



REQUEST FOR CITY COUNCIL ACTION

MEETING DATE:	August 2, 2017	<input type="checkbox"/> Motion
DEPARTMENT:	Community Development	<input type="checkbox"/> Resolution
DIVISION:	Community Planning	<input type="checkbox"/> Ordinance - Introduction
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ordinance - Adoption
		<input type="checkbox"/> Public Hearing

TITLE:
Zoning Code Text Amendment: Landscape Regulations

SUMMARY RECOMMENDATION:

Amend the City of Yuma Zoning Code, Title 15, Chapter 154, Article 20 – Landscape Regulations and Article 01.07 – Definitions to emphasize the importance of trees to provide shade, reduce energy consumption, absorb stormwater runoff, and improve air quality; to encourage xeriscape, low-water use landscape design; and to improve aesthetics throughout the community. (ZONE-17535-2017) (Community Development/Community Planning) (Laurie Lineberry)

REPORT:

CLERK'S NOTE: This item was continued from the June 21, 2017 regular City Council Meeting by motion of the Yuma City Council to make additional changes that were recommended through public meetings and City Council discussion. A summary of public input from local development and landscaping professionals, as well as edits made since the May 22, 2017, P & Z Meeting are included as Exhibit A and B to this Request for Council Action.

This text amendment updates the existing landscape regulations to emphasize the importance of trees to provide shade, reduce energy consumption, absorb stormwater runoff, and improve air quality; to encourage xeriscape, low-water use landscape design; and to improve aesthetics throughout the community. Landscape is an integral part of the community's infrastructure. The effort to update the landscape code is part of a larger effort championed by the City's Public Works Department to reduce future maintenance burdens associated with excessive or inappropriate landscape in City rights-of-way and retention basins.

The proposed text amendment addresses common concerns that arise with the existing landscape regulations. Staff frequently reviews landscape plans that specify plants not well adapted to Yuma's climate, specify inappropriate groundcover materials, and oftentimes do not contain adequate information. The current landscape code standards are based on the area of the space, which require designs that fill the space with plants rather than designs that encourage thoughtful, pedestrian-friendly locations for the landscape material. Furthermore, the area-based standards in the existing code do not make the purpose of the required landscape clear. The proposed amendment outlines the rationale behind each required landscape area and why certain types of plants are preferred. Overall, the goal of the amendment is to reduce the cost of landscape while increasing its benefits to the community.

The effort to update the Landscape Regulations began in 2005 when a text amendment was initiated (Z2005-48). At that time, a consultant was hired and a draft was created, but the draft was never adopted. In 2014, minor amendments were adopted in Ordinance 2014-06 to address concerns about landscape rock and to allow shrubs to be substituted for some vegetative groundcover requirements. In 2015, with the hiring of a staff person with a background in landscape architecture, the update was reinstituted. As part of this proposed amendment, the changes proposed in the 2005-06 draft were reviewed and some recommendations were incorporated into this proposed amendment. Additionally, an extensive review of other cities' landscape codes was conducted. The effort started with the creation of the Recommended Plants List to identify and encourage appropriate, low-water use plants for Yuma's desert climate. This list, created by Community Planning staff in conjunction with the Public Works Department, Yuma County Water Users' Association, and APS, is now available to the public at City Hall and online. It is provided to designers and landowners as they develop their landscape plans, typically during the pre-development meeting process.

To make the code easier to understand, the information was reorganized into the following sections: Purpose, Applicability, Landscape Design Standards, Required Landscape Areas, Maintenance, Administration, and Review of Regulations. The proposed format aligns with the organization of many other Arizona municipalities' codes. The section on landscape design was enhanced to distinguish between types of trees (street, shade, and accent), to include more detailed descriptions of xeriscape and hydrozones, and to clearly define the purpose of each type of landscape. Illustrations and charts were added in several sections of the code to improve readability and enhance understanding.

In the section on Required Landscape Areas, the seven currently required areas are replaced with four areas: perimeter, off-street parking, retention basins, and other areas. The proposed amendment introduces the streetscape zone, which emphasizes street trees along the street to provide shade for pedestrians and visual enclosure to the street which calms traffic speeds. Many studies have shown that tree-lined streets increase property values by making those areas more desirable places to live, work, and shop. Many of Yuma's neighborhoods established in the pre-war era have large "tree belts", the space between the back of the curb and the sidewalk where trees were historically planted. In these areas, new construction will require trees to be planted in and irrigation provided to the tree belt.

Another addition is the inclusion of regulations for single-family residential lots, which were previously not addressed in the code. In accordance with many other municipalities, these residential requirements, which apply to lots over 5000 square feet, require one street tree to be planted within the front yard setback.

The proposed language eliminates the requirement for vegetative groundcover and in landscape areas to be dedicated to and maintained by the City of Yuma such as parkways and retention basins, turf is no longer allowed as an acceptable form of groundcover. Vegetative groundcover, particularly turf, requires a lot of water and frequent maintenance by mowing crews, with little return on this investment in terms of benefits.

For off-street parking lots, the proposed changes increase the number of required trees from 1 per 15 spaces to 1 per 8 spaces. This is in line with other municipalities' requirements and aims to achieve 30% shade coverage at maturity. The focus of landscaping within parking lots is trees to provide shade, while shrubs and vegetative groundcover are less important. Each tree will also be required to provide adequate uncompacted soil to ensure the health of the tree in the long term. Parking lots will require a screening of shrubs when located adjacent to the street right-of-way, but when the parking is hidden behind the building, additional screening is not required.

The proposed requirements for landscaping retention basins are significantly different. Instead of a one-size-fits-all approach, a flexible point system has been presented to tailor the designs to the specific type and location of the basin. For example, a basin in a residential neighborhood would be required to provide amenities such as a play area or walking path, whereas a basin in an industrial

zone would only need minimal landscaping and landscape rock.

To address concerns with inadequate or incomplete landscape plan submittals, a detailed section on required contents has been added. This allows the landscape designer and the reviewing staff the ability to understand both the designer's intent and conformance with the code, while ensuring a timely and accurate review.

On May 22, 2017 the Planning and Zoning Commission voted to recommend APPROVAL (4-0, with Hamel, Lund, and Dammeyer absent) of the request to amend the City of Yuma Zoning Code, Title 15, Chapter 154, Article 20 – Landscape Regulations and Article 01.07 – Definitions to emphasize the importance of trees to provide shade, reduce energy consumption, absorb stormwater runoff, and improve air quality; to encourage xeriscape, low-water use landscape design; and to improve aesthetics throughout the community.

Following the Planning and Zoning Commission meeting, Community Planning staff conducted a meeting with local development and landscape professionals on June 20, 2017. The stakeholders provided valuable feedback that was incorporated into the proposed text amendment and a summary their input is attached as Exhibit A. Stakeholder comments lead to clarifications on several issues such as parkway maintenance, median landscape, shade structures in parking lots, and signage visibility. While some expressed support for the new requirements for single-family residential lots, others voiced concerns. In response to those concerns, the text was edited to remove the maximum impervious surface coverage in the front yard setback and substitutions were added to allow more flexibility for the tree requirement. All edits to the proposed text since the Planning & Zoning Commission Meeting on May 22, 2017 are outlined in Exhibit B.

PUBLIC COMMENTS - EXCERPTS FROM PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES (5/22/2017):

QUESTIONS FOR STAFF

Pruitt asked if the concerns from the Public have been addressed. **Leeman** said yes.

Hamersley asked if the City would incorporate the requested landscape changes into existing developments. **Leeman** explained that this proposal would only apply to redeveloping areas or new developments and added staff would like to develop a Street Tree and Shade Master Plan that would address landscape investments in existing developments. **Leeman** added Public Works was looking to convert residential subdivision retention basins that were currently grass into xeriscape.

Pruitt asked if Yuma participated in Tree City USA. **Leeman** said yes.

APPLICANT / APPLICANT'S REPRESENTATIVE

None

PUBLIC COMMENT

Larry Sullins, JSA, 4233 E. 30th Place, Yuma, AZ, expressed his concern with the existing landscape regulations and complimented staff on this proposal.

Planning Commission Staff Report – Attached

FISCAL REQUIREMENTS	CITY FUNDS:	\$0.00	BUDGETED:	\$0.00
	STATE FUNDS:	\$0.00	AVAILABLE TO TRANSFER:	\$0.00
	FEDERAL FUNDS:	\$0.00	IN CONTINGENCY:	\$0.00
	OTHER SOURCES:	\$0.00	FUNDING FOR THIS ITEM IS FOUND IN THE FOLLOWING ACCOUNT / FUND / CIP:	
		\$0.00		
		\$0.00		
TOTAL:	\$0.00			
FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT:				
ADDITIONAL INFORMATION	SUPPORTING INFORMATION NOT ATTACHED TO THE CITY COUNCIL ACTION FORM THAT IS ON FILE IN THE OFFICE OF THE CITY CLERK:			
	1. Landscape Regulations (June 22, 2017) 2. 3. 4. 5.			
ADDITIONAL INFORMATION	IF CITY COUNCIL ACTION INCLUDES A CONTRACT, LEASE OR AGREEMENT, WHO WILL BE RESPONSIBLE FOR ROUTING THE DOCUMENT FOR SIGNATURE AFTER CITY COUNCIL APPROVAL?			
	<input type="radio"/> Department <input type="radio"/> City Clerk's Office <input type="checkbox"/> Document to be recorded			
SIGNATURES	CITY ADMINISTRATOR:		DATE:	
	Gregory K. Wilkinson		7/11/2017	
	REVIEWED BY CITY ATTORNEY:		DATE:	
	Richard Files		7/10/2017	
	RECOMMENDED BY (DEPT/DIV HEAD):		DATE:	
Laurie Lineberry		5/30/2017		
SIGNATURES	WRITTEN/SUBMITTED BY:		DATE:	
	Naomi Leeman		5/30/2017	