

LITTLE ROCK LANDSCAPE ORDINANCE

RECOMMENDED REVISIONS: SUMMARY

2000 LANDSCAPE ORDINANCE: <http://www.lrcitybeautifulcommission.org/5.html>

Throughout much of 2008, staff and the City Beautiful Commission have been working on a review of the City's 2000 Landscape Ordinance. As a result of that review, the Commission has proposed several changes to the Ordinance. Many of the changes are "clean-up" in nature, including correcting typo errors and adding definitions in (Section 15-6). Additionally, there are several proposed changes to various standards and criteria established by the Ordinance. The Commission felt the proposed changes would result in enhanced landscape standards and higher quality developments. The Commission held two public hearings (October, November 200*) for the purpose of receiving input on the proposed Ordinance changes. At each hearing, there were persons present who voiced concerns about some of the proposed changes. Based on statements made at the public hearings, the proposed changes which city staff feels would have the greatest impact on development are noted below.

The addition of a new subsection at the beginning to "encourage green/sustainable practices as a purposed to aspire towards for all applicable landscape projects." (Section 15-3- #8)

One change is to the **definition of "tree-topping"** which is prohibited by the Ordinance. Under the change, the maximum size of branches that can be trimmed is **reduced from three (3) inches to two (2) inches**. This means a greater portion of the affected tree would be preserved. (Section 15-6)

The Commission has also proposed **increasing the filing fee** for landscape ordinance variance from \$100.00 to \$250.00. The filing fee has not changed since its inception. (Section 15-36)

It has been proposed to **reduce the size of properties for which the seal of a registered landscape architect is required** on landscape plans from two (2) acres to one (1) acre. Many of the developments that have been constructed in recent time have been on tracts less than two (2) acres in size, including several on Highway 10. Staff feels the current two (2) acre minimum should be reduced to one (1) acre so that more properties will be developed under landscape plans prepared by a professional landscape architect. (Section 15-18b)

An additional proposed change would be **to require that landscape plans include trees and shrubs from at least two (2) different genus groups and that at least fifty (50) percent be evergreen**. Having plants from varying genus groups assures greater survivability of plants in response to disease. Having evergreen trees and shrubs on the site assures greenery on the site, even during the winter months when deciduous plants lose their leaves. (Section 15-51/15-87)

It is proposed to **require the preservation of all trees with a diameter at breast height of four (4) inches or greater** located within the thirty (30) foot wide perimeter planting strip adjacent to freeways or expressways. The Ordinance currently describes that area adjacent to freeways as a street planting strip and buffer, meaning there is no requirement to preserve trees. Particularly along I-430 staff believes it is important to preserve trees along the interstate. (Section 15-96a)

Two (2) changes have been proposed which will result in additional landscaping being required on sites. One change is **to require perimeter plantings of shrubbery at a rate of three (3) shrubs for every ten (10) feet**. The ordinance currently requires three (3) shrubs for every thirty (30) feet. A second proposed change would **increase the interior landscape island requirement in parking lots from the current eight (8) percent of the vehicular use area to ten (10) percent**. This would create more tree canopy over paved areas. (Section 15-97)

For commercial parking lots used solely for the purpose of providing rented or leased parking spaces, the Landscape Ordinance currently allows for a substantial reduction of some landscape requirements and a total elimination of others. It has been proposed **to eliminate those exceptions and to require the landscaping of commercial parking lots downtown as with all other parking lots**. In reality, this proposed change will have little effect since it is not likely the many more surface commercial parking lots will be developed and the new standards wouldn't be applied to existing commercial lots. (Section 15-99)