

Chapter 21.42  
Landscaping Standards

Sections:

- 21.42.010 Purpose.
- 21.42.020 Landscaping Required.
- 21.42.030 General Requirements.
- 21.42.035 Special Requirements for Water Efficient Landscaping.
- 21.42.040 Landscaping Standards for R-3, R-4 and Non-residential Districts.
- 21.42.050 Landscaping Standards for Public Right-of-Way

21.42.10 Purpose.

Landscapes are intended to improve the physical appearance of the City by providing visual, ecological, and psychological relief in the urban environment. Successfully designed and maintained landscape areas provide an attractive living, working, and recreating environment in addition to their role in reducing water and energy consumption.

*(Ord. C-7065 § 1, 1992; Ord. C-6533 § 1 (part), 1988).*

21.42.20 Landscaping Required

The provisions of this Chapter are the minimum requirements for the provision and maintenance of landscaped areas.

*(Ord. C-7326 § 22, 1995; Ord. C-6533 § 1 (part), 1988).*

21.42.30 General Requirements.

The following requirements apply to all zoning districts:

- A. Landscaped Area. All required yards and setback areas shall be attractively landscaped primarily with drought tolerant and native plant materials. Decorative non-living materials such as brick, stone, art, fountains and ponds may be used within the landscaped area, provided such materials present an attractive setting consistent with the intent of these landscaping requirements.

- 1. A minimum of 90% of total landscape area shall consist of very low to low

water usage plantings based on plant species classifications provided by the State's Water Use Classifications of Landscape Species (WUCOLS) document. Landscape projects containing less than 90% very low to low water use plantings shall require submittal of a complete Landscape Document Package showing the Estimated Total Water Usage (ETWU) of all proposed plantings falling below the property's specific Maximum Applied Water Allowance (MAWA), as specified in the Landscape Document Package application.

2. Paving shall not cover more than thirty percent (30%) of on-site area that is not covered by structures and parking. To help with on site stormwater retention and filtration along with reducing the urban heat island effect, the use of permeable and high reflectance paving materials are encouraged.
  3. Water-efficient landscape irrigation systems on automotive timers and sensors shall be used and abide by all applicable Long Beach Water Department water use prohibitions.
  4. Large canopy trees shall be used to help minimize urban heat island effect.
  5. Minimize or eliminate use of turf.
  6. Where available, recycled water and recirculating water systems shall be used with decorative water features.
  7. Plants with similar water needs shall be planted together.
  8. The use of infiltration beds, swales, and basins that allow water to collect and soak into the ground; and retention ponds that retain water, handle excess flow and filter pollutants are highly encouraged in the landscape design.
- B. Maintenance. All landscaped and paved areas shall be maintained in a neat, attractive, orderly and water-efficient condition. All paved areas, walls and fences shall be in good repair without broken parts, holes or litter. Dead or diseased plants shall be removed and replaced with plant materials that comply with the provisions of this Chapter.
- C. Plans Required. When applicable, a Landscape Document Package shall be approved prior to the issuance of any planning or building permit. For projects proposing the use of 90% very low to low water use plantings, ETWU and MAWA calculations are not required in the Landscape Document Package submittal.

Applicable landscaping, irrigation, planter drainage, water reuse, retention and filtration improvements shall be implemented before any final building and planning inspection is approved.

*(Ord. C-7326 § 23, 1995; Ord. C-7032 § 31, 1992; Ord. C-6533 § 1 (part), 1988).*

21.42.35 Special Requirements for Water Efficient Landscaping.

A. Applicability

1. The requirements of this ordinance shall apply to the following projects:
  - a. All projects which require the issuance of a discretionary permit or Site Plan Review;
  - b. New dwelling unit(s) or principal structure expansion projects resulting in a fifty-percent (50%) or greater increase in gross floor area with a landscape area equal to or greater than 2,500 square feet;
  - c. Developer-installed landscaping projects;
  - d. Cemeteries. Recognizing the special landscape management needs of cemeteries, new and rehabilitated cemeteries are limited to Sections 492.4, 492.11 and 492.12; and existing cemeteries are limited to Sections 493, 493.1 and 493.2 of the California Code of Regulations Title 23. Chapter 2.7 Model Water Efficient Landscape Ordinance;
  - e. Existing landscapes are limited to Sections 493, 493.1 and 493.2 of the California Code of Regulations Title 23. Chapter 2.7 Model Water Efficient Landscape Ordinance;
  - f. Public right-of-ways; and
  - g. Public facilities.
2. The requirements of this ordinance shall not apply to the following projects:
  - a. Registered local, state or federal historical sites;
  - b. Landscape projects not connected to the public water system;
  - c. Ecological restoration projects that do not require a permanent irrigation system; or
  - d. Plant collections, as part of botanical gardens or arboretums open to the public.

3. Special landscaped areas including sports fields, golf courses, and playgrounds where turf is the surface utilized for recreational use may require water exceeding the Maximum Applied Water Allowance (MAWA). As such, justification must be provided in the submittal documentation outlining specific hydrozones needed for additional water exceeding the MAWA. Turf shall be limited to areas utilized for high recreation areas while the perimeter areas shall utilize drought-tolerant and native plants in hydrozones (very low water and low water use).
4. Orchards, community gardens and nurseries may require water exceeding the MAWA. As such, justification must be provided in the submittal documentation outlining specific hydrozones needed for additional water exceeding the MAWA.
5. Edible plant gardens may comprise up to ten percent (10%) of total landscaped area. Edible plant gardens in excess of ten percent (10%) but not exceeding twenty percent (20%) of total landscaped area shall require the use of an adequately sized rain barrel or other water retention system for garden irrigation.

21.42.040 - Landscaping Standards for R-3, R-4 and Non-residential Districts.

A. Number of Plants. A minimum number of plants shall be provided as follows:

1. On-Site Street Frontage. Within the required setback area along all street frontages, except at driveways, a minimum five-foot-wide (5') landscaping strip (inside dimension to planter) shall be provided. This area shall be landscaped with one tree for each fifteen (15) linear feet of street frontage and three (3) shrubs for each tree. Sites with more than one hundred feet (100') of street frontage shall also provide one tree of not less than thirty-six inch (36") box size for each one hundred feet (100') of street frontage.  
Planters. All on-site landscaped areas adjoining the public right-of-way shall be located in planters not less than six inches (6") high. The planters shall be designated to drain back onto the private property and not directly onto the public right-of-way.

2. Parking Lots. One canopy tree shall be provided for each four (4) open parking spaces. Trees may be clustered provided a 50% tree canopy shade coverage of all parking stall and related drive aisle areas, after ten years of growth, is achieved. A minimum of one cluster for each one hundred feet (100') of a row or double row of parking spaces shall be provided. In order to meet the 50% requirement, broad-leafed evergreen trees are recommended. Adequate planter sizes shall be provided to allow full growth of proposed trees.

Screening Required. A three-foot (3') tall masonry wall, landscaped berm, or hedge shall be provided in the event parking areas abut a street frontage. See Chapter 21.41.266. C for requirements.

Wheel Stops. No vehicles shall be permitted to overhang required landscape areas behind wheel stops. See Chapter 21.41.269 for requirements.

3. Parking Structures. An attractive six-foot-wide (6') landscaping strip shall be provided on all sides of the structure except at driveways and walkways. One tree shall be provided for each twenty feet (20') of perimeter of the structure in addition to the required trees for abutting a residential district, a school or a street frontage. Trees bordering the parking structure shall be of a species that will obtain a mature height of not less than the height of the structure. The trees shall be of a species or shall be located or trimmed in such a way as to prevent people from using them to gain unauthorized access to otherwise secured areas.

Abutting Residential Zone, School, or Public Street. All sides of a parking structure abutting a residential zone, school or public street shall be screened by vines or other decorative screen approved by the Director of Development Services.

Wheel Stops. No vehicles shall be permitted to overhang required landscape areas behind wheel stops. See Chapter 21.41.269 for requirements.

4. Yards and Parking Lots Near Residential District and Schools.

Residential (R-3, R-4), Commercial, Mixed-Use, and Light Industrial (IL) Districts.

- a. A minimum five-foot wide (5') landscaped strip shall be provided as a buffer along all yard areas abutting or adjacent an alley, a residential district or school. This area shall be planted fifteen feet (15') on center with broad leaf evergreen trees and minimum fifteen (15) gallon size.

Medium Industrial (IM), General Industrial (IG) and Port-related Industrial (IP) Districts.

- a. A minimum fifteen-foot wide (15') landscaped strip shall be provided along the full extent of the property line between the two (2) districts. This area shall be landscaped with one broad leaf evergreen tree, of minimum twenty-four inch (24") box size, for each fifteen (15) linear feet along the property line, as well as appropriate shrubs and groundcover.

5. Landscaping Over Parking Garages and Other Green Roofs.

- a. Landscaped areas on top of parking garages or other green roofs shall factor in the structural integrity of the building;
- b. The landscaped areas shall be identified as requiring shallow soils (extensive) or deep soils (intensive);
- c. Extensive green roofs shall contain less than six (6) inches deep of soil to promote plant growth. ;
- d. Intensive green roofs shall contain deeper soils to support a deeper layer of growing medium; and
- e. Landscaping over parking garages and other green roofs shall contain irrigation and maintenance measures.

6. Other Yard Areas. There shall be a minimum of one tree provided for each one hundred and twenty-five (125) square feet of other required yard area on the lot. In addition, there shall be a minimum of three (3) shrubs provided per tree.

7. Fences and retaining walls. All required fences and retaining walls shall be landscaped with vines planted no more than ten feet (10') on center on all accessible sides of a wall or alternative plant materials approved by the Director of Development Services.
8. Planting Distance between Trees. Adding the diameter of two (2) adjacent tree canopies and dividing by four (4) shall determine planting distance between two (2) trees. Distance between trees shall not be less than fifteen feet (15') or greater than twenty-five feet (25').
9. Plant Size. All required plant materials shall be not less than the following sizes:
  - a. Trees. For required on-site trees, at least a twenty-four (24") box and seven-foot (7') height;
  - b. Shrubs. For required shrubs, at least five (5) gallons; and
  - c. Mulch. A minimum of two-inch (2") mulch shall be applied on all exposed soil surfaces of landscape areas.
10. Substitutions. The following substitutions for required landscaping materials may be made subject to approval of the Director of Development Services:
  - a. Three (3) fifteen (15) gallon trees for one twenty-four inch (24") box tree;
  - b. One thirty-six inch (36") box tree for two (2) twenty four inch (24") box trees;
  - c. One forty-eight inch (48") box tree for four (4) twenty-four inch (24") box trees;
  - d. One twenty-four inch (24") box tree for five (5) five (5) gallon shrubs; and
  - e. Five (5) one (1) gallon shrubs for one (1) five (5) gallon shrub.
11. Green Building Development Standards. In addition to the above requirements, projects requiring Site Plan Review shall comply with the Green Building Development Standards located in Section 21.45.400.
12. Exceptions. The Site Plan Review Committee may waive any of the

landscape standards if it finds that such changes will create a more functional, water or energy efficient, sustainable or cohesive design.

*(Ord. C-7360 § 12, 1995; Ord. C-6933 § 34, 1991; Ord. C-6895 § 23, 1991; Ord. C-6533 § 1 (part), 1988).*

**21.42.050 Landscaping standards—Public right-of-way (Parkway).**

A. Responsibility. Pursuant to the requirements of this Chapter, the owner of private property adjoining the public right-of-way shall be responsible to plant, install and maintain landscaping in the area between the curb and the private property line for the entire frontage of the property. For any landscaping or paving in the parkway that does not conform or comply with the requirements of this Chapter, the City of Long Beach shall not be responsible for any loss or damage to such landscaping or paving materials in the parkway, such as cast-in-place concrete or paving units set on concrete, associated with street, curb or sidewalk repairs, or any other municipal repair or maintenance function.

B. Street Trees.

1. Provision of Trees. One large canopy (1) street tree, of not less than twenty-four-inch (24") box size, shall be provided for each twenty-five feet (25') of property line length whenever a new dwelling unit is added to the adjoining property or new development requiring discretionary approval, Site Plan Review or a fence built under the special fence height provisions. Such street tree shall be of a species approved by the Director of Public Works and shall be provided with root barriers and irrigation according to the specifications of the Director of Public Works.

2. Exceptions. Street trees shall be spaced from driveways, light standards, intersections, utility poles and street furniture and shall be located only in the prescribed width of parkway as provided in Chapter 14.28 of this Code. An in-lieu fee shall be provided for any tree required in Subsection 21.42.050.B.1 that is not allowed by the provisions of Chapter 14.28. Such fee shall only be used for planting street trees in other locations that do comply with these standards. Such fee shall be paid to the Director of Public Works, and shall be based on the

actual cost to the Department of Public Works to obtain and plant a tree.

3. Removal. No street tree shall be removed unless found by the Director of Public Works to be dead, dying, or a public hazard due to damage to curb, gutter, sidewalk or roadway or potential for falling, or for replacement of trees in an approved street tree program. Such approval shall be recorded with the Planning and Building Department before the tree is removed.

C. Parkway Landscaping.

1. Provision of Landscaping. The area between the sidewalk and the curb and between the sidewalk and the private property line, if any, shall be landscaped primarily with native and drought tolerant live plant material (see WUCOLS very low to low water usage plant materials) and maintained in a neat and healthy condition. Nonliving material and decorative elements may be used within the parkway in accordance with the provisions of this Chapter. The owner of private property adjoining the public right-of-way shall be responsible for planting and maintaining such landscaping. Sidewalk width shall be four feet (4') or, if adjoining the curb, five feet (5'), as provided in Chapter 20.36.
2. Live Planting Material. Groundcover of not more than eight inches (8") in height, accent plantings or shrubbery all that are not more than thirty-two inches (32") in height, and street trees are the only plant materials allowed in the parkway. The planting of low-water demand and drought-tolerant plant materials shall be encouraged by the City of Long Beach. High-water demand plant material that require, at maturity, one inch (1") or more of irrigation water per week shall be prohibited. Automatic irrigation systems, if installed, shall be maintained so as to conserve water, and shall not cause water to runoff into the sidewalk or street or pond within the parkway.
3. Nonliving Material. Permeable groundcovers that accept foot traffic, such as decomposed granite, inorganic and organic mulches, and modular paving units set on sand, are the only nonliving materials allowed in the parkway and shall not cover fifty percent (50%) or more of the total parkway area.
4. Decorative Elements. Decorative stone, wood or other elements that are smooth-surfaced are allowed in the parkway, and shall not project more than

eight inches (8") above the surface.

5. Exceptions. The paving of the parkway shall be prohibited, except as follows:
  - a. Rights-of-way subject to major uses for commercial or retail purposes, or abutting a major arterial or regional corridor street as designated in the transportation element of the General Plan, may be paved for the full depth of the curb to property line area as determined by the City Engineer;
  - b. The paving of the parkway is installed by a public utility, the City of Long Beach or another governmental agency for a public purpose;
  - c. The paving of the parkway is for a City-approved driveway;
  - d. A paved parkway was approved with the subdivision map for the property; or
  - e. A standards variance is approved. Such standards variance shall not require public notice and shall be charged the "mini-variance" fee.
6. Approval of Paving. If an exception is allowed, the parkway may be paved according to the specification of the Director of Public Works. Prior to paving the parkway, the adjoining property owner must obtain a street improvement permit from the Director of Public Works as provided in Chapter 14.08 of this Code with the approval of the Director of Planning and Building.

D. Parkway Maintenance and Access.

1. Maintenance of Landscaping. The owner of private property adjoining the public right-of-way shall be responsible for planting and maintaining parkway landscaping free and clear of refuse, noxious weeds, hazardous materials and plants bearing thorns, stickers or other potentially injurious parts. Plants, mulches and inorganic groundcover materials shall not be allowed to overgrow or spill over the edge of the sidewalk or curb.
2. Maintenance of Traffic Lines of Sight. For purposes of pedestrian and vehicular safety, all parkway landscaping shall be maintained so as not to interfere with necessary vehicular or pedestrian traffic lines of sight, including views of traffic signage and signals and clear views of vehicles within the roadbed or exiting driveways. Such standards, which include limitations on taller landscape elements within street intersection areas, shall be determined by the City

Engineer.

3. Access Through Parkways.

- a. In order to maintain access between the sidewalk and legally parked cars on the curb, a minimum eighteen-inch-wide (18") strip or path that accepts foot traffic shall be maintained abutting and parallel to the curb adjacent to legal parking spaces. Additional space may be required as needed at public transit stops at the direction of the City Engineer.
- b. In order to prevent obstructions to public access across parkways, continuous hedge-like plantings shall be prohibited. Single specimen shrubs or groupings of elevated landscape materials, including accent plantings or shrubbery of more than eight inches (8") in height, decorative rock and other elements, shall not extend more than six feet (6') along a parkway as measured parallel to the curb, and must be spaced at least thirty-six inches (36") apart as measured parallel to the curb.
- c. The berming of earth or other landscape materials of more than twelve inches (12") in height above the sidewalk at its highest point, or the creation of a bioswale or depression of more than twelve inches (12") in depth at its lowest point, shall be prohibited.
- d. Fencing of any kind shall be prohibited in parkways, except for curbing of not more than six inches (6") in height intended to contain groundcover material.