

Mapleton City Planning Commission Staff Report

Meeting Date: August 28, 2014

Item: 4

Applicant: Mapleton City

Location: City-wide

Prepared by: Sean Conroy, Community Development Director

Public Hearing Item: Yes

Zone: All

REQUEST

Consideration of an ordinance amending Mapleton City Code Chapter 17.15.050 regarding front yard landscaping requirements for new single family dwellings.

BACKGROUND AND PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Mapleton City Code (MCC) Chapter 17.15 outlines the landscaping requirements for new development in the City. The purpose of the requirements is to “*foster aesthetically pleasing development which will protect and preserve the appearance, character, health, safety and welfare of the community.*” MCC Chapter 17.15.050 currently requires that a minimum of 75% of the front yard of new single family dwellings be landscaped in turf grass.

Staff presented a draft ordinance to the Commission on August 14, 2014 that included the following:

- Allowed a maximum of 75% grass in the front yard as opposed to requiring a minimum of 75% grass;
- Allowed no more than 40% of the front yard to be covered with hardscape (driveway, walkway, patios, etc.);
- Required that at least 20% of the area not planted with grass or covered with hardscape shall include plants and/or trees; and
- Limited the height of plants in parkways to 36 inches.

The Commission was supportive of the concept of revising the landscape ordinance but was uncomfortable with some of the provisions of the ordinance, particularly with the percentage breakdowns of grass and other landscaped areas.

Staff has revised the draft ordinance to now include the following:

- Eliminates the requirement that 75% of the front yard must be installed with grass;
- Allows no more than 40% of the front yard to be covered with hardscape (driveway, walkway, patios, etc.);
- Requires a minimum of 30% plantings of some type (grass, shrubs, trees, etc.);
- Allows alternatives to grass (xeriscape); and
- Limits the height of plants in parkways to 36 inches.

EVALUATION

Water Conservation: While Utah is one of the most arid states in the country, it continues to be one of the highest water users per capita. Mapleton City has been promoting water conservation for many years, however, some of the City’s ordinances contradict the goal of water conservation. The City’s current ordinance requiring that at least 75% of the front yard of all homes be plated with sod is inconsistent with water conservation goals.

The proposed ordinance eliminates the mandate of 75% sod and gives more flexibility to each property owner to determine their landscape design. This will allow property owners to use water conserving landscaping if they so choose. In order to avoid a barren front yard, a minimum of 30% must be planted with some type of vegetation. If an owner still would like to install all the front yard in grass, the proposed ordinance would not preclude that option.

Hardscape: The proposed amendments limit the amount of hardscape that could be installed within the front setback to 40%. For example, a lot that is 100 feet wide and has a front setback of 30 feet would be allowed up to 1,200 square feet of hardscape ($100 \times 30 \times .40 = 1200$). Installing an excessive amount of paving within the front setback would be contrary to the stated purpose of the landscape ordinance, which is to foster aesthetically pleasing development. Excessive hardscape also contributes to storm water runoff pollution.

Parkways: The Planning Commission and City Council recently approved an amendment to the landscaping requirements for parkways (area between curb and sidewalk) to allow xeriscaping (drought tolerant plantings). The proposed amendments include one modification to the xeriscaping standards that would limit the height of plants in the parkway to no more than 36 inches a maturity. This limitation is to avoid vegetation that could create site vision problems or a landscape barrier.

STAFF RECCOMENDATION

Recommend adoption of the attached ordinance to the City Council.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Draft Ordinance.

Attachment "1"
(Changes shown in strikeout and underline)

17.15.050: LANDSCAPE REQUIREMENTS FOR SINGLE-FAMILY HOMES:

It is the intent of this section to ~~provide~~ encourage aesthetically pleasing front yards and the use of water conserving landscaping. ~~a guide for all single family homes, however, this section shall be required for all homes constructed on any lot less than an acre in size. These standards shall also apply to any of the aforementioned zones with a "cluster or transferable development right" overlay zone, as well as any lot one acre in size or less. This section shall apply to all new subdivision lots.~~ This section shall only apply to the front yards of residential homes. For the purposes of this section, the front yard shall be defined as the area between the front property line and the front wall of the dwelling. Unless otherwise agreed upon by the developer of a subdivision, the homeowner, within one calendar year of receiving a certificate of occupancy, must provide landscaping with the following minimum standards:

- ~~A. No less than seventy five percent (75%) of front yard shall be lawn or sod, and a combination of shrubs, trees, decorative rock, ground cover or other recognized landscape materials such as wood chips. Areas of the front yard not landscaped shall be "hardscaped" (pathways or patios). Front lawns shall be kept free of weeds, structures, or debris.~~
- A. No more than forty percent (40%) of the area within the front yard setback shall include hardscape. For the purposes of this section "hardscape" shall be defined as any non-permeable hard surface located within the front setback (i.e. driveways, walkways, porch, stoop, patio, etc.). If a public sidewalk is located within a public utility easement on the lot, the sidewalk shall not be included in the hardscape limitations.
- B. The front yard of any lot containing a dwelling shall include landscaping. The term "landscaping" shall mean and include the installation of any combination of turf (including either sod or seeded area), planter beds, gardens, trees, shrubs, ground cover, wood chips, mulch, rocks and boulders. At least 30% of the area not covered in hardscape shall include vegetation (i.e. turf, plants, shrubs, trees, etc.).
- C. Xeriscape designs are permitted and encouraged provided, however, that the failure of an owner to install and maintain landscaping within the front yard under the guise that the vegetation and bare ground that occur naturally on the site constitutes xeriscaping shall not qualify as conforming with the provisions of this ordinance.
- D. The property owner is required to maintain the landscaping in an attractive manner. Grass and weeds shall be maintained at a height of not more than six inches (6") at any time. Dead, decayed, diseased, or hazardous trees, weeds, hedges, and overgrown or uncultivated vegetation that is in a hazardous condition, is an obstruction to pedestrian or vehicular traffic, or that is likely to harbor rats, vermin, or other pests shall be considered a nuisance and shall not be permitted.

~~BE.~~ Automatic surface sprinkling system for front yard is encouraged. This will include lawn area, parkway in front of house and between sidewalk and curb. Each station should provide sufficient water to meet needs of plants being watered.

~~EF.~~ Separate deep soak irrigation system for street trees and trees planted in planter strips between curb and sidewalk is also encouraged. A drip irrigation system is encouraged for other planting areas.

~~D. Mapleton City recommends using plants with low water requirements.~~

~~EG.~~ Where a parkway or planter strip is present, street trees, as approved by the Mapleton City tree list shall be installed. The number of trees shall be determined by the spread or canopy of the tree at full maturity. Trees shall be no less than one inch (1") caliper in size. Larger trees may be used, but are not recommended. A bond for the trees shall be collected with the building permit for any new home with a parkway in the front or side yard (corner lots). See section 17.15.120 of this title for more information on parkway landscaping.

17.15.120: PARKWAYS:

A. All parkways in new developments shall be landscaped in conformance with the provisions of this section.

B. Parkway two feet (2') or more in width shall be landscaped with turf grass or with an approved xeriscape design. Parkway less than two feet (2') in width may be landscaped with impervious materials including brick pavers, concrete pavers or concrete. Asphalt shall not be permitted. For xeriscape designs a landscape plan shall be submitted that satisfies the following:

1. Plant Coverage: Thirty percent (30%) or more of the parkway surface be covered with vegetation, not including required street trees, within three (3) years of planting or when planting has reached maturity, whichever comes first. For lots with two (2) or more street frontages, this standard shall be applied separately to each adjacent parkway on each street frontage. Water conserving plants shall constitute at least eighty percent (80%) of all plants used. With the exception of trees, no planting material shall exceed thirty six (36) inches in height at maturity.