may be used to screen off-street parking from view of the road, in which case the berm shall be a maximum of three (3) feet in height, and shall be planted in accordance with Section 5.02, sub-section B. The berm shall be located totally on private property, adjacent to the road right-of-way.

**4. Screening**

Screening in the form of a landscaped berm, greenbelt, or wall shall be required wherever a non-residential use in a commercial, office, or industrial district abuts directly upon land zoned for residential or agricultural purposes, and where loading areas would be visible from residential or agricultural districts. Landscaped screening shall comply with the requirements in Section 5.02, sub-section E. If a wall is used instead of landscaping, the requirements in Article 6.00 shall be complied with, but a landscaped greenbelt shall be required on the side of the wall facing the residential or agricultural district.

**5. Parking Lot Landscaping**

Off-street parking areas containing greater than ten (10) spaces shall comply with the requirements for parking lot landscaping in Section 5.02, sub-section F.

**B. Requirements for Multiple Family Districts**

All lots or parcels of land located in the RM-1 zoning district shall comply with the following landscaping requirements:

**1. General Site Landscaping**

A minimum of two (2) deciduous or evergreen trees plus four (4) shrubs shall be planted per dwelling unit. Unless otherwise specified, required landscaping elsewhere in the multiple family development shall not be counted in meeting these requirements for trees.

**2. Landscaping Adjacent to Road**

All multiple family developments shall comply with the requirements for landscaping adjacent to the road in Section 5.02, sub-section B.

**3. Berm Requirements**

A berm may be used to screen off-street parking from view of the road, in which case the berm shall be a maximum of three (3) feet in height, and shall be planted in accordance with Section 5.02, sub-section B. The berm shall be located totally on private property, adjacent to the road right-of-way.

**4. Screening**

Screening in the form of a landscaped berm, greenbelt, or wall shall be required on all sides of a multiple family development. Landscaped screening shall comply with the requirements in Section 5.02, sub-section E. A wall may be used instead of landscaping adjacent to non-residential districts, subject to the requirements in Article 6.00. If a wall is used instead of landscaping, the requirements in Article 6.00 shall be complied with, but a landscaped greenbelt shall be required on the side of the wall facing the residential or agricultural district.

**5. Parking Lot Landscaping**

Off-street parking areas containing greater than ten (10) spaces shall comply with the requirements for parking lot landscaping in Section 5.02, sub-section F.

**6. Privacy Screen**

## ***Landscaping and Screening***

Where multiple family dwellings are designed so that rear open areas or patio areas front onto a public street, a landscaped privacy screen shall be provided (see illustration). The screen may consist of a combination of trees, shrubs, and berms, subject to review by the Planning Commission.

### **C. Requirements for Non-Residential Uses in Residential or Agricultural Districts**

All non-residential uses developed in residential or agricultural zoning districts shall comply with the following landscaping requirements:

**1. General Site Landscaping**

All developed portions of the site shall conform to the General Site Requirements in Section 5.02, sub-section A, except where specific landscape elements are required.

**2. Landscaping Adjacent to Road**

All non-residential developments located in residential districts shall comply with the requirements for landscaping adjacent to the road in Section 5.02, sub-section B.

**3. Berm Requirements**

A berm may be used to screen off-street parking from view of the road, in which case the berm shall be a maximum of three (3) feet in height, and shall be planted in accordance with Section 5.02, sub-section B. The berm shall be located totally on private property, adjacent to the road right-of-way.

**4. Screening**

Screening in the form of a landscaped berm, greenbelt, or wall shall be required wherever a non-residential use abuts directly upon land zoned for residential purposes. Landscaped screening shall comply with the requirements in Section 5.02, sub-section E. If a wall is used instead of landscaping, the requirements in Article 6.00 shall be complied with, and a landscaped greenbelt shall be provided on the side of the wall facing the residential or agricultural district.

**5. Parking Lot Landscaping**

Off-street parking areas containing greater than ten (10) spaces shall comply with the requirements for parking lot landscaping in Section 5.02, sub-section F.

## **Section 5.04 -- STANDARDS FOR LANDSCAPE MATERIALS**

Unless otherwise specified, all landscape materials shall comply with the following standards:

### **A. Plant Quality**

Plant materials used in compliance with the provisions of this Ordinance shall be nursery grown, free of pests and diseases, hardy in central Michigan, in conformance with the standards of the American Association of Nurserymen, and shall have passed inspections required under state regulations.

**PRIVACY SCREEN**

**Section 5.03, sub-section C.**

**B. Non-Living Plant Material**

Plastic and other non-living plant materials shall not be considered acceptable to meet the landscaping requirements of this Ordinance.

**C. Plant Material Specifications**

Use of native plant species to comply with landscaping requirements is encouraged so as to preserve the diversity and health of Michigan's unique natural heritage. Lists of native wildflower, ferns, trees, shrubs and vines, and grasses, sedges, and rushes are available at the Township Hall. The following specifications shall apply to all plant material proposed in accordance with the landscaping requirements of this Ordinance: *(revised 2/3/04)*

**1. Deciduous Shade Trees**

Deciduous shade trees shall be a minimum of two and one-half (2.5) inches in caliper measured twelve (12) inches above grade with the first branch a minimum of four (4) feet above grade when planted.

**2. Deciduous Ornamental Trees**

Deciduous ornamental trees shall be a minimum of one and one-half (1-1/2) inches in caliper measured six (6) inches above grade with a minimum height of four (4) feet above grade when planted.

**3. Evergreen Trees**

Evergreen trees shall be a minimum of five (5) feet in height when planted. Furthermore, evergreen trees shall have a minimum spread of two and one-half (2.5) feet, and the size of the burlapped root ball shall be at least ten (10) times the caliper measured six (6) inches above grade.

**4. Shrubs**

Shrubs shall be a minimum of two (2) feet in height when planted. Low growing shrubs shall have a minimum spread of twenty-four (24) inches when planted.

**5. Hedges**

Hedges shall be planted and maintained so as to form a continuous, unbroken, visual screen within two (2) years after planting, barring unusual growing conditions, such as drought or disease. Hedges shall be a minimum of two (2) feet in height when planted.

**6. Ground Cover**

Ground cover used in lieu of turf grasses in whole or in part shall be planted in such a manner as to present a finished appearance and reasonably complete coverage after one (1) complete growing season.

**7. Grass**

Grass area shall be planted using species normally grown as permanent lawns in central Michigan. Grass, sod, and seed shall be clean and free of weeds, pests, and diseases. Grass may be sodded, plugged, sprigged or seeded. When grass is to be established by a method other than complete sodding or seeding, nurse grass seed shall be sown for immediate effect and protection until complete coverage is otherwise achieved. Straw or other mulch shall be used to protect newly seeded areas.

**8. Mulch**

Mulch used around trees, shrubs, and vines shall be a minimum of three (3) inches deep, and installed in a manner as to present a finished appearance.

**9. Undesirable Plant Material**

Use of plant materials that cause disruption to storm drainage or that are susceptible to pests or disease is not encouraged. The following plant materials exhibit such characteristics, and therefore their use is not encouraged in the Township:

Box Elder  
 American Elm  
 Tree of Heaven  
 European Barberry  
 Northern Catalpa  
 Poplar  
 Willow  
 Silver Maple  
 Austrian Pine (*revised 2/3/98*)

**SUMMARY OF PLANT MATERIAL SPECIFICATIONS [1]**

	<u>Minimum Caliper</u>	<u>Minimum Height</u>	<u>Minimum Spread</u>	<u>Minimum Length</u>
Deciduous Trees	2 1/2 in.[2]	4 ft. first branch	--	--
Ornamental Trees	1 1/2 in.[3]	4 ft. first branch	--	--
Evergreen Trees	--	5 ft.	2 1/2 ft.	--
Shrubs	--	2 ft.	2 ft.	--
Hedges	--	2 ft.	--	--

Footnote

- [1] See Section 5.04 for detailed requirements.
- [2] Measured 12 inches above grade.
- [3] Measured 6 inches above grade.

**Section 5.05 -- INSTALLATION AND MAINTENANCE**

The following standards shall be observed where installation and maintenance of landscape materials are required:

**A. Installation**

Landscaping shall be installed in a sound, workmanlike manner to ensure the continued growth of healthy plant material. Trees, shrubs, hedges, and vines shall be generously mulched at the time of planting.

**B. Installation of Perimeter Landscaping**

Landscaping along the perimeter shall be installed prior to construction, except where such landscaping would be destroyed during construction.

**C. Seeding or Sodding**

Lots or parcels shall be seeded or sodded within ninety (90) days after occupancy.

**D. Protection from Vehicles**

Landscaping shall be protected from vehicles through use of curbs or wheel stops in parking lots. Landscape areas shall be elevated above the pavement to a height that is adequate to protect the plants from snow removal, salt, and other hazards.

**E. Off-Season Planting Requirements**

If development is completed during the off-season when plants cannot be installed, the owner shall provide a performance guarantee to ensure installation of required landscaping in the next planting season, in accordance with Section 2.18.

**F. Maintenance**

Landscaping required by this Ordinance shall be maintained in a healthy, neat, and orderly appearance, free from refuse and debris. All unhealthy and dead plant material shall be replaced immediately upon notice from the Building Official, unless the season is not appropriate for planting, in which case such plant material shall be replaced at the beginning of the next planting season.

All landscaped areas shall be provided with a readily available and acceptable supply of water, with at least one spigot located within three hundred (300) feet of all plant material to be established and maintained. Trees, shrubs, and other plantings and lawn areas shall be watered regularly throughout the growing season.

All constructed or manufactured landscape elements, such as but not limited to benches, retaining walls, edging, and so forth, shall be maintained in good condition and neat appearance. Rotted, deteriorated, or damaged landscape elements shall be repaired, replaced, or removed.

**Section 5.06 -- TREATMENT OF EXISTING PLANT MATERIAL**

The following regulations shall apply to existing plant material:

**A. Consideration of Existing Elements in the Landscape Design**

In instances where healthy plant material exists on a site prior to its development, the Planning Commission may permit substitution of such plant material in place of the requirements set forth previously in this Section, provided such substitution is in keeping with the spirit and intent of this Article and the Ordinance in general.

Existing hedges, berms, walls, or other landscape elements may be used to satisfy the requirements set forth previously, provided that such landscaping is in conformance with the requirements of this section.

**B. Preservation of Existing Plant Material**

Site plans shall show all existing trees which are located in the portions of the site that will be built upon or otherwise altered, and are five (5) inches or greater in caliper, measured twelve (12) inches above grade.

Trees shall be labeled "To Be Removed" or "To Be Saved" on the site plan. If existing plant material is labeled "To Be Saved" on the site plan, protective measures should be implemented, such as the placement of fencing or stakes at the dripline around each tree. No

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vehicle or other construction equipment shall be parked or stored within the dripline of any tree or other plant material intended to be saved.

In the event that healthy plant materials which are intended to meet the requirements of the Ordinance are cut down, damaged or destroyed during construction, said plant material shall be replaced with the same species as the damaged or removed tree, in accordance with the following schedule, unless otherwise approved by the Planning Official based on consideration of the site and building configuration, available planting space, and similar considerations:

### **CALIPER MEASURED 12 INCHES ABOVE GRADE**

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<u>Damaged Tree</u>	<u>Replacement Tree</u>	<u>Replacement Ratio</u>
Less than 6 inches	2-1/2 to 3 inches	1 for 1
More than 6 inches	2-1/2 to 3 inches	1 replacement tree for each 6 inches in caliper or fraction thereof of damaged tree

## **Section 5.07 -- MODIFICATIONS TO LANDSCAPE REQUIREMENTS**

In consideration of the overall design and impact of a specific landscape plan, and in consideration of the amount of existing plant material to be retained on the site, the Planning Commission may modify the specific requirements outlined herein, provided that any such adjustment is in keeping with the intent of this Article and Ordinance in general. In determining whether a modification is appropriate, the Planning Commission shall consider whether the following conditions exist:

- Topographic features or other unique features of the site create conditions such that strict application of the landscape regulations would result in a less effective screen than an alternative landscape design.
- Parking, vehicular circulation, or land use are such that required landscaping would not enhance the site or result in the desired screening effect.
- The public benefit intended by the landscape regulations could be better-achieved with a plan that varies from the strict requirements of the Ordinance.