

GENERAL INFORMATION

Subject

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| Request | - | Text amendment modifying TMC§1108.0406 Landscaping & Screening – Irrigation, adding language to accommodate native/drought resistant plants in lieu of artificial irrigation |
| Applicant | - | Toledo City Plan Commission
One Government Center, Suite 1620
Toledo, OH 43604 |

STAFF ANALYSIS

The Zoning Code currently requires all projects over ½ an acre in size to provide a subsurface irrigation system. Subsurface irrigation systems are not always the best fit for plantings, especially those native to the area which – after establishment – often do not require artificial irrigation. Subsurface irrigation systems can also be prohibitively expensive to install for small business owners. The proposed text amendment will permit flexibility in how developments irrigate their landscaping, native plantings or not, while simultaneously requiring an adequate amount of irrigation be available.

Staff reviewed the zoning codes of Cleveland, Cincinnati, Detroit, Ann Arbor, and Bloomington (IN), and found a variety of strategies for requiring an appropriate amount of artificial irrigation. Of note, Detroit and Ann Arbor both require landscaping to be within a certain distance of water outlets (hose bibbs) unless a subsurface irrigation system is used. Ann Arbor takes this a step further by allowing landscaping further from water outlets (hose bibbs) in areas where Xeriscaping plants are used. While Ann Arbor’s code defines Xeriscaping as “A combination of landscaping features and techniques that in aggregate reduce the demand for, and consumption of, water”, it does not specify the threshold a planting / landscape area must meet in order to be considered Xeriscaping. When staff reached out to the Ann Arbor Department of Planning Services for further clarification, their Urban Forestry & Natural Resources Planning Coordinator – who reviews landscaping reviews for the City of Ann Arbor – responded that they had not reviewed any plantings further than the required distance from water outlets (hose bibbs) in the past five years. If they were to review a landscaping plan using xeriscaping, they would require a number of details including a watering plan during plant establishment (approximately 3 years), soil type, and drainage. They also wanted to iterate that xeriscaping does not mean zero irrigation – it means efficient irrigation. Irrigation would need to be designed according to the water needs of plants.

STAFF ANALYSIS

The proposed text amendment will somewhat mirror Ann Arbor's irrigation requirements, with more detail given on xeriscaping requirements. Xeriscape requirements are set specifically high given that all plants require some form of irrigation – whether artificially from a hose or ‘naturally’ by thoughtful grading and drainage. The proposed text amendment will allow developers to choose between three options for irrigation: subsurface irrigation, water outlet / manual irrigation, and xeriscaping. For two of the three options – water outlets / manual irrigation and xeriscaping – developers will be incentivized to choose native and drought-tolerant plantings to either keep the cost of manual watering crews down or to pass the high bar set for xeriscaping plans. The third option – subsurface irrigation – will likely only be used by large chains and/or larger sites which will make it impractical to hire manual watering crews.

It is worth noting that TMC§1108.0405(C) requires that all unhealthy or dead plant material required by the code be replaced by the next planting period. This provision has not always been enforced; however, the Plan Commission is currently hiring a number of Zoning Compliance Specialists. With this increase in staffing, staff anticipates enforcement of this provision to increase – especially for sites reviewed in the past couple of years. If developers choose the water outlet / manual irrigation option, and they don't keep up on required manual irrigation, it is likely that this neglect will be caught.

Forward Toledo Comprehensive Land Use Plan

One of the goals under the sustain theme is to Promote Native Plants. Native plants provide many different ecological and environmental benefits. One of the most important purposes they serve is being more drought-tolerant than non-native plants, which reduces maintenance costs and increases longevity. They are also better at filtering stormwater runoff, which helps reduce pollution in our public waterways. The proposed text amendment is consistent with the Forward Toledo Plan as it permits the use of more sustainable methods of irrigation while also promoting the use of native and/or drought-tolerant plants.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the Toledo City Plan Commission recommend approval of M-1-24, a text amendment modifying TMC§1108.0406 Landscaping & Screening – Irrigation, adding language to accommodate native/drought resistant plants in lieu of artificial irrigation, for the following two (2) reasons:

1. Subsurface irrigation systems are not always the best fit for plantings, especially those native to the area which – after establishment – often do not require artificial irrigation; and,
2. The text amendment is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan and the stated purpose of the Zoning Code.

REF: M-1-24 ... August 8, 2024

ZONING TEXT AMENDMENT
TOLEDO CITY PLAN COMMISSION

REF: M-1-24

DATE: August 8, 2024

TIME: 2:00 P.M.

ZONING AND PLANNING COMMITTEE OF
CITY COUNCIL

DATE: September 10, 2024

TIME: 4:00 P.M.

AS

Two (2) Exhibits follow

Exhibit “A”
Existing

1108.0400 | Landscape Material Standards

The following standards must be considered the minimum required standards for all trees, shrubs and landscape material installed to satisfy the requirements of this section.

1108.0406 Irrigation/Watering

Landscaped areas must be irrigated as necessary to maintain required plant materials in good and healthy condition. Irrigation shall be required for projects of over ½ acre in site area. Irrigation plans must be submitted with development plans and must contain all construction details.

Exhibit “B”

Modifications

(Additions in blue underlined. Deletions in red strikethrough.)

1108.0400 | Landscape Material Standards

The following standards must be considered the minimum required standards for all trees, shrubs and landscape material installed to satisfy the requirements of this section.

1108.0406 Irrigation/Watering

Landscaped areas must be irrigated as necessary to maintain required plant materials in good and healthy condition. ~~Irrigation shall be required for projects of over ½ acre in site area.~~ All landscaped areas shall be provided with a readily available water supply. Water outlets (hose bibbs) shall be provided within 100 feet of all required plant material unless a subsurface irrigation system is used. Plantings may be further than 100 feet from water outlets in areas where sufficient xeriscaping is used. If a subsurface irrigation system is used, irrigation plans must be submitted with development plans and must contain all construction details. If xeriscaping is used, a xeriscaping plan must be submitted containing a watering plan during plant establishment (approximately 3 years) and detailed depictions of xeriscaping features and techniques used, including soil type, drainage, topography, and plant cultivars/nativars.

1116.0100 General Terms

1116.01101.1 Xeriscaping

A combination of landscaping features and techniques that in aggregate reduce the demand for, and consumption of, water.