SECTION 63

Landscaping, Screening and Buffering

63.0 Purpose

The landscaping provisions of these design standards preserve and enhance the character, appearance and beauty of the community, to preserve property values, and to accomplish transition between areas of unlike character.

63.1 Minimum Landscape Area (MLA)

- ☐ Does the landscaping include a diverse variety of plant species?
- ☐ Does the landscaping soften the mass of a large building?
- ☐ Will the landscaping features create a sense of place?

For all non-residential *uses*, and for residential *uses* with more than three (3) *dwelling units* per *lot*, the area of the *lot* devoted to tree protection, plant preservation and pervious landscaping will not be less than the following percentages of MLA in each District:

All Residence Districts	50%
Central Business B-1 District	10%
Shopping Center Business B-2 District	15%
Restricted Business B-3 District	15%
Gateway Business B-4 District	25%
Marine Commercial MC District	15%
Saybrook Point SP District	20%
Industrial I District	25%

Each site will contain a minimum of twelve (12) trees per acre.

For purposes of this section, pervious landscaping consists of any of the following or combination: turf grass, vines, shrubs, groundcover, hedges or trees.

Decrease the "non-conformities" of an existing landscaping, screening or buffer areas to meet current design standards:

- Replace diseased trees.
- Increase buffer plantings.
- Relocate dumpsters.

The Board of Selectmen's Tree Committee advocates a policy of no net loss of tree cover.

Existing Site Features

With approval of the Commission, include existing natural vegetation and unique site features, such as existing stone walls, large boulders or rock outcroppings, in the area used to satisfy this requirement.

trees above sidewalk on the Boston Post Road

63.2 General Requirements

☐ Does the development preserve sensitive environmental land features, such as steep slopes, wetlands and large rock outcroppings?

☐ Are scenic views and historically or archaeologically significant features preserved?

The following performance standards apply to all *uses* for which a site plan is required:

- Any portion of a developed lot that is not used for the location of buildings, structures, accessory uses, outside storage areas, off-street parking and loading areas, sidewalks or other paved areas, will be landscaped in accordance with an approved landscaping plan.
- Any area of the lot not disturbed by filling, grading, excavation or other construction activity may be left as natural terrain if its location, size or shape supports the landscaping plan in a manner as to minimize storm water runoff, sedimentation or erosion.
- Landscaping, trees and plants required by these design standards will be planted in a growing condition according to accepted horticultural practices and will be maintained in a healthy growing condition.
- Any landscaping, trees or plants in a condition that does not fulfill the intent of the approved landscaping plan will be replaced by the property owner during the next planting season. The Commission may require a separate bond, in a form acceptable to the Commission against completion of the requirements to be held by the Commission for two (2) years.
- Any screening, fence or wall required by these design standards will be maintained by the property owner in good condition throughout the period of the use on the lot.
- All landscaping, trees and planting material located adjacent to parking areas, loading areas, or driveways will be properly protected from damage by vehicles by barriers, curbs or other means.

Streets and Sidewalks

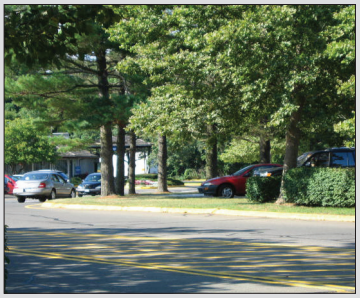
Chapter 185 of the *Town Code* authorizes the Board of Selectmen to enforce that "all owners of property adjacent to or abutting on public sidewalks shall be responsible for keeping such sidewalks free of hedges, shrubbery grass and overgrown plantings".

- To the maximum extent possible, all significant existing natural, man-made or scenic resources will be preserved or protected to the greatest extent possible, including, but not limited to, stone walls, steep slopes, large boulders or ledge outcroppings, specimen trees or stands of trees, including rare or unusual flora or fauna, endangered species, species of special concern, watercourses, ponds, wetlands, scenic vistas, ridgelines or other significant geological or unique site features.
- Existing, healthy, mature plant materials, especially trees, if properly located, will be fully credited towards these design standards.
- For all new landscaping, an ample variety and quantity of ornamental plants will be provided, with a few dominant types chosen to create unity and subordinate, specimen types interspersed for accent.
- Variety should be achieved with respect to seasonal changes, species selected, texture, color, and size at maturity.
- The use of resource-efficient, landscapes and gardens of slow-growing, drought-resistant plant species indigenous to the region is encouraged.
- Landscaping will serve to integrate the proposed development to the site, with particular consideration for natural topography and existing vegetation.
- Where terrain is uneven, the Commission will consider and may approve parking areas at different levels.
- Preservation of existing landscape materials and landforms is desirable.
- Landscape composition will be complimentary to the scale and style of existing and proposed buildings.
- Without adversely affecting the reasonable solar gain of any neighboring property, new plantings will concentrate evergreen trees and hedges on the north side of a structure to protect from wind without interfering with passive solar gain; deciduous, on the south side for seasonal sun control.

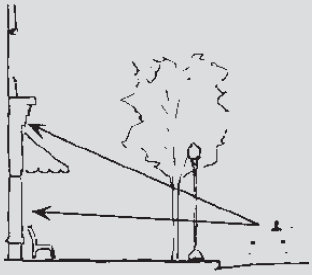
Additionally, properties located in the Connecticut River Gateway Conservation Zone must adhere to the minimum riparian buffer area required in Section 58.

manicured evergreens on Elm Street

functional reproduction with classical materials



well-shaded parking spaces on Boston Post Road



building visibility

Include the area of the front landscaped buffer in calculations for the minimum landscaped area.

Leave room for plants or hedges to grow without interference to any existing or required sidewalk.

Prevent the need for costly replacement of unmaintained vegetation by installing resource efficient systems, such as drip/micro irrigation, rainwater collection or gray water retention.

Minimize turf by planting the front landscape area with ground cover and appropriate trees and shrubs.

Planters

With approval of the Commission, substitute planters, plant boxes or pots containing trees or flowers to comply with the intent of these design standards where the Commission acknowledges that *lot* size and shape or existing *structures* make it infeasible to comply with the requirements for landscaping, screening or buffering.

63.3 Front Landscaped Area

☐ Is the appearance of the property enhanced rather than the use screened from view?

☐ Are shade trees located so as to not interfere with utilities or signage when mature in size?

63.3.1 Design and Construction

A. **Location.** Provide each *lot* with a landscaped area extending the length of the *street frontage* along the interior side of the front *lot* line, except where a *driveway* is located.

B. **Width.** The width of a front landscaped area will be at least:

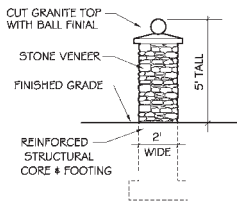
Central Business B-1 District	10 feet
Saybrook Point SP-2 District	15 feet
Other *districts*	25 feet

C. **Materials.**

1. Shrubs and plantings will be *native* or *adaptive plants* chosen for drought-resistance or other qualities necessary to survive in local conditions and not exceed three feet (3′) in height at maturity; roadside shoulders will be planted to optimize visual clearance for automobile drivers;
2. At a minimum, one *specimen* tree having a caliper of at least three and one-half inches diameter at breast height (3½′ dbh) and a height of at least six feet (6′) at time of planting will be planted for each forty feet (40′) of *lot frontage* and each fraction thereof.

63.3.2 Streetscape

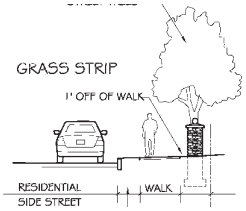
Clearing in a public right-of-way of any *street* is prohibited, except in conjunction with an approved site plan, the Commission may require the area within a public right-of-way between the front *lot* line and the edge of the pavement to be landscaped and maintained or any of the following improvements:



marker detail

A. **Neighborhood Markers**. Neighborhood monuments or markers will be placed within either side of a right-of-way of any side street transitioning from commercial to residential uses.

B. **Street Furniture**. Necessary or convenient equipment will be installed in the street, including traffic barrier, bench, outdoor seating, bicycle rack, bollard, post box, phone box, streetlamp, street lighting, traffic light, traffic sign, bus stop, tram stop, taxi stand, public lavatory, fountain, memorial, or waste or recycling receptacle.



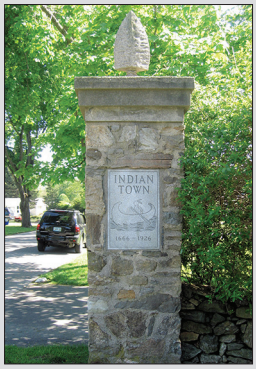
street tree in grass strip

C. **Street Trees**. At a minimum, one *street* shade tree having a caliper of at least three and one-half inches diameter at breast height (3½′ dbh) and a height of at least six feet (6′) at time of planting will be planted for each forty feet (40′) of *lot frontage* and each fraction thereof.

D. **Plant Palette**. A plant palette will be provided for use in coordinating the various landscape elements of the site and that of the neighboring properties.

Encroachment Permit

Work in any right-of-way requires permission from the Town Department of Public Works or State Department of Transportation



Include street trees that contribute to the ecological "microclimate" of the neighborhood.

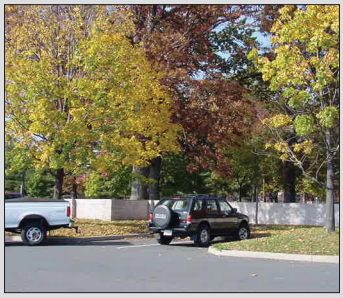
Plant Palette

With approval of the Commission, landscape those lots fronting on Main Street, the Boston Post Road or Ferry Road consistent with any comprehensive landscape design established by cooperative efforts of civic, business or governmental organizations or agencies.

63.4 Perimeter Buffer

☐ Does landscaping sufficiently shield adjacent properties from the site's noise, headlight glare or visual intrusion?

Include perimeter buffer in calculating minimum landscape area.



Except for *single-family* residential *uses*, do not use the perimeter buffer for parking.

63.4.1 Buffer Width

A buffer is required for each *lot*, not withstanding any buffers on adjacent property:

A. For single-family residential *uses*, the side and rear yard *setback* areas will be considered perimeter buffers.

B. For non-residential *uses* abutting property within a *district* that allows residential *uses*, unless the line is also the *lot* line of a Planned Residential Development, in which event the provisions of Section 63 will apply. — 20 feet

C. For *uses* within business *districts* — 10 feet

D. For *uses* within industrial *districts* — 20 feet

Provide a perimeter buffer along all lot lines except the front *lot* line and where *driveways* or sidewalks connect to abutting properties.

63.4.2 Required Landscaping for Buffers

At a minimum, the planting will consist of mixed evergreen trees six feet (6′) in height planted at intervals of ten feet (10′) staggered on center, unless otherwise approved by the Commission.

A. **Multi-family or non-residential use**. The buffer area will be maintained with lawn, shrubs and trees, including evergreen planting of the type, height, spacing and arrangement as, in the judgment of the Commission, will effectively screen the activity on the *lot* from the neighboring residential area.

B. **Single-family use**. There is no specific requirement for landscaping the buffer area.

Include evergreen planting to supplement deciduous planting but not take its place.

Perimeter Width

With approval of the Commission, modify the width of the perimeter buffer area where *lot* size and shape or existing *structures* make it infeasible to comply with the minimum widths required above.

63.5 Interior Parking Lot Landscaping

☐ Are pervious surfaces maximized to protect water quality?

☐ Are there enough trees to shade parked cars from absorbing the solar heat sink of the pavement?

In addition to front landscaped area and perimeter buffer requirements, there will be landscaping of buildings, walkways and parking lots:

63.5.1 Cumulative Area

A standard of one (1) island for every ten (10) parking spaces should be used for design purposes. All uses required to provide twenty (20) or more off-street parking spaces will have at least twenty square feet (20 s.f.) of interior landscaping within the paved portion of the lot per parking space.

63.5.2 Intervening Islands

For uses requiring thirty (30) or more spaces, no more than fifteen (15) parking spaces in a row or four (4) rows across will be permitted without an intervening interior landscape area.

63.5.3 Dimensions

Each interior parking lot landscaped area will contain:

A. A minimum area of one hundred square feet (100 s.f.);

B. A minimum depth of ten feet (10′);

C. Plantings of shrubs or ground cover; and

D. At least one (1) specimen shade tree having a caliper of at least three and one-half inches diameter at breast height (31/2′ dbh) and six feet (6′) in height and spaced approximately every forty feet (40′) and each fraction thereof from the next tree within any interior parking lot landscaped area.

Design interior landscaping to enhance visual qualities of the site and to break up expanses of parking.

Position islands to indicate safe and efficient channelization of pedestrian or vehicular traffic and to separate access ways from parking aisles.

Provide a landscaped area along the perimeter drive of any parking area, except where functionally integrated with parking on an abutting *lot*.

Natural Landscape

With approval of the Commission, modify the planting or buffer area requirements where the existing topography or natural vegetation provides adequate screening.

Plant low-height shrubs or upward branching trees that will not obscure pedestrians or signs from motor vehicles — especially at crossing locations.

clear corner at Elm Street

Protect cyclists and pedestrians from motor vehicles with conscientious placement of fencing.

clear corner in Old Saybrook

Line-of-Sight

With approval of the Commission, modify the requirements to maintain a clear line-of-sight where unique circumstances indicate that the intent of the design standards can be met.

63.6 Visual Clearance

☐ Is there sufficient visual clearance to prevent any safety hazard to motorists, cyclists or pedestrians?

No plant, structure or object will be located to create – nor grow to create – a visual hazard for vehicular or pedestrian traffic eitherwithin or at the intersection of the site's access with a *street*.

63.6.1 Fences, Walls or Terraces

The required setback distances will not apply to fences or walls six feet (6′) or less in height nor to necessary retaining walls of less than six feet (6′) in height that are not classified as a shoreline flood and erosion control structure or to unroofed terraces, but no fence, wall or terrace will be located within the right-of-way of any street.

Any *fence*, wall or planting that obstructs the line of sight will not be considered to be a *nonconformity*.

63.6.2 Corner Visibility

On any *corner lot*, there will be no *building*, *structure*, *fence*, wall or planting located within a triangular space on the *lot* bounded by the two intersecting *street lines* and a straight line connecting a point on one *street line* fifteen feet (15′) from the intersection with a point on the other pavement fifteen feet (15′) from the intersection, so as to obstruct a clear line of sight anywhere across the triangle between an observer's eye at an elevation three and one-half feet (31/2′) above one *street line* and an object one foot (1′) above the other *street line*, except that any *building* may extend to within the minimum distance of a *street line* as specified in these regulations.

63.7 Screening

- ☐ Is glare, noise or litter prevented from spilling into residential areas or public streets?
- ☐ Are on-site activities suitably screened from public view during all seasons?

Requirements for screening will address areas for loading and service, including trash receptacles, storage, utilities or mechanical units and queuing lanes, and retail drive-through mechanicals, such as menu boards, automatic teller machines or other product dispensers:

- Service areas and mechanicals will be located in the least conspicuous area of the site that allows sufficient area for operations without damage from service providers or other vehicles to the maximum extent possible without conflict with the Fire/Building or Health Codes.
- Building materials of muted colors and natural vegetation will be used to conceal or blend service areas into the background and to divert attention to more attractive parts of the site.
- Service areas, mechanicals and product dispensers will be screened from view from any public street by fencing, decorative walls or other landscaping materials or a combination that complements the architecture of the building or reflects the character of the neighborhood.
- Loading areas will be designed so that delivery vehicles can back up to a loading dock or enter the building.

plantings around utilities at Banbury Crossing

Perimeter Screening

With approval of the Commission, substitute an earthen berm, wall or *fence* of location, height, design and materials for any portion of the required planting or buffer area strip; the substituted berm, wall or *fence* will not be used to meet the minimum landscape area.

63.8 Submission of a Landscape Plan

As part of or in conjunction with a required site plan, the following formation will be provided concerning site landscaping:

A. Location and description of existing vegetation on site and any proposals to protect and preserve existing vegetation during and after construction.

B. Location and description of existing natural features, including large boulders, rock outcroppings and water features to be incorporated into proposed site design.

C. Location and spacing of proposed new plant materials, including types of materials identified by botanical and common names.

D. A list of plant materials to be used, including size in diameter and height at installation and at maturity; a planting schedule for all plant materials.

E. Proposed treatment of ground surfaces.

F. Methods of protecting landscaping from vehicles.

63.9 Requirement for Surety

The *Commission* may require a separate bond or other surety against completion of the requirements of this section.