



TOWN OF MERRILLVILLE LANDSCAPE STANDARDS

Purpose and Intent

Landscaping is necessary for the protection and enhancement of the environment and for the continued vitality of all land uses in the Town. The intent of this Section is to promote the public health, safety and welfare by establishing minimum standards for the design, installation, and maintenance of landscape improvement. The requirements of this section are intended to help achieve a number of functional and environment objectives such as:

- To promote the implementation of the Town of Merrillville Master Plan and related sub area plans;
- To aid in stabilizing the environment's ecological balance by contributing to the processes of air purification, oxygen regeneration, groundwater recharge, and storm water runoff retardation, while at the same time aiding in noise, glare and heat abatement;
- To encourage the preservation of existing trees and vegetation;
- To provide visual buffering and enhance the beautification of the Town;
- To reduce the physical impact between adjacent land uses by requiring complementary landscape treatments and providing a transitional area adjacent to natural areas;
- Note: This document should be considered as a companion document to the Town of Merrillville Tree Ordinance # 10-23. Whereas the Ordinance contains the majority of the regulatory authority and general requirements, this document contains the necessary means and methods for achieving compliance with the Ordinance. It is intended to serve as a guidance document to assist plan reviewers, developers, and designers achieve the minimum standards. In case there are conflicts between the requirements contained in this document and the ordinance, the requirements of the Tree Ordinance shall prevail.

Scope of Application

- The requirements set forth in this section shall apply to all new development or re-development projects located in the Town of Merrillville following the effective date of this document. No site plan that is reviewed shall be approved unless the site plan shows required landscaping consistent with the provisions of this section.
- Where landscaping is required, a building permit shall not be issued until the required landscape plan is submitted and approved, and a certificate of occupancy shall not be issued unless provisions set forth in this section have been met or cash escrow has been posted in accordance with the provisions set forth in the section.

- The Planning Commission may determine existing landscaping or screening, which is intended to be preserved, would meet the intent of this section. The Planning Commission may also determine that dimensional conditions unique to the parcel would prevent development of required parkways, buffer zones, parking lot landscaping or interior requirements. If such determination is made, a waiver from or modification of the landscaping provisions of this section in consideration of, but not limited to, the following criteria:
 - Presence of existing natural vegetation
 - Topography
 - Existing wetland, floodplain and poor soils areas
 - Existing and proposed building placement
 - Building heights and views
 - Types and distance to adjacent land uses
 - Dimensional conditions unique to the parcel
 - Provision of adequate sight distances for motorists
 - Health, safety and welfare of the Town
 - Future land use proposed in the Town Master Plan
 - Drainage conditions

Landscape Plan Specifications

- The requirements contained in this section are considered the minimum necessary to achieve the intent of this section. In some instances these standards are intentionally flexible to encourage flexibility and creative design. Nothing herein shall preclude a developer and the Town from agreeing to more extensive landscaping to further improve the function, appearance and value of the property. A well integrated landscape plan ensures an attractive, pleasant environment while enhancing drainage, storm water quality and minimizing soil erosion. Landscaping should enhance the quality of commercial developments by framing and softening the appearance of structures, defining site functions, screening undesirable views and buffering incompatible land uses. The use of native plantings in a manner that is attractive, pleasing and integrated with the overall landscape plan is strongly encouraged. Landscaped areas should generally use a three tiered system; 1) grasses and ground cover, 2) shrubs and vines, and 3) trees.
- **A SEPARATE DETAILED LANDSCAPE PLAN MUST BE SUBMITTED AS PART OF THE SITE PLAN REVIEW.**
- When two or more require landscape areas overlap the more stringent requirements shall apply.
- **Required Information.** The landscape plan shall demonstrate that all requirements of this section are met and shall include the following information.
 - Illustrate location, spacing, species, and size of proposed plan material;
 - Separately identify compliance with the minimum numeric requirements for parkways, buffer zones, parking lot trees, detention ponds and other required interior landscaping. Required trees or material can not be double counted.
 - Identify trees and other landscape elements to be preserved; the following tree protection measures shall be required on all sites.
 - Prior to construction activities, a sturdy fence or barrier should be erected around designated trees for protection at a minimum

distance of one linear foot for every inch of DBH. No machinery, tools, chemicals, or temporary soil deposits may be permitted within this area.

- Tunneling shall be used for utility placement in all areas where trees are to be preserved. If trenches must be used, they should be planned for minimal root damage.
 - Soil grading around preserved trees shall be avoided. A depth of no more than six inches of soil shall be placed over tree roots within the protected area, nor shall soil be graded away.
 - Special concern should be given to the preservation of mature trees and those trees on the Priority Tree List during site (re)development.
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- Provide significant construction details to resolve specific conditions such as limits of grading adjacent to areas with trees and vegetative cover to be preserved, tree wells to preserve existing trees or culverts to maintain natural drainage patterns.
 - Identify grass areas and other methods of ground cover.
 - A site plan shall be submitted which depicts the general location of any existing tree canopy in relation to existing and proposed site improvements.
 - Provide a typical lot landscaping detail for residential developments.

Design Standards

- **All landscaping shall conform to the following standards:**

- **Interior Landscaping**

- Commercial/industrial and multifamily residential interior landscaping areas shall include open area remaining after required landscape areas have been accounted for. Such area shall include a mixture of evergreen and deciduous trees and shrubs provided at the following proportions:
 - One (1) tree for each eight hundred (800) square feet. *Note: Five (5) shrubs may be planted in lieu of one (1) tree.*
 - One (1) shrub for each two-hundred and fifty (250) square feet.
- Single family residential dwelling unit interior landscaping shall include a minimum of two (2) canopy trees and fifteen (15) shrubs for each interior lot and four (4) canopy trees and twenty five (25) shrubs for each corner lot. This does not include additional plantings for parkway or rear and side yard buffer zone planting requirements.
- Lands to be dedicated or reserved for park and/or recreational purposes shall be suitable in the opinion of the Parks Director in location, landscaping, topography, environmental characteristics and development potential as related to the intended use.
- All developed portions of the site shall conform to the following general landscaping standards, except where specific landscape elements, such as a buffer zone, parkway, parking lot landscaping or detention and retention pond plantings are required.

- All portions of the site shall be planted with grass, flowers, ground cover, shrubbery, or other suitable plant material, except those areas covered by buildings, parking areas, driveways, signs, water surfaces, roadways, paved patios, terraces, sidewalks and similar site features.
 - All herbaceous plantings must include at least 75% native species or native cultivars.
 - Landscape areas shall be designed to soften the appearance of buildings, screen service areas, provide shade and ensure adequate sight visibility for motorists, adequate clearance for pedestrians and vehicles, clearance from overhead utility lines, adequate separation from underground utilities and accessibility to fire hydrants.
 - In subdividing any land within the town, due regard shall be shown natural features such as trees, brooks, hilltops, scenic views, and historic sites, all of which shall be preserved, if possible, so as to add attractiveness and value to the proposed development.
 - The Town, through the Environmental Committee, may recognize and give credit for the preservation of existing trees. The basis of the credit will be determined by the Environmental Committee and shall be no more than 1 tree credit for every 2.5" or greater caliper tree preserved.
- Spaces between adjacent pad site buildings shall be improved to provide small pockets (preferably heavily – landscaped) of pedestrian connections, small scale project amenities, or focal points. Examples include but are not limited to:
 - A landscaped pedestrian walkway linking customer entrances between two or more pad site buildings
 - An area landscaped emphasizing four season colors, textures, and plant/tree varieties

- All dumpsters and loading facilities should be located in the least visible location, and should be fully screened from view with building materials and landscaping that is coordinated with the overall building design.
- In consideration of the over-all design and impact of the landscape plan, the Planning Commission may modify or adjust the requirements outlined herein for landscaping, provided that any such adjustment is in keeping with the intent of this section.



Trash enclosures should be screened with landscaping from public view.

Parkway/Street Tree Standards: A parkway is the land abutting a public street, private street or access drive that shall be reserved as a landscape area to serve as an obscuring screen, noise abatement and visual enhancement along roadway corridors.

- The Parkway shall contain a minimum of one (1) canopy tree per forty (40) linear feet, or fraction thereof, of the entire road frontage.

- The frontage calculation shall include any openings for driveways, sidewalks or easements with the number of trees.
- Fractions of trees shall be rounded upward to the nearest whole number.
- If it is not possible to locate these trees within the parkway, place them within the exterior yards next to the parkway pursuant to the required count.
- Setback area requirement. All required setback areas shall be planted in turf or other acceptable living groundcover.
- The Parkway shall contain only living materials and planting beds with the exception of approved sidewalks, bike paths, signs, driveways, essential services, and detention ponds as dictated by site conditions.
- Parkway plantings shall be arranged to emulate the landscape character of the surrounds areas.
- Parkway shall be designed to ensure adequate sight visibility for motorists, adequate clearance for pedestrians and vehicles, clearance from overhead utility lines, adequate separation from underground utilities and accessibility to fire hydrants. Where such conditions prohibit full compliance, the Planning Commission may adjust the location of the required materials.



Parkways should reflect a natural landscape pattern integrating sidewalks as required.

Linkage Pathways

- Developments must consider recreational pathways which shall have perimeter landscaping to connect areas of compatible residential and commercial land uses within and around the development.
- Pathways shall include a continuous landscaped area minimum three (3) feet wide of densely planted vegetation on both sides of the walkway entering the commercial development.
- Where the walkways abut a public right-of-way and/or driving aisles, the landscape area shall be provided between the walkway and the public right-of-way or driving aisle.
- Pathway design shall consider incorporating pervious paving when feasible.



Well landscaped pedestrian paths help link multi family residential development to a big box retail establishment across the street.

Buffer Zones: A buffer zone is a landscape area which serves to visually obstruct views from abutting uses. The Planning Commission has the discretion to modify these requirements as appropriate to adjust to site conditions or uses proposed. A buffer shall be provided between the subject site and all adjacent properties as follows:

Subject Site	Adjacent To	Buffer Zone Type
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Multiple Family District or Use	Single Family Residential District or Use	Type C
Institutional Uses	Any Residential District or Use	Type B
Business and Office District or Use	Any Residential District or Use	Type A
Industrial District or Use	Any Business or Office District or Use	Type A
Industrial District or Use	Any Residential District or Use	Type B
Industrial/Industrial	Industrial	N/A
Single Family Residential	Single Family Residential	Type D or C

- **Type “A” Buffer Zone.** One (1) large deciduous canopy tree and one (1) ornamental tree and four (4) shrubs or one (1) evergreen tree, one (1) large deciduous canopy tree and four (4) shrubs per forty (40) linear feet along the property line, rounded upward.
- **Type “B” Buffer Zone.** One (1) evergreen tree per twelve (12) linear feet along the property line, rounded upward.
- **Type “C” Buffer Zone.** One (1) evergreen tree per eight (8) linear feet along the property line, rounded upward.
- **Type “D” Buffer Zone.** One (1) large deciduous canopy tree, evergreen or ornamental tree per sixty (60) linear feet along the side and rear property lines, rounded upward.
- **Buffer Zone Width Required.** At a minimum, the width of the buffer shall be equal to the required building setback. Set setback area may be considered for the area used for buffer zone.
- Where building facades or primary commercial boundaries face residentially zoned property, such building shall be buffered by landscaping containing deciduous trees at a rate of one (1) tree per thirty five (35) linear feet along the building. Bushes and decorative landscaping planted in clusters or clumps must be additionally provided throughout the landscaped area
- **Note: Buffer Zones are not required between two adjacent industrial properties.** However all industrial properties still require green belt areas and must meet the minimum tree planting requirements.

Required Parking Area Landscaping: All parking areas, associated drive aisles, loading areas, and other paved ground surface areas used for vehicular parking shall have internal landscaping to provide visual and climatic relief from broad expanses of pavement and to channelize and define logical areas for pedestrian and vehicular circulation. The following parking area landscaping is required.

- One (1) canopy tree shall be required for each 2,000 square feet of the total paved surface, including parking, loading and driveways. The number of required trees shall be rounded upward to the nearest whole number. At least two (2) parking lot trees shall be provided on each site.



Landscaped parking lot islands can also serve as vegetated swales for storm water drainage.

- If not adjacent to a buffer zone or Parkway, a minimum of one-third (1/3) of the required trees shall be placed within the paved portion of the parking lot.
- No more than fifteen (15) continuous parking spaces are permitted without being interrupted by a landscaped island of at least nine (9) feet in width and extending the entire length of the parking stall. A minimum of one (1) tree and a combination of shrubs and/or ground cover shall be planted in each landscape island.
- Required Landscaping for Loading and Outdoor Storage Areas: The Planning Commission has the discretion to increase the landscape requirements of this section in order to properly screen loading areas and outdoor storage areas from abutting land uses and streets.
- Landscaped islands must be located at the end of rows for safer pedestrian crossings across main aisles and a more inviting user experience.



Landscaping in parking lot areas is a critical element to an attractive shopping center. Landscaping should be integrated with the overall style of the development.

Detention and Retention Ponds: For sites requiring detention or retention ponds, the following landscaping is required.

- To the extent possible, pond configuration shall be incorporated into the natural topography of the site. Where these requirements are not practical, the pond shall be shaped to emulate a natural formed 'free form' depression and shall be part of the natural landscape and open space system of the site.
- The edge of the pond shall consist of sculptured landforms to filter and soften views of the pond.
- Plantings shall replicate a natural environment. Trees and shrubs shall be clustered around the basin and contain a variety of plant material.
- Trees and shrubs should be planted in a natural pattern and are not limited to strict placement along the edge of the pond. Trees and shrubs planted below the water line of the pond must be tolerant of wet or moist soil conditions. The location of plant material shall be done in consideration of the need to provide access for a minimize disruption of plant material during routine pond maintenance.
- Plantings shall be provided a rate of one (1) canopy tree or two (2) ornamental trees and one (1) large shrub or two (2) small shrubs per fifty (50) linear feet of pond perimeter as measured along the top elevation of the pond bank.
- Plantings, including tall prairie grass stands along shorelines of wet ponds, shall be installed as a goose deterrent mechanism utilizing current recommendations from Indiana Department of Natural Resources – Division of Fish and Wildlife.



Natural vegetative buffers around ponds can also help deter geese reducing E. coli.

Specifications for Landscape Improvements and Plant

Materials

- All plant material shall be hardy to the Town of Merrillville, be free of disease and insects, and conform to the American Standard for Nursery Stock of the American Nurserymen.

Plant Standards

- Minimum Sizes and Spacing. The minimum plant sizes shall be provided in accordance with the following:

Plant Type	Minimum Plant Size	Minimum Spacing Requirements
Large Deciduous Canopy Trees	Two (2) inch caliper;	Thirty (30) ft on center
Ornamental Trees	Two (2) inch caliper	Ten (10) ft on center
Evergreen Trees	Six (6) ft height	Eight (8) ft on center
Large Deciduous Shrubs	Two (2) ft height	Eight (8) ft on center
Upright Evergreen Shrubs	Two (2) ft height	Four (4) ft on center

- Minimum spacing requirements may be altered upon approval from the Environmental Committee provided that plants are clustered to gain a more natural design.

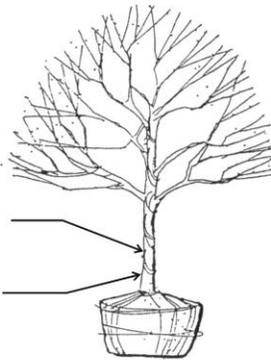
Plant Material Measurements

Deciduous Canopy Tree

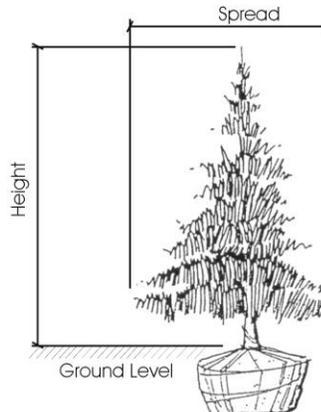
Tree Caliper Measurements-
For new trees only, see Woodland Protection Ordinance for measurement of existing trees

Take measurement 12" above ground level if tree caliper is 4" or more

Take measurement 6" above ground level if tree caliper is less than 4"



Tree or Shrub Height



Mixing of Species

- The overall landscape plan shall no contain more than twenty-five (25%) of any one (1) tree/shrub species. The use of native species and mixture of trees from the same species association is strongly encouraged.

Trees Not Permitted

- Note: see Town of Merrillville's Tree Species Selection List maintained by the Environmental Committee.

Proximity to Utilities

- Plant material shall not be located in a manner that will interfere with or cause damage to underground or above ground utilities, public roads or other public facilities.

Entry Point Plantings

- Each development must include an ornamental landscaped area at each primary point of ingress/egress around an entry monument signage that identifies the development.
- Landscaping shall have a minimum 10' wide densely planted border utilizing at lease 75% native species. The landscaped border be around the entire monument and include a creative mix of trees, shrubs, flowers, grasses and other vegetation to complement the development. In the event that the monument is located with an island, the entire island must contain high quality landscaping.
- Each gateway planting shall be no less than 300sf.
- The primary entry points should create a sense of arrival and beatification elements should be used to buffer areas along major roadways to enhance the image of the corridor.
- Berms, decorative paving, water features and lighting should be used to create additional appeal.
- The street corridor should reflect a natural landscape pattern, utilizing an informal pattern of high canopy trees and cluster of low-height shrubbery within the setback or buffer area adjacent to the roadway.



Attractive landscaped entrance leading to the big box section of a lifestyle center.

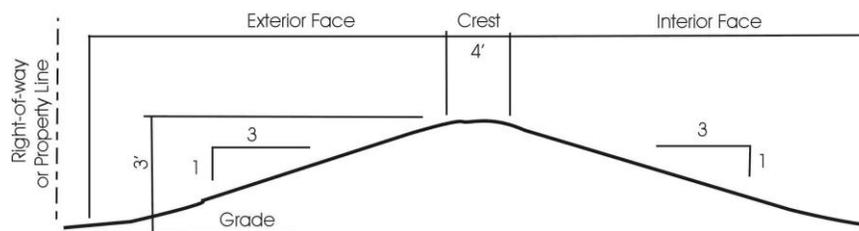
Landscape Berms.

- Where provided, landscape berms shall conform to the following standards:
 - The berm shall be at least three (3) feet above the grade elevation.
 - Sides of the berm shall be constructed with slopes no steeper than one (1) foot vertical for each three (3) feet horizontal.



Landscape berms provide an additional buffer from roadway traffic.

- Berms should have a crest area of at least four (4) feet on the top.
- In measuring slope and height, grade elevation shall be the ground elevation at the property line adjacent to the proposed berm.
- The exterior face of the berm shall be constructed as an earthen slope with a retaining wall or terrace.
- Side slopes shall be protected from erosion by sod, seed or other living ground cover. If slopes are seeded, they shall be protected until the seed germinates and a permanent cover is established.



Minimum Standards for Plant Installation and Maintenance

- **Timing of Planting.** All required materials shall be planted prior to issuing a Certificate of Occupancy. In the event that the project is completed during a time of year when planting is impractical, a financial guarantee is required.
- **Completion of Improvements.** Tree stakes, guy wires, and tree wrap shall be removed after completion of the initial growing season.
- **Maintenance.** The owner of the property shall be responsible for the regular maintenance of all landscaping. Landscaped areas and plant materials required by the section shall be kept free from refuse and debris. Plant materials, including lawn, shall be maintained in a healthy growing condition, neat and orderly in appearance per the intent of the approved site plan. If any plant material required with an approved site plan dies or becomes diseased, it shall be replaced within thirty (30) days following a written notice from the Town or within an extended time period as specified in said notice.

Definitions

Caliper: a caliper is the diameter measurement of the trunk taken 6 inches above ground level.

Canopy Tree: a tree that can reach a mature height of at least 40' and has a widespread canopy of stems, branches and leaves.

Diameter Breast Height (DBH): the diameter of a tree in inches 4 ½ feet above the ground.

Evergreen Tree: a tree having leaves or needles all year round. This contrasts with deciduous plants, which completely lose their foliage for part of the year

Person: a person shall be defined as any individual, corporation, business or any other entity, whether private or governmental, including the Town of Merrillville.

Public Property: all property owned by the Town of Merrillville or any agency or department thereof and all property included in the Public Way as defined by the Crown Point Zoning Ordinance.

Tree: a woody, perennial plant, ordinarily with one main stem or trunk, which develops many branches and which ordinarily, grows to a height of ten feet or more with a diameter in excess of 6 inches at a height of five feet.

WITNESS WHEREOF, the Town of Merrillville, Indiana has caused these documents to be signed in its name and behalf by the President of its Town Council, President of its Planning Commission and attest by its Clerk-Treasurer, and to evidence its acceptance of these documents hereby created.

TOWN OF MERRILLVILLE, INDIANA

By: _____ Date: _____
Richard Hardaway, President, Town Council

By: _____ Date: _____
Shawn Pettit, President, Planning Commission

Attest:

_____ Date: _____
Eugene M. Guernsey, Clerk Treasurer