

MEMO

TO: Three Forks Planning Board, Staff

FROM: Lee Nellis, FAICP

DATE: January 22, 2025

RE: Landscaping Chapter

Randy took you all through a presentation about landscaping. It is one of the most important and most detailed chapters we'll be talking about. I am sending you a draft tonight with modest expectations. It is a lot more important to get through the discussion of the Kyd Road zoning as explained in another memo written today.

If you can't read this in advance, that's ok. We'll have an outline for discussion and you can catch up later.

Chapter ? – Landscaping

11-?-1 What is the purpose of this chapter? This chapter provides standards for landscaping and screening that apply, as relevant, in all zoning districts. These standards seek to:

- protect functional existing vegetation as development occurs;
- protect water quality by integrating landscaping and stormwater management;
- limit runoff and allow groundwater and wetlands recharge by requiring vegetated spaces in developing areas;
- provide urban wildlife habitat by requiring species diversity and vertical structure in landscaped spaces;
- ensure land use compatibility by requiring effective landscaped buffers and/or screening between potentially incompatible uses;
- create favorable microclimates, reducing energy consumption in developed spaces;
- allow the use of xeriscaping to conserve water;
- maintain and enhance the appearance and character of Three Forks; and
- ensure that landscaping is properly installed and maintained.

Given Three Forks need for additional water does the City want to require xeriscaping in some cases? See <https://apps.msuextension.org/magazine/articles/5557>

11-?-2 Do these standards apply to all proposed development? Yes. All applications for permits must include a landscaping plan that complies with this chapter. There are two exceptions to this requirement.

- A. Applications for one and two family dwellings and associated accessory buildings and structures need include landscaping plans. Please be aware, though, that the landscaping of residential premises is still required.
- B. Administrative permits for buildings or structures that are part of developments for which a landscaping plan has already been approved need not submit such a plan unless a change in the previously approved plan is proposed.
- C. A checklist for the contents of landscaping plans is appended to this chapter.

Existing Vegetation

11-?-3 May I clear an entire site? The clearing of an entire site of more than one acre at one time is a violation of these regulations, subject to enforcement as provided by Chapter 11-?. Existing vegetation must be removed from large sites in phases. This could eventually lead to removal of vegetation from an entire site if that is consistent with 11-?-4.

Land clearing should be minimized to reduce the potential for blowing dust and water erosion.

11-?-4 May I replace all existing vegetation on the site? Existing vegetation that can effectively serve the landscaping functions listed in the introduction to this chapter shall be retained to the extent feasible while accommodating the permitted development.

11-?-5 Must I protect vegetation during construction? Yes. Existing vegetation that is to be retained or landscaping that was installed in a previous phase of development must be protected from damage during construction, as required by the *Standards for Design and Construction*.

The city needs to add protecting vegetation during construction to its standards.

Buffers

11-?-6 Must a development provide landscaped buffers for adjoining uses? Table 11-?-6.1 shows where landscaped buffers are required and the type and minimum width of the required buffers. The minimum width may be reduced by the inclusion of an earthen berm or screening fence or wall, as provided by 11-?-7.D.

11-?-7 Does this mean that landscaped buffer requirements replace setbacks? Required landscaped buffers replace rear and side yard requirements for uses other than one and two family dwellings. They do not replace front setback requirements which vary with the type of street and may be found

11-?-8. What are the design standards for landscaped buffers? Table 11-?-8.1 requires one of two types of landscaped buffers depending on what uses are being buffered.

- A. A **dense** buffer must be composed of essentially continuous screening vegetation that will grow to at least six (6) feet in height. This screening vegetation must be supplemented, on its exterior side (the side away from the use being buffered against), by an open landscaped buffer of the width required by Table 11-?-6.1.

- B. An open buffer may be substituted for dense buffer where Table 11-?-6.1 calls for a dense landscaped buffer if the open buffer is double or more the width required by Table 11-?-6.1.
- C. An **open** landscaped buffer must be composed of a ground cover, shrubs and small trees, and major trees. The minimum density of planting per 100 feet of buffer shall be a full ground cover plus any combination of three major trees, at least three ornamental or understory trees, and/or shrubs and/or flower beds that occupy at least 50% of the buffer's area.

Table 11-?-6.1 - Basic Landscaped Buffer Requirements

use providing buffer	use being buffered	buffer type	buffer width
one and two family residential	one and two family residential	see zoning district	
	mutli-family up to 5 du/A	open	8
	mutli-family over 5 du/A	open	12
	downtown commercial	open	12
	highway commercial	dense	16
	industrial, within building	dense	16
	industrial, outside building	dense	20
	parking areas, all uses	add headlight screening	
	one and two family residential	open	12
	mutli-family up to 5 du/A	open	8
mutli-family over 5 du/A	mutli-family up to 5 du/A	open	8
	mutli-family over 5 du/A	open	8
	downtown commercial	open	12
	highway commercial	dense	16
	industrial, within building	dense	16
	industrial, outside building	dense	20
	parking areas, all uses	add headlight screening	
	one and two family residential	open	12
	mutli-family up to 5 du/A	open	8
	mutli-family over 5 du/A	open	8
downtown commercial	downtown commercial	open	12
	highway commercial	open	16
	industrial, within building	open	16
	industrial, outside building	dense	20
	parking areas, all uses	add headlight screening	
	one and two family residential	open	12
	mutli-family up to 5 du/A	open	8

	mutli-family up to 5 du/A	open	12
	mutli-family over 5 du/A	open	12
	downtown commercial	not required	
	highway commercial	not required	
	industrial, within building	not required	
	industrial, outside building	open	8
	parking areas, all uses	add headlight screening	
highway commercial	one and two family residential	dense	16
	mutli-family up to 5 du/A	dense	16
	mutli-family over 5 du/A	open	12
	downtown commercial	open	8
	highway commercial	not required	
	industrial	not required	
	parking areas, all uses	add headlight screening	
new use being buffered	use buffered against	buffer type	buffer width
industrial, inside building	one and two family residential	dense	20
	mutli-family up to 5 du/A	dense	20
	mutli-family over 5 du/A	open	16
	downtown commercial	not required	
	highway commercial	not required	
	industrial, outside building	not required	
	parking areas, all uses	add headlight screening	
industrial, outside building	one and two family residential	dense	24
	mutli-family up to 5 du/A	dense	24
	mutli-family over 5 du/A	dense	20
	downtown commercial	open	8
	highway commercial	not required	
	industrial, outside building	not required	
	parking areas, all uses	add headlight screening	

D. Earthen berms up to four (4) feet in height or screening fences or walls up to eight (8) feet in height may be proposed to reduce the width of a required buffer. Where this is permitted, the buffer's width may be reduced by the height of the berm, fence, or wall, but not by more than half the required width.

11-?-9 Are any impervious surfaces permitted within landscaped buffers? Yes.

Landscaped buffers should function as part of a development's stormwater management system where feasible, so impervious cover must be minimized, but some is inevitable, as permitted in A-D, below.

- A. Landscaped buffers may be crossed at a right angle ($90^\circ, \pm 10^\circ$) by driveways, roads, sidewalks, trails, and utilities, including necessary risers and boxes.
- B. Sidewalks and trails may run within and parallel to a landscaped buffer, but the width of the sidewalk or trail will not be counted in the required width of the buffer.
- C. Outdoor lighting poles and signs may be placed in a landscaped buffer.
- D. Landscaped buffers may also include retaining walls, planters, minor impervious surfaces that are part of SWM plans; and sculptures or other works of art.

Screening

11-?-10 What does screening mean? Screening means that the view of an outdoor use, installation, or structure from public streets or trails (but not from alleys) or adjoining residences is effectively blocked by location on the site; earthwork; landscaping; an enclosure, fence, or wall; or some combination of these techniques, as shown by the landscaping plan required by this chapter.

11-?-11 When is screening required?

- A. Screening is required for
 - loading areas
 - mechanical equipment
 - manufacturing
 - materials handling, storage
 - solid waste containers
 - utilities installations

The Board should check off the boxes as it feels appropriate, and also talk about what, if anything, else should be screened.

Parking Areas

11-?-12 Is landscaping required for and within parking areas? Yes.

- A. Parking areas are subject to the same buffering requirements as the use to which they are accessory. An independent (not accessory) parking area is a commercial use, subject to the buffer requirements for commercial uses in its zoning district. This standard also calls for additional landscaping within large parking lots.

- B. Parking areas that include more than ___ spaces shall be broken up by landscaped islands or medians that occupy a minimum of five percent (5%) of the parking area.
- C. Headlight glare from parking areas into the windows of nearby homes shall be mitigated by the orientation of the parking spaces, landscaping, or screening.
- D. No single rank of parking spaces shall include more than ___ spaces without being broken up by one or more landscaped islands or medians.

We didn't resolve the question of what's large when it comes to parking lots. Fill in the blank.

- E. Parking lot landscaping shall include large, high branching deciduous shade trees that will help keep paved surfaces cool by creating a canopy over the pavement.

Public Ways

11-?-13 Is landscaping required along alleys? Landscaping along an alley is required only where that alley separates uses for which buffering is required by Table 11-?-6.1.

11-?-14 Is landscaping required along public trails? Commercial and industrial uses shall provide an open landscaped buffer of at least eight (8) feet in width along public trails, except where the trail parallels a street, in which case, see 11-?-15., below, or where the trail will be included in a buffer between uses as required by Table 11-?-6.1, in which case, the buffer width required in that table applies.

11-?-15 Is landscaping required along streets?

- A. Landscaping along downtown streets shall be provided as specified in the city's downtown streetscape plan.

The next big planning project in Three Forks should probably be a downtown plan that would include resuscitating the street trees.

- B. Boulevards that include a sidewalk or trail and landscaping shall be provided along all other streets except where the existing right-of-way width makes this infeasible and an alternative is negotiated with the city or where an approved subdivision plan provides for an alternative.
- C. A **boulevard** is a landscaped strip at least six (6) in width along a street that includes a ground cover of turf and evenly spaced major trees. The density of planting per 100 feet of boulevard shall be a full cover of turf or approved xeriscape materials and major trees on 30-foot centers.
- D. Where a front yard is required (please see the zoning district chapters) or provided it shall be landscaped as provided by the landscaping plan, where such a plan has been approved by the city, or using plant materials consistent with its neighborhood.

Plant Materials

11-?-16 What are the criteria for selecting the plant materials used in landscaping required by these regulations?

- A. Plant materials must not be on the noxious weed lists adopted by the State and the Gallatin County Weed District.

<https://www.gallatinmt.gov/sites/g/files/vyhlf606/f/uploads/mtnoxiousweedlist.pdf>

- B. Plant materials shall include a diversity of species that:

- are known to be hardy in Three Forks
- are well-adapted for the site
- are well-adapted for the function/s they will perform
- provide color throughout the year
- minimize the need for irrigation

The Board should check off the boxes it thinks are important.

11-?-17 What does a ‘variety’ of species mean? Species diversity means that the landscaping will continue to function if one or more plant species are adversely affected by a pest or disease.

11-?-18 Are there specifications for the installation of plant materials? Yes.

- A. Plant materials must conform to ANSI Z60.1, the *American Standard for Nursery Stock*.
- B. The installation of plant materials must conform to the city’s public works standards.

Again, the city will need an addition to the public works standards. This can be based on best practices promulgated by the International Society for Arboriculture and similar sources.

- C. The minimum size of new plant materials installed in required plantings shall be as follows: large trees – 2 ½ inch caliper; understory or ornamental trees – 2 inch caliper; and shrubs, ornamentals – 2 gallon.

Installation - Maintenance

11-?-19 Are there standards for the installation and maintenance of landscaping

required by these regulations? Yes.

- A. The landscaping plan must show that there is an un-compacted soil volume sufficient to support the long-term health of all plant materials.

This standard is especially important where landscaping is mixed with hard surfaces, as in islands in parking area, and in narrow planting strips.

- B. The landscaping plan must show how tree selection and locations are coordinated and compatible with the location of overhead utilities.
- C. Landscaping is a required improvement subject to the public works standards and the inspection, warranty, and maintenance requirements of Chapter 11-?.
- D. A maintenance manual must be provided where there will be more than 10,000 SF of landscaping.

Appendix 11-?-A - Landscaping Plan Checklist

This appendix is incomplete in this draft.

- The landscaping plan must show where existing vegetation will be retained and how it will be protected from damage during construction.
- The landscaping plan must include a schedule showing that all measures required to protect existing, including previously installed, vegetation will be in place before other construction activities begin.
- The landscaping plan must show the dimensions of all proposed buffer/s, including all crossings and inclusions; a planting design and schedule appropriate for the proposed buffer type; and one or more typical cross- sections.
- The landscaping plan shall show the contours of proposed earthen berms and one or more cross-sections detailing their construction, including an engineer's certification for any earthen berm more than four (4) feet in height.
- The landscaping must show all proposed screening using dimensioned drawings and renderings or photographs of the proposed screening as it used in another location.
- The landscaping plan must show how all proposed buffers and other landscaping are integrated into the site's SWM plan.