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TO: City Council Planning and Economic Development Committee

FROM: Eric Fazzini, CPC Staff
Greg Moots, P&DD Staff

RE: Requested changes to Screening Text Amendment Ordinance

DATE: October 15, 2025

Below are the requested changes as they would appear in each affected section of the zoning ordinance (ZO). Text with a strikethrough would be deleted and underlined text would be added. Staff has not altered the requested language but provides comments in bold below each section. Upon agreement on requested changes to the ordinance and at the direction of PED, the below sections could be incorporated into an updated ordinance approved as to form by the Law Department, with the exception of Request 2 that we've been advised would need to be pursued in 2026.

Request 1: Sec. 50-12-270. Motor vehicle filling stations; screening and landscaping

(b) Traditional Main Street Overlay Areas.

(2)a. Trees. At least one tree shall be provided in the buffer strip ~~for~~ within each ~~30~~ 15 linear feet of landscape buffer. ~~Trees~~ Each tree must have a minimum nonpaved planting area of ~~18~~ 36 square feet, with a minimum depth of five feet. ~~Trees provided to meet the standards of this subsection shall not be planted not more than 50 25 feet apart. (See Figure 50-14-341(1)a.)~~

Staff Comment: Staff supports the proposed changes and the Law Department has found that no new public hearing would be required for the requested revisions. Final language is subject to approval as to form.

Request 2: Sec. 50-14-323. Plant quality and type.

All plants shall conform to "American Nurserymen's" standards, with coherent root ball or wrapped roots, of a height, leaf density and spread appropriate to the species. ~~No one species of tree or shrub may make up more than 50 percent of the total plantings. Applicants should consult with the Urban Forester and General Services Department regarding the most effective tree species at mitigating pollution. See Appendix B of this chapter for a list of recommended trees and shrubs. (add 2019 MDOT Resource: Plants for Michigan Roadsides as a new Appendix B).~~

Staff Comment: Staff has been advised that the proposed changes to this section require additional consideration and should be addressed through a public hearing as this section is not currently included in the screening ordinance. Staff is developing a city-specific list of recommended trees and shrubs that we will present to CPC and City Council in 2026 alongside the desire to have language directing applicants to GSD as a resource for landscaping. This section should not be included in revised screening ordinance at this time.

Request 3: Sec. 50-14-325. Plant size.

The following requirements shall apply with respect to plant size, except upon special review and approval by the Recreation Department:

- (1) Shrubs. Shrubs planted to meet the landscaping and screening standards of this subdivision shall have a minimum size equal to or greater than a Number 3 container and have a minimum height of ~~18~~ 24 inches at the time of planting. Where shrubs are used to meet landscaping or screening standards, at least 50 percent shall be evergreen; and
- (2) Trees. Deciduous trees that are installed to meet the standards of this subdivision shall have a minimum height of 10 feet and a minimum diameter of ~~two~~ two and a half inches, which is measured 12 inches above the root ball, and a clear stem of at least five feet. Evergreen trees shall have a minimum height of ~~five~~ 10 feet at time of planting,

Staff Comment: Staff supports the proposed changes and the Law Department has found that no new public hearing would be required for the requested revisions. Final language is subject to approval as to form.

Based on discussions with GSD, the proposed increase to minimum required tree planting sizes will have an impact the cost of installing required landscaping. Per GSD, the cost of an evergreen tree more than doubles from \$700 to \$1,600 when tree height increases from six feet to 10 feet. The costs for handling larger trees may also be higher as they would require more time to grow in a nursery and the equipment needed to install larger trees may need to be more substantial. For larger sites that require a significant amount of landscaping, potentially doubling the per tree cost for evergreen trees would have an added financial impact on developers. However, GSD has indicated that a minimum caliper of 2.5 inches and a minimum tree height of 10 feet is desired by foresters.

Request 4: Sec. 50-14-369. Buffer Types III and IV.

(c) Type III and Type IV buffers are subject to the following:

	Buffer Type III	Buffer Type IV
Minimum Buffer Depth	7 feet, except if not practicable, buffer depth may be reduced to three feet, subject to approval by the Planning and Development Department	15 feet
Fence and Wall Standards		
Fence or Wall Requirement	Required	Permissible, Not Required
Material Opacity	Solid Continuous Screen	Transparent

Minimum Height	6 feet	Subject to Section 50-14-344(a)
Maximum Height	Subject to Section 50-14-344(b)	
Landscaping Requirements		
Ground Treatment	Subject to Section 50-14-326, except cobblestones/pavers/rocks must not exceed 10% of buffer area	
Deciduous Trees	1 tree within each 30 <u>15</u> linear-foot portion of buffer. Trees may be planted outside of buffer area within landscaped portion of right-of-way, subject to approval by Department of Public Works.	1 tree within each 25 <u>15</u> linear-foot portion of buffer. <u>Trees may be planted outside of buffer area within landscaped portion of right-of-way, subject to approval by Department of Public Works.</u>
Evergreen Trees	Not Required	1 tree within each 10 <u>15</u> linear-foot portion of buffer. Must form a continuous screen.
Shrubs	1 shrub within each 5 linear-foot portion of buffer. Must be planted exterior to the required solid wall or fence and visible from adjacent streets and property.	1 shrub within each 3 linear-foot portion of buffer

Staff Comment: The above changes address the desired increase in required tree plantings. Staff supports the proposed changes and the Law Department has found that no new public hearing would be required for the requested revisions. Final language is subject to approval as to form.

Request 5: Sec. 50-14-370. Buffer Types V and VI.

(c) Type V and Type VI buffers are subject to the following:

	Buffer Type V	Buffer Type VI
Minimum Buffer Depth	15 <u>20</u> feet	30 feet
Fence and Wall Standards		
Fence or Wall Requirement	Required	Permissible, Not Required
Material Opacity	Solid Continuous Screen	Transparent
Minimum Height	8 feet	Subject to Section 50-14-344(a)
Maximum Height	Subject to Section 50-14-344(b)	
Landscaping Requirements		
Ground Treatment	Subject to Section 50-14-326, except cobblestones/pavers/rocks must not exceed 10% of buffer area	
Deciduous Trees	1 tree within each 30 <u>15</u> linear-foot portion of buffer	1 tree within each 25 <u>15</u> linear-foot portion of buffer
Evergreen Trees	Not Required. If provided, must be planted exterior to the required solid wall or fence	1 tree within each 10 <u>15</u> linear-foot portion of buffer.

	and visible from adjacent streets or property	Must form a continuous screen.
Shrubs	1 shrub within each 5 linear-foot portion of buffer. Must be planted exterior to the required solid wall or fence and visible from adjacent streets and property.	1 shrub within each 3 linear-foot portion of buffer. Must form a continuous screen

Staff Comment: The above changes address the desired increase in required tree plantings. Staff supports the proposed changes and the Law Department has found that no new public hearing would be required for the requested revisions. Final language is subject to approval as to form.

Request 6: Sec. 50-14-367. Screening standards for specific uses and site features

(c) Required screening for specific uses. Screening is required for the following uses in accordance with the following standards:

Uses that Require Screening			
Use	Permissible Buffer Types		
	Adjacent to street rights-of-way	Adjacent to or across and alley from Residential Districts	Adjacent to all other property lines
<u>Concrete batching plants (high-impact manufacturing or processing)</u>	<u>Type V or VI</u>	<u>Type V or VI</u>	<u>Type III</u>
Containerized freight yard	Type V <u>or VI</u>	Type V	Type III
Junkyard	Type V	Type V	Type III
Light duty vehicle repair establishments	Type I or II	Type III	Screening Not Required
Light duty vehicle services establishments	Type I or II	Type III	Screening Not Required
Lumber yard	Type III or IV	Type V or VI	Screening Not Required
Medium/heavy duty vehicle or equipment repair establishment	Type III	Type III or V	Type III
Motor vehicle filling stations	Type I or II	Type III	Screening Not Required
Motor vehicles, new or used, salesroom or sales lot	Type I or II	Type III	Screening Not Required
Motor vehicles, new or used; storage lot accessory to a salesroom or sales lot for new or used motor vehicles	Type I or II	Type III	Screening Not Required
Motor vehicle washing and steam cleaning	Type I or II	Type III	Screening Not Required
Outdoor storage yard	Type V	Type V	Type III
Towing service storage yard	Type III	Type V	Type III

Transfer station for garbage, refuse, or rubbish	Type V	Type V	Type III
Trucking terminals, transfer buildings, recreational vehicle storage lots, and parking areas for operable trucks	Type III or IV <u>IV or V</u>	Type V or VI	Type III or IV
<u>Tunnel or bridge plaza and terminal, vehicular</u>	<u>Type III or IV</u>	<u>Type V or VI</u>	<u>Type III or IV</u>
Utilities, basic and major	Type III or IV	Type V or VI	Type III
Very-high impact manufacturing or processing facilities (<u>e.g. asphalt manufacture, bituminous concrete manufacture, concrete crushing</u>)	Type V	Type V	Type V
Wholesaling, warehousing, storage buildings, or public facilities	Type III or IV	Type V or VI	Type III or IV

Staff Comment: Staff supports the proposed changes and the Law Department has found that no new public hearing would be required for the requested revisions. Final language is subject to approval as to form.

Request 7: Sec. 50-14-367. Screening standards for specific uses and site features

(d) Required screening for individual site features. For all uses not identified in Subsection (c) of this section, screening is required for the following individual site features in accordance with the following standards:

Individual Site Features that Require Screening			
Site Feature	Permissible Buffer Types		
	Adjacent to street rights-of-way	Adjacent to or across and alley from Residential Districts	Adjacent to all other property lines
Loading docks, service yards, exterior work areas, truck maneuvering areas, and open areas for the parking of trucks, semi-trucks, and semi-trailers	Type III or IV <u>IV or V</u>	Type V or VI <u>IV or V</u>	Type III or IV
Open storage areas, principal or accessory	Type V	Type V	Type III
Off-street parking areas	Type I or II	Type III	Screening Not Required
Off-street parking areas for operable commercial vehicles, not including taxicabs and limousines	Type III or IV	Type III or IV	Screening Not Required

Staff Comment: Staff supports the proposed changes and the Law Department has found that no new public hearing would be required for the requested revisions. Final language is subject to approval as to form.