

PLANNING COMMISSION REPORT
Regular Agenda -- Public Hearing Item

PC Staff Report
2/25/13

ITEM NO. 5 TEXT AMENDMENT TO THE LAND DEVELOPMENT CODE; PARKING LOT PERIMETER SCREENING (MJL)

TA-12-00207: Consider Text Amendments to the City of Lawrence Land Development Code, Chapter 20, Article 10, to change the parking lot perimeter screening standards. *Initiated by City Commission on 8/21/12.*

RECOMMENDATION: Staff recommends that the Planning Commission forward a recommendation for approval of the proposed amendments TA-12-00207 to the Land Development Code, Article 10 to the City Commission for approval.

Reason for Request: Currently a berm or masonry wall is required for perimeter parking lot screening materials. These can be costly and a berm may require a larger area to accommodate the size.

RELEVANT GOLDEN FACTOR:

- The text amendment is in conformance with the comprehensive plan.

PUBLIC COMMENT RECEIVED PRIOR TO PRINTING

- No comments received prior to printing

OVERVIEW OF PROPOSED AMENDMENT

Currently the Code requires parking lots to be landscaped and screened from view of rights-of-ways with 1 tree per 25' of parking lot frontage and with either a solid masonry wall or a berm with a minimum height of 2'. The code does allow the Planning Director to grant a waiver from these requirements. A solid masonry wall can prove costly and a berm requires a wide area to accommodate the 3:1 slope. Additional options should be considered such as installation of a fence or a continuous row of evergreen shrubs. These options can be less costly while obtaining similar screening results.

See the attached draft language in Section 20-1004. Changes are noted in **red** and the additions are underlined and the deletions are ~~struck through~~.

CONFORMANCE WITH THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Horizon 2020, Chapter 6 – Commercial Land Use, Policy 3.2(A)(3) discusses design standards for new and redeveloped commercial areas which improve the aesthetics of the districts from the surrounding street system. This text amendment offers applicants more material options to screen parking lots.

CRITERIA FOR REVIEW AND DECISION-MAKING

Section 20-1302(f) provides review and decision-making criteria on proposed text amendments. It states that review bodies shall consider at least the following factors:

1) Whether the proposed text amendment corrects an error or inconsistency in the Development Code or meets the challenge of a changing condition; and

The proposed text amendment is a change in condition in order to continuously improve the development process. The proposed change maintains the intent of the standard, to screen parking lots, but offers more options to meet the standard.

2) Whether the proposed text amendment is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan and the stated purpose of this Development Code (Sec. 20-104).

The proposed text is consistent with the comprehensive plan by maintaining the goal of screening the perimeter of a parking lot from rights-of-ways and help enhances the general welfare of the citizens of Lawrence. The proposed text offers more options to meet the screening standard.

20-1004 PARKING LOT PERIMETER LANDSCAPING

(a) **Purpose**

The parking lot perimeter **Landscaping** standards of this section are intended to **Screen** views of parking lots from streets and roads.

(b) **Applicability**

- (1) The parking lot perimeter **Landscaping** standards of this section apply to all off-street parking lots containing 5 or more off-street **Parking Spaces**.
- (2) The parking lot perimeter **Landscaping** standards of this section shall apply to all new development and to redevelopment of existing parking lots which result in an increase of 20% or greater of the number of spaces in the existing parking lot.

(c) **Landscape/Screening Material**

Parking lots shall be landscaped and screened from view of street rights-of-way with a minimum of one **Shade Tree** or **Ornamental Tree** per 25 linear feet of parking lot **Frontage** (required Street trees may be counted toward satisfying this requirement) and at least one of the following:

- (1) a solid masonry wall **or fence** with a minimum Height of three feet (3') and a maximum Height of four feet (4'); or

(2) a **Berm** with a minimum height of two feet (2'), a maximum height of three feet (3') and a maximum 3:1 slope. The **Berm** shall be located entirely on the property with the parking lot. Where Parking is allowed on a site and it is impracticable to provide a 15-foot wide buffer on a side adjoining residential uses or across an **Alley** from residential uses, with the approval of the **Planning Director** as part of the Site Plan Review process, a solid fence or wall at least six (6) feet in Height may be substituted for the buffer on the side adjoining or across the **Alley** from the residential uses; **or**

~~(2)(3)~~ a continuous row of evergreen Shrubs with a minimum height of three feet (3'); or

~~(3)(4)~~ Provided that, the **Planning Director** may waive this parking lot perimeter **Landscaping** and **Screening** requirement if the Director determines that the purpose of this requirement is otherwise met or that the overall spirit and intent of this Development Code is not undermined by granting the waiver.

(d) **Landscape Area**

Required landscape/**Screening** material shall be located between the street right-of-way and the parking lot. This landscape area shall have a minimum width of ten feet (10'), although a buffer width of five feet (5') is permitted if it is provided in conjunction with a solid masonry wall of a minimum height of three feet (3').