



Staff Report

PLANNING DIVISION

To: Salt Lake City Planning Commission
From: Noah Elmore, Principal Planner
Noah.Elmore@slc.gov or (801) 535-7971
Date: February 25, 2026
Re: PLNPCM2026-00461, Text Amendment to Update Landscaping and Buffers

Zoning Text Amendment

PROPERTY ADDRESS: City-wide
PARCEL ID: Not applicable
MASTER PLAN: Not applicable
ZONING ORDINANCE: Chapter 21A.48 – Landscaping and Buffers

REQUEST:

Mayor Erin Mendenhall initiated a zoning text amendment to update the Landscaping and Buffers Chapter (21A.48) to clarify language for ease of use, to better align city code with state code, and to allow for artificial turf in some required landscaping areas where it was not previously permitted.

RECOMMENDATION:

To forward a positive recommendation to the City Council to adopt the text amendment as proposed.

ATTACHMENTS:

- A. [ATTACHMENT A: Proposed Text Amendment](#)
- B. [ATTACHMENT B: Zoning Text Amendment Standards](#)
- C. [ATTACHMENT C: Department Review Comments](#)
- D. [ATTACHMENT D: Public Process and Comments](#)

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The new Landscaping and Buffers Chapter was adopted by the City Council on April 26, 2023. As the new regulations have been implemented, some sections were found to need further clarification and modifications to better understand and utilize the standards. Additionally, changes to the state code were adopted that limit the applicability of a landscape plan. The proposed text amendment will clarify standards, update the chapter to align with state code, and allow for artificial turf in some required landscaping areas.

The amendment includes the following proposed revisions:

- Specifies that public infrastructure projects within the right-of-way shall follow landscaping requirements. However, modifications are permitted based on unique conditions, such as safety issues or creating a healthy environment for trees or other plants.
- Clarifies the ability of the Zoning Administrator to modify landscaping requirements due to unique circumstances related to a property; additionally, Zoning Administrator would have the added option to request the Engineering Division review modification requests.
- Aligns with recent changes in state code related to when a landscaping plan is required.
- Removes the requirement for landscape plans to be submitted for new construction of single-family and two-family dwellings during permitting but such projects would still be required to meet landscaping standards.
- Eliminates parking lot landscaping requirements when abutting buildings, but retains buffer requirement along property lines.
- Adds language that would allow artificial turf in required landscape yards. However, it would not be allowed to be installed in required landscape buffers or park strips. Furthermore, 33% of the required landscape yard area would still need to be live vegetation. Other standards regulate where artificial turf may be located, add protection for existing trees and plants, and outline qualifications for artificial turf.

The entire proposed text amendment may be found in [Attachment A](#).

APPROVAL PROCESS AND COMMISSION AUTHORITY

The proposal is for a zoning text amendment. The Planning Commission may make a recommendation to the City Council on this type of proposal, per [21A.50.050.A](#). The Planning Commission may make modifications to the proposed amendments, direct staff to make recommendations or forward a recommendation to the City Council.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

The key considerations listed below were identified through the analysis of the project:

1. Artificial Turf
2. Clarifying Language and Aligning with State Code

Consideration 1: Artificial Turf

Presently, artificial turf is not permitted in any required landscape yards, but is allowed in other required landscape yards, such as the rear yard and interior side yard. Additionally, artificial turf is permitted in landscaping areas anywhere outside of required landscape yards. Landscaping outside of a required landscape yard is considered a provided landscape yard; a provided landscape yard is not subject to the standards of 21A.48. The proposed amendment would permit artificial turf as a landscaping material in required landscape yards, while provided landscape yards remain unchanged.

As part of the proposal, staff reviewed the various advantages and disadvantages of artificial turf:

ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF ARTIFICIAL TURF	
Advantages	Disadvantages
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced water consumption • Reduced use of artificial chemicals, such as fertilizers, pesticides, weed killers • Reduced use of gas-powered equipment for maintenance • Fewer allergies from grass and pollen • Lower maintenance over time, requiring less labor and money • Potentially provides an accessible surface consistent with ADA standards 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental/water pollution from run-off, which includes hazardous organic chemicals, toxic metals, carcinogens, and microplastics • Does not benefit the ecosystem like grass, such as storing CO₂ and protecting soil • Production of artificial turf creates greenhouse gases • Increases the urban heat island effect • Expensive to install; high upfront cost • Must be replaced after service life; high heat and sunlight exposure accelerate degradation • Unnatural appearance, particularly in winter

To mitigate the potential for detrimental impacts, the proposed amendment would permit artificial turf as a landscaping material in required landscape yards with the following standards:

- a. All minimum vegetation requirements as required by this chapter are complied with.
- b. Artificial turf shall have a minimum permeability of 30 inches per hour per square yard.
- c. Artificial turf is not permitted in any park strip, required landscape buffer or freeway buffer, permanent drainage features (e.g., ponds, swales, and retention and detention basins) or elsewhere in a public right of way.
- d. A minimum four-foot separation between artificial turf and tree trunks and two-foot separation between artificial turf and shrubs shall be maintained to ensure roots are not damaged with the installation of artificial turf and that the overall health of the living plant material is not compromised;
- e. The use of indoor or outdoor plastic or nylon carpeting as a substitute or replacement for artificial turf or natural turf is prohibited;
- f. Artificial turf shall consist of green lifelike individual blades of grass that:
 - 1) Emulate natural turf in look and color;
 - 2) Have a minimum pile height of 1.5 inches;
- g. Artificial turf shall be cleaned regularly and maintained in an appropriate and neat manner. It shall be replaced if it is worn, uneven, discolored, or damaged.
- h. Uses such as public parks, schools, athletic fields, playgrounds and similar uses are exempt from these standards.

As opposed to permitting entire front yards of artificial turf, the standards seek to provide a balance between the advantages and disadvantages. Standard “a” is perhaps the most impactful, as it still requires compliance with all other landscaping standards, such as a minimum 33% live vegetation. This ensures benefits of live vegetation, like improved air quality, a reduced urban heat island, and stormwater drainage, remain. Standards “b”, and “c” are aimed at mitigating the effects of pollution from stormwater run-off by requiring a minimum amount of permeability and a prohibition near drainage features. Standard “c”, along with standard “d”, also helps to protect trees and their root systems, both in required landscape yards and in the park strip; a healthy tree canopy serves to reduce the urban heat island effect. Finally, standards “e”, “f”, and “g” address concerns regarding the appearance and maintenance of artificial turf.



ARTIFICIAL TURF MITIGATION	
Impact	Applicable Standard(s)
Environmental/water pollution from run-off, which includes hazardous organic chemicals, toxic metals, carcinogens, and microplastics	a, b, c
Does not benefit the ecosystem like grass, such as storing CO ₂ and protecting soil	a, b, c, d
Increases the urban heat island effect	a, c, d
Must be replaced after service life; high heat and sunlight exposure accelerate degradation	e, g
Unnatural appearance, particularly in winter	e, f, g

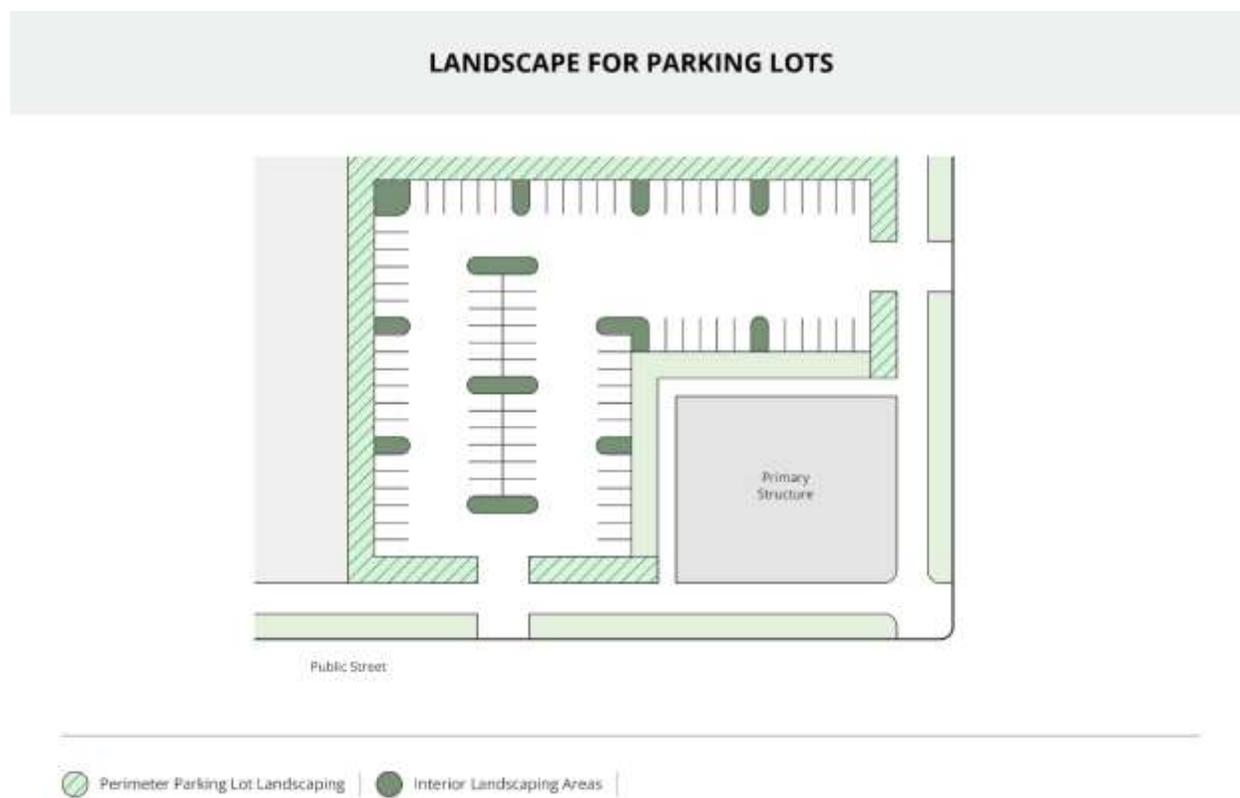
Consideration 2: Clarifying Language and Aligning with State Code

The proposal includes revisions to aid in clarifying the ordinance and its applications. A new subsection, 21A.48.020.C, is proposed which clarifies public infrastructure projects are required to meet landscaping standards, however, modifications are permitted in the event of unique conditions:

Public infrastructure projects within the right-of-way that are unable to meet required landscaping standards due to the design of the project, safety issues or the inability to provide sufficient park strip width to allow for healthy conditions for vegetation or trees are exempt from the standards of this chapter. Turf and artificial turf are prohibited, and minimum rock or gravel sizes standards apply in these areas.

New revisions are proposed to allow the Zoning Administrator greater flexibility in modifying the standards of the chapter due to site conditions. Currently, due to the narrow language of the chapter, the Zoning Administrator is limited in their ability to modify the standards for property owners burdened by a unique lot shape or difficult topography. Revisions to the same subsection also now list Engineering as a group available for consultation by the Zoning Administrator concerning any requested modifications.

Revisions are also being proposed to ease construction challenges. First, parking lot landscaping is proposed to no longer apply when abutting buildings on the lot (while requirements along property lines remain). Existing requirements for parking lot landscaping have had the unintended effect of limiting the buildable area of a parcel, making it more difficult to develop usable land. This disproportionately affects small businesses, given that they are more likely to occupy smaller parcels than larger businesses, especially in the more historic neighborhoods of Salt Lake City. Furthermore, the intent behind the standards is to create a buffer between uses. Such a buffer is excessive then, given that parking lots are often intended to serve the abutting building; the landscaping would be buffering the building from its own parking lot. The revision will make it easier for prospective builders to comply with both the requirements and the intent of the parking lot landscaping standards.



The above drawing illustrates how the revised parking lot landscape buffer would be implemented

Second, single-family and two-family dwellings are proposed to be exempt from providing a landscape plan during permitting for a new construction. According to the Kem C. Gardner Policy Institute, approximately 77 building permits were issued for single-family detached dwellings in 2025. The cost of providing a landscape plan for permitting is often a costly burden for homeowners and this revision seeks to lighten that burden. However, while a landscape plan may not be needed, that does not mean single-family and two-family dwellings are exempt from the chapter. Single-family and two-family dwellings must still comply with the landscaping requirements of Chapter 21A.48, such as a minimum 33% live vegetation in the required front yard.

Finally, the proposal will align the chapter with state code by including an exemption to providing a landscape plan pursuant to Utah Code 10-20 which states that a city cannot delay issuing a building

permit or a certificate of occupancy based on the lack of a landscape plan. Development will still need to meet all landscaping standards; noncompliance with the landscaping standards is liable to enforcement action by the City.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

The proposed ordinance amendments have been reviewed against the Zoning Amendment consideration criteria in [Attachment B](#). The proposed amendment adds consistency and clarity to the ordinance with the aim of improving the applicability of the chapter. The proposed amendment also furthers the purpose of the city's policies and goals, including those in the applicable master plans. Due to these considerations, staff is recommending that the Commission forward a positive recommendation on this request to the City Council.

NEXT STEPS

The City Council has the final decision-making authority on all zoning amendments. The zoning ordinance authorizes the Planning Commission to make recommendations to the city council on zoning amendments. The Planning Commission may provide a positive or negative recommendation for the proposal and can request that changes be made to the proposal.

The recommendation and any requested changes will be sent to the City Council, who will hold a briefing and additional public hearing on the proposed changes. The City Council may make modifications to the proposal and approve or decline to approve the proposed changes.

If ultimately approved by the City Council, the changes would be incorporated into the City Zoning code.

ATTACHMENT A: Proposed Text Amendment

Project Title: Text Amendment to Update Landscaping and Buffers

Petition No.: PLNPCM2025-00461

Version: Planning Commission Draft

Date Prepared: 2/19/26

Planning Commission Action: 2/25/26

<p>APPROVED AS TO FORM Salt Lake City Attorney's Office</p> <p>Date: _____</p> <p>By: _____ Attorney Name, <i>Senior City</i></p>
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This proposed ordinance makes the following amendments (for summary purposes only):

- Creates Subsection 21A.48.C, which specifies that public infrastructure projects within the right-of-way need to follow landscaping requirements, but allows for modifications based on unique conditions, such as safety issues or creating a healthy environment for trees or other plants.
- Amends Subsection 21A.48.030.A to clarify the Zoning Administrator's ability to modify landscaping requirements due to unique circumstances related to the property; the Engineering Division would also be added as a group the Zoning Administrator may request to review modification requests.
- Amends Subsections 21A.48.040.C.4, 21A.48.050.E, and 21A.48.060.B to make grammatical or technical changes.
- Amends Subsection 21A.48.050.A to align with changes to State Code related to when a landscape plan is required and to exempt new construction of single-family and two-family dwellings from providing a landscape plan.
- Amends Subsection 21A.48.050.D.1 to clarify the requirements of a planting plan.
- Amends Subsection 21A.48.050.F
- Deletes Subsection 21A.48.050.G as a Certificate of Occupancy may not be withheld due to landscaping.
- Amends Subsection 21A.48.060.D to clarify which zoning districts are affected by a landscape buffer and when the Zoning Administrator may modify a landscape buffer. Additionally, the landscape buffer and freeway landscape buffer standards have been relocated from 21A.48.060.D.1 to 21A.48.060.D.2 and 21A.48.060.D.3.
- Amends Subsection 21A.48.070.C to eliminate parking lot landscaping requirements when abutting buildings.
- Amends Subsection 21A.48.080.B.4 to allow artificial turf in required landscape yards under select circumstances. It would not be allowed to be installed in required landscape buffers or park strips. In addition, 33% of required landscape yards would still need to be live vegetation. Other standards regulate where it could be located, add protection for existing trees and plants, and outline qualifications for artificial turf.

Underlined text is new; text with strikethrough is proposed to be deleted. Modifications made as part of the Planning Commission recommendation are highlighted in yellow. All other text is existing with no proposed change.

If adopted by the City Council, the Salt Lake City Council ordains the following, in substantial compliance with the following:

1 1. *Creates Subsection 21A.48.020.C as follows:*

2 C. Public infrastructure projects within the right-of-way that are unable to meet required
3 landscaping standards due to the design of the project, safety issues, or the inability to
4 provide sufficient park strip width to allow for healthy conditions for vegetation or trees are
5 exempt from the standards of this chapter. Turf and artificial turf are prohibited and
6 minimum rock or gravel size standards apply in these areas.

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8 2. *Amends Subsection 21A.48.030.A as follows:*

9 A. The requirements of this chapter may be modified by the zoning administrator, on a
10 case-by-case basis due to unique property conditions where ~~innovative a~~ landscaping design
11 ~~that~~ furthers the purpose and intent of this chapter is implemented, ~~or in response to input~~
12 ~~from:~~ For the purpose of making modifications as authorized by this section, unique
13 property conditions shall be related to the dimensions or shape of the property, topography,
14 existing easements, or safety impacts. The need for the adjustment shall not be created by
15 the actions of the applicant. Any request for a modification under this section may be
16 reviewed by the following to determine if the modification is justified:

- 17 1. Police Department;
18 2. Public Utilities; ~~or~~
19 3. Urban Forestry; Or
20 4. Engineering.

21
22 3. *Amends Subsection 21A.48.040.D.4.a as follows:*

23 a. When a ~~Landscaping~~ landscape plan is required, as described in Section 21A.48.050,
24 street trees shall be irrigated with a permanent automatic irrigation system.

25 4. *Amends Subsection 21A.48.050.A as follows:*

26 A. ~~Landscaping Plan Required~~ Applicability: A landscape plan shall be submitted for all
27 landscaped areas of a property and adjacent rights-of-way unless the requirement to submit
28 a landscape plan is exempt under Utah Code 10-20 or by this Title. All landscaped areas
29 shall comply with the requirements of this Chapter, including when a landscape plan is not
30 required. A landscape plan shall be required for the following:

- 31 1. New construction of a ~~primary principal~~ structure. Single-family and two-family
32 dwellings are exempt from this provision.
33 2. Any addition, expansion or intensification of a ~~property~~ use that increases the floor
34 area by 50% or more, increases the number of parking stalls required by 50% or more, or
35 modifies any required landscaping by 50% or more shall bring the entire property into
36 compliance with this chapter. ~~Single-family and two-family uses dwellings~~ are exempt
37 from this provision.
38
39 5. *Amends Subsection 21A.48.050.D.1 as follows:*

- 40 1. Planting Plan:
41 a. Property lines, easements, and street names.
42 b. Location and dimensions of existing and proposed structures such as, parking lots,
43 drive aisles, and sidewalks, bicycle paths, fencing, ground signs, refuse and recycling
44 containers, freestanding electrical equipment, and all other structures. ~~fencing.~~
45 c. ~~Location of existing and proposed sidewalks, bicycle paths, ground signs, refuse~~
46 ~~disposal, freestanding electrical equipment, and all other structures. Sight distance~~
47 ~~triangles, as defined and illustrated in Chapter 21A.62.~~
48 d. The location of existing buildings, structures, and trees on adjacent property within
49 20 feet of the ~~site-subject property line.~~
50 e. The location, size, and common names of all existing trees.
51 f. ~~Sight distance triangles at curb cuts or corners, as defined and illustrated in Chapter~~
52 ~~21A.62. The location, quantity, size at maturity, and name (botanical and common) of~~
53 ~~proposed plants and trees.~~
54 g. Root Zone Protection Plan required when construction work will occur near a street
55 tree or other protected tree and is subject to approval from the Urban Forestry Division.
56 h. Minimum tree soil standards set by the Salt Lake City Urban Forestry Division.
57 i. ~~The location, quantity, size at maturity, and name (botanical and common) of~~
58 ~~proposed plants and trees.~~
59 j.i. Summary table that specifies the following for each landscaping location separately:
60 (1) Area and percentage of each required landscape location.
61 (2) Area and percentage of each landscape location covered in turf grasses, impervious
62 surfaces.
63 (3) Area and percentage of each landscape location covered in adapted or native plant
64 species and adapted or native trees at maturity.
65 kj. A signature by a Landscape Architect licensed with the State of Utah, or an US-EPA
66 WaterSense certified professional verifying planting plan compliance with the standards
67 of this chapter.
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- 69 6. *Amends Subsection 21A.48.050.E as follows:*

70 E. Specific Landscape Regulations: ~~Various zoning districts in this title have specific~~
71 ~~landscaping regulations in addition to the requirements found in this chapter. Refer to the~~
72 ~~respective zoning district for specific landscaping regulations.~~ Landscape plans for
73 properties subject to zoning district specific landscape regulations shall be in compliance
74 with all applicable landscape and district specific requirements.

75 7. Amends Subsection 21A.48.050.F as follows:

76 F. Compliance Certification: A letter of compliance shall be prepared and submitted to the
77 city ~~upon completion of the landscape plan installation and prior to the issuance of a~~
78 ~~certificate of occupancy, or commencement of the use of the property within 90 days of~~
79 ~~landscape installation or within one year after the landscape plan is approved, whichever~~
80 ~~comes later.~~ Compliance certification shall be signed by a landscape architect licensed with
81 the State of Utah, or an US-EPA WaterSense certified professional verifying that all
82 landscape plan elements have been installed in compliance with the approved landscape
83 plan. Failure to submit a letter of compliance within 8 months upon completion of the
84 landscape plan installation and issuance of a certificate of occupancy shall result in written
85 warning notice to the property owner, notifying the property owner of the violation of this
86 title, the intent to enforce on the violation, and a specific date the violations must be
87 corrected by. Failure to submit a letter of compliance within 8 months after issuance of a
88 certificate of occupancy shall be a violation of this title, and subject to the fines and penalties
89 established in [Chapter 21A.20](#).

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91 8. Deletes Subsection 21A.48.050.G:

92 ~~—G. Planting Season Installation: The landscape plan installation may be delayed until the~~
93 ~~next optimal planting season. A Temporary Certificate of Occupancy (TCO) may be issued~~
94 ~~and subsequent TCO fees waived between October 15 and the following April 1 where it is~~
95 ~~not favorable to install landscaping. The landscape plan shall be installed, and a letter of~~
96 ~~compliance submitted within 30 days following April 1. Temporary Certificate of Occupancy~~
97 ~~fees pursuant to Section [18.32.035](#) of this code shall be reinstated where no letter of~~
98 ~~compliance is submitted by the end of the 30-day period.~~
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100 9. Amends Subsection 21A.48.060.B as follows:

Park Strips	
Street Trees	Minimum of 1 street tree planted on center between back of street curb and the sidewalk. Additional street trees shall be provided at the following rate per each frontage length: 1 small tree per 20 feet, or 1 medium tree per 30 feet, or 1 large tree per 40 feet. The largest tree that is appropriate to the park strip size shall be used. ¹ ²
Street Tree Soil Volume	In the Downtown, Jordan River Fairpark, and Gateway zoning district (Chapter 21A.30), street trees shall be planted in areas with adequate soil volume to promote street tree health and longevity. The soil volume surrounding a tree

	shall be a minimum of 750 <u>cubic feet</u> ³ per tree, provided that this area is exclusive of the soils volume calculation for adjacent trees. The soil volume may be reduced if underground utilities are present within the soil volume and the soil volume cannot be extended horizontally due to other obstructions or barriers. The urban forester may also approve a reduced soil volume below 750 <u>cubic feet</u> ³ if that volume is not necessary for the proposed tree health.
Vegetation	Minimum 33% coverage.
Turf and Artificial Turf	Prohibited
Impervious Surfaces	The combination of all paving materials shall not exceed 20% of the total park strip area.
1. Street trees shall be an appropriate species chosen from the Urban Forestry Street Tree List based on park strip size, shall have sufficient separation from public utilities, and shall be approved by the Urban Forestry Division.	
2. Park strips with a width of 36" or less are exempt from this provision.	

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102 *10. Amends Subsection 21A.48.060.D as follows:*

103 D. Landscape Buffer Standards:

104 1. Landscape Buffer Widths

District	When Abutting ¹	Required Landscape/ Freeway Buffer Widths
All districts (except single- and two-family R-1, R-2, Foothill, Special Development Pattern, FB-UN1, and those districts listed below that require a greater buffer width)	Single- and two-family R-1, R-2, FB-UN1, Foothill, & Special Development	10'
All districts	Freeway ²	20'
All other non-residential districts (except MU-2, MU-3, FB-UN1 , and those districts listed below that require a greater buffer width)	RMF-30, RMF-35, RMF-45, & RMF-75	10'
M-1 & M-1A	Any district that allows residential uses, AG districts, & OS	15'

M-2	Any district that allows residential uses	50'
	AG districts & OS	30'
BP & RP	All residential districts (in Chapter 21A.24)	30'
EI	All districts	30'
MH	All districts	20'
1. Or when required elsewhere by this title.		
2. The zoning administrator may approve a reduced freeway buffer if there's an existing sound wall, or significant grade/elevation difference that mitigate visual or auditory impacts, or required off-street parking cannot be met. If such a reduction is necessary, the buffer may not be less than 10' in width.		
Landscape Buffer Standards		
1 tree for every 30 linear feet of landscape buffer.		
1 shrub every 3 feet, with a mature height of no less than 4', along the entire length of the buffer.		
A 6-foot solid fence along the length of the required landscape buffer unless modified by the zoning administrator to better meet the fence height provisions in Section 21A.40.120.		
Turf is limited to active recreation areas.		
Freeway Landscape Buffer Standards (buffer standards for those properties abutting a freeway)		
1 tree for every 15 linear feet of required freeway landscape buffer. Trees shall be staggered along the length of the buffer.		
100% coverage required, may include adapted or native grasses, wildflower, and shrubs. Turf is prohibited.		

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106 2. Landscape Buffer Standards

<u>Tree</u>	<u>1 tree for every 30 linear feet of landscape buffer</u>
<u>Shrub</u>	<u>1 shrub every 3 feet, with a mature height of no less than 4 feet, along the entire length of the buffer.</u>
<u>Turf</u>	<u>Limited to active recreation areas.</u>
<u>Fence</u>	<u>6-foot solid fence along the length of the required landscape buffer unless modified by the zoning administrator to better meet the fence height provisions in Section 21A.40.120.</u>

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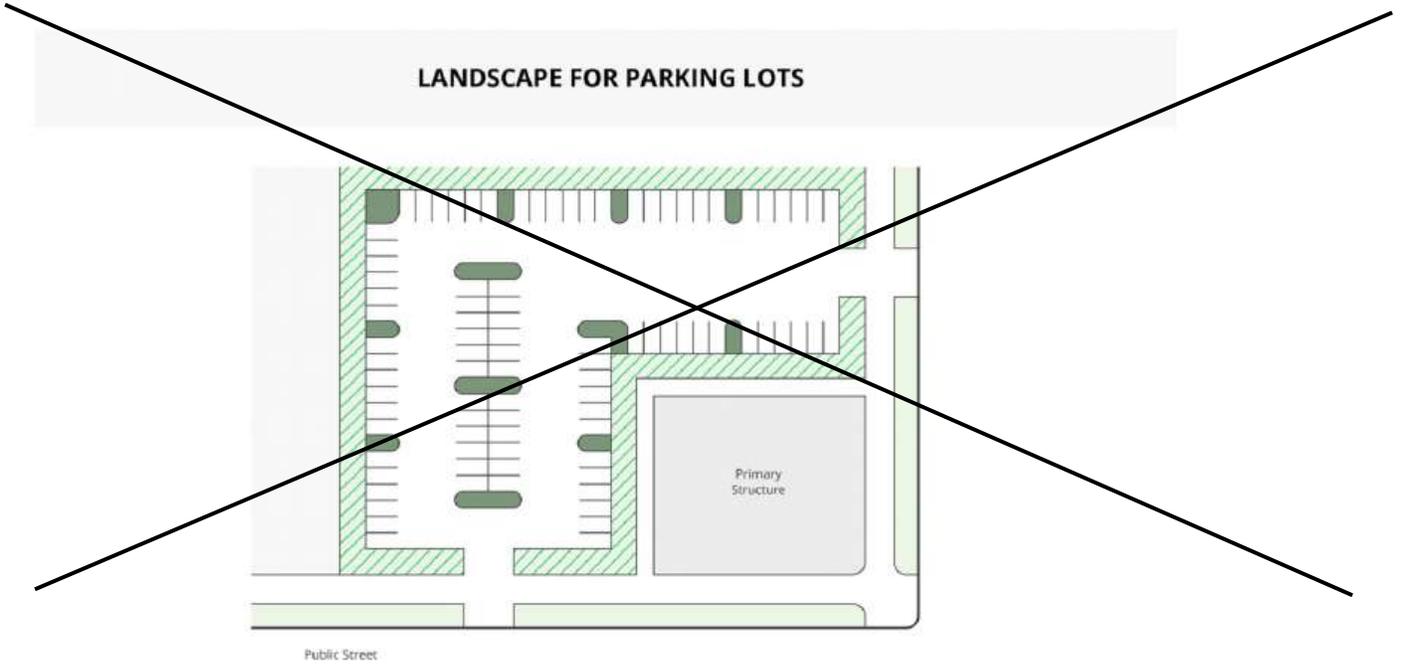
108 3. Freeway Landscape Buffer Standards (for those properties abutting a freeway)

<u>Freeway Buffer</u>	
<u>Tree</u>	<u>1 tree for every 15 linear feet of required freeway landscape buffer. Trees shall be staggered along the length of the buffer.</u>

<u>Vegetation</u>	<u>100% coverage required, may include adapted or native grasses, wildflower, and shrubs.</u>
<u>Turf</u>	<u>prohibited.</u>

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110 *11. Amends Subsection 21A.48.070.B.4 as follows:*

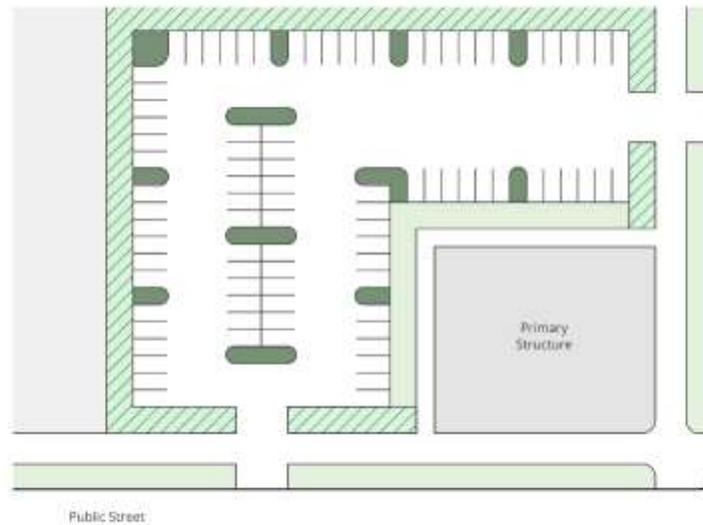


Perimeter Parking Lot Landscaping |
 Interior Landscaping Areas

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LANDSCAPE FOR PARKING LOTS



● Perimeter Parking Lot Landscaping | ● Interior Landscaping Areas

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12. Amends Subsection 21A.48.070.C as follows:

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C. Parking Lot Perimeter Landscaping:

1. Applicability: Landscaping along the perimeter of the parking lot shall be provided when the parking lot is located:
 - a. Within a required yard (where permitted in Sections [21A.44.060](#) or [21A.36.020](#)); or
 - b. Within 20 feet of a lot line; or
 - c. ~~Abutting a principal building.~~
2. Where both landscape buffers and perimeter parking lot landscaping are required, the more restrictive shall apply.
3. Where a surface parking lot is adjacent to another surface parking lot, on the same or separate parcels or lots, the perimeter parking lot landscaping provision may be waived by the zoning administrator if the required number trees are located elsewhere within the development.
4. Size:
 - a. In a required yard or within 20 feet of a property line: 8 feet in width, as measured from the back of the parking lot curb and extending into any parking space overhang area.
 - b. ~~Abutting a building on the same property: A minimum 5-foot wide required landscaping and 3-foot walkway shall be required to buffer buildings from parking spaces.~~

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13. Amends Section 21A.48.080.B.4 as follows:

- 4. ~~Artificial turf is prohibited in any location where landscaping is regulated by this chapter.~~
Artificial turf is allowed subject to the provisions of this section:
 - a. All minimum vegetation requirements as required by this chapter are complied with.
 - b. Artificial turf shall have a minimum permeability of 30 inches per hour per square yard.
 - c. Artificial turf is not permitted in any park strip, required landscape buffer or freeway buffer, permanent drainage features (e.g., ponds, swales, and retention and detention basins) or elsewhere in a public right of way.
 - d. A minimum four-foot separation between artificial turf and tree trunks and two-foot separation between artificial turf and shrubs shall be maintained to ensure roots are not damaged with the installation of artificial turf and that the overall health of the living plant material is not compromised;
 - e. The use of indoor or outdoor plastic or nylon carpeting as a substitute or replacement for artificial turf or natural turf is prohibited;
 - f. Artificial turf shall consist of green lifelike individual blades of grass that:
 - (1) Emulate natural turf in look and color;
 - (2) Have a minimum pile height of 1.5 inches;
 - g. Artificial turf shall be cleaned regularly and maintained in an appropriate and neat manner. It shall be replaced if it is worn, uneven, discolored, or damaged.
 - h. Uses such as public parks, schools, athletic fields, playgrounds and similar uses are exempt from these standards.

Effective Date: This ordinance, if passed, shall become effective on the date of its first publication and shall be recorded with the Salt Lake City Recorder.

Is there a penalty for violating this ordinance? If so, please state penalty or reference another ordinance that prescribes the penalty here. _____
_____.

If penalty for violation includes possibility of imprisonment, include the following statement:

Per Section 78B-22-301 of the Utah Code, Salt Lake City shall provide for indigent defense services, as that term is defined in 78B-22-102 of the Utah Code.

ATTEST:

CITY RECORDER

Transmitted to the Mayor on _____.

Mayor's Action: _____ Approved. _____ Vetoed.

MAYOR

ATTEST:

CITY RECORDER

DRAFT

ATTACHMENT B: Zoning Text Amendment Standards

ZONING TEXT AMENDMENTS

21A.50.050: A decision to amend the text of this title or the zoning map by general amendment is a matter committed to the legislative discretion of the city council and is not controlled by any one standard. In making a decision to amend the zoning map, the City Council should consider the following:

1. Whether a proposed text amendment is consistent with the purposes, goals, objectives, and policies of the city as stated through its various adopted planning documents;

Guiding Principle 6 of Plan Salt Lake is to “*minimize our impact on the natural environment*”. Initiative #2 of this principle includes a 2040 target to reduce water consumption per capita. Providing options for residents in landscaping their yards, provides additional opportunities to meet this target.

Guiding Principle 3 is to encourage “*access to a wide variety of housing types for all income levels throughout the city, providing the basic human need for safety and responding to changing demographics.*”. Initiative #2 is to decrease the percent of income spent on housing for cost-burdened households. Guiding Principle 11 calls for the City to “*ensure access to all City amenities for all citizens while treating everyone equitably with fairness, justice, and respect*”. Initiative #1 of this principle specifies a target to “*decrease combined cost of housing and transportation*”. Exempting single-family and two-family dwellings from providing a landscape plan reduces housing costs and lowers the barrier of entry for first-time homebuyers, aligning the proposed amendment with both of these guiding principles.

Guiding Principle 11, “*Ensure access to all City amenities for all citizens while treating everyone equitably with fairness, justice, and respect*”, includes the initiative to “*Support policies that provide housing choices, including affordability, accessibility and aging in place*”. Artificial turf may potentially be consistent with ADA standards for outdoor accessibility, allowing for additional options in housing accessibility and aging in place.

Guiding Principle 13 is to have “*a local government that is collaborative, responsive, and transparent*”. Initiative #1 of this principle is to “*ensure easy access to complete and understandable information*”. By clarifying the code and providing consistency throughout, this initiative is met. Initiative #13 is to “*improve licensing and permitting processes*”. Clarification of zoning standards allows the permitting process to be smoother for all parties involved, helping to streamline the process for new housing and existing remodels.

2. Whether a proposed text amendment furthers the specific purpose statements of the zoning ordinance.

21A.02.030: Purpose and Intent: The purpose of this title is to promote the health, safety, morals, convenience, order, prosperity and welfare of the present and future inhabitants of Salt Lake City, to implement the adopted plans of the City, and to carry out the purposes of the Municipal Land Use Development and Management Act, title 10, chapter 9, of the Utah Code Annotated or its successor, and other relevant statutes. This title is, in addition, intended to:

A. Lessen congestion in the streets or roads;

B. Secure safety from fire and other dangers;

- C. Provide adequate light and air;
- D. Classify land uses and distribute land development and utilization;
- E. Protect the tax base;
- F. Secure economy in governmental expenditures;
- G. Foster the City's industrial, business and residential development; and
- H. Protect the environment.**

One of the listed intents included is to protect the environment. The proposed landscaping chapter accomplishes this by stewarding the urban forest and conserving water while ensuring publicly viewable private spaces are landscaped to mitigate the urban heat island effect and improve stormwater quality.

***21A.50.010 Purpose Statement:** The purpose of this chapter is to provide standards and procedures for making amendments to the text of this title and to the zoning map. This amendment process is not intended to relieve particular hardships nor to confer special privileges or rights upon any person, but only to make adjustments necessary in light of changed conditions or changes in public policy.*

This proposal is consistent with the general purpose of making changes in light of changed conditions related to the enforcement of the existing ordinance. Revising the ordinance responds to the desire of the community for easier landscaping maintenance, while also aiding in easing the costs of building new single-family or two-family dwellings

3. Whether a proposed text amendment is consistent with the purposes and provisions of any applicable overlay zoning districts which may impose additional standards;

This standard is not applicable to the proposal.

4. The extent to which a proposed text amendment implements best current, professional practices of urban planning and design.

Best management practices have been followed to the extent of applicability of the purview of the Planning Division and the goals and objectives of Salt Lake City. Artificial turf allows for water conservation in a dry climate, helping the city become more drought resilient. The proposed provisions regulating the installation of artificial turf also seek to reduce artificial turf's impacts on the urban heat island effect and stormwater runoff. Additionally, by clarifying that public infrastructure projects are required to comply with landscaping requirements, ensuring the proposal emphasizes a greater establishment of the urban tree canopy and clean air.

Furthermore, the best regulations are those that are clear and understandable to both those who administer and those who are required to adhere to them. Revising the landscaping and buffers chapter to clarify where, how, and who it applies to will ensure more expeditious permitting and easier compliance with standards.

Finally, ensuring the City Code is aligned with State Code follows best practices by keeping the zoning ordinance current and up to date.

5. The impact that the proposed text amendment may have on city resources necessary to carry out the provisions and processes required by this title.

The impact of the amendment would be minimal. By reducing requirements for landscaping maintenance, fewer City resources will be needed to enforce the landscaping and buffers ordinance. Furthermore, streamlining the permitting process for single-family and two-family dwellings optimizes review turnaround, contributing to more permits being reviewed in less time.

Additionally, the amendment creates flexibility for public projects from Engineering, Public Utilities, and Transportation by streamlining landscaping requirements. Streamlining those requirements helps public projects be completed more efficiently and more quickly.

6. The impact that the proposed text amendment may have on other properties that would be subject to the proposal and properties adjacent to subject properties.

The proposal is not specific to any specific property and affects the entire city; this standard is not applicable to the proposal.

7. The community benefits that would result from the proposed text amendment, as identified in 21A.50.050.C.

[21A.50.050.C](#) only applies to zoning amendments that are initiated by private property owners. As this amendment was initiated by the Mayor Erin Mendenall, this standard does not apply.

ATTACHMENT C: Department Review Comments

This proposal was reviewed by the following departments.

Building Code – Steve Collett (steven.collett@slc.gov)

No Building Code comments in regard to the text amendment update.

Fire – Doug Bateman (douglas.bateman@slc.gov)

When a building exceeds 30-feet in height from grade there may be conflict with tree locations and heights and fire department aerial access as required by the International Fire Code. Coordination between Urban Forestry and Fire Prevention may be necessary to have projects move forward. These items may include tree locations and spacing and maximum tree mature heights.

Public Utilities – Holly Lopez (holly.lopez@slc.gov)

From our Development Services team:

- 21A.48.020 C – Suggested to add language that addresses projects that are unable to meet required landscaping standards due to providing essential utility services. Planning may feel that utility projects are already addressed here with the language, “due to the design of the project”.
- 21A.48.050 G – We have other issues with TCO’s, so this appears to be a good change.

From our Water Conservation Manger:

- Council adopted the updated conservation plan which recognizes the formal prohibition of artificial turf in regulated landscapes as a conservation measure
- Have we checked with our landfill to see if they have the capacity to accept artificial turf
- 21A.48.080 B 1 – Drought tolerant is not the correct label; it should be Regionally Adaptive
- 21A.48.080 B 4 h – Why the exemption in public spaces? Does this exemption mean that these sites do not have to be maintained to the standards included in the preceding sections?

Transportation – Kyle Cook (kyle.cook@slc.gov)

As Engineering and Transportation Divisions work to upgrade the public right of way, the Landscaping Code (21A.48) has introduced major complications to roadway projects. This letter highlights the key issues, some of which are active on the 900 South Road Reconstruction Project and are anticipated on the 600/700 North Reconstruction Project.

Challenges with Roadway Projects and Park Strips

- **Unrealistic Expectations:** It is customary (and City Code) that the adjacent property owner irrigates and maintains park strip landscaping in the City Right of Way. It is acknowledged this arrangement is not unique to Salt Lake City. However, the Landscape Ordinance includes vegetation requirements that assume property owners can provide underground pressurized irrigation, particularly for trees. Parkstrip irrigation systems are not common, particularly in areas with lower household incomes.

- **Transfer of Responsibility:** Lacking private irrigation systems in park strips, City roadway projects are generally not able to adhere to the Landscaping Code. This puts the adjacent property owner at risk of fines for non-compliance.
- **Arbitrary Enforcement:** Enforcement of the parkstrip landscape requirements is complaint-based. Recently on the 900 South project, one property owner facing fines questioned why similar violations nearby weren't addressed. The arbitrary nature of enforcement contributes to a sense of unfairness, particularly when the changes were imposed by a City-sponsored road project. Further, where non-compliant park strips have existed for years, a new road project invariably draws attention and increases the likelihood of park strip violations being reported.
- **Partial Restoration:** Road projects often impact a portion of park strips. Matching the existing condition is often the most obvious solution to restoration, which may not comply with the Landscape Ordinance.
- **Unknown Conditions:** Even when private irrigation systems exist, it can be difficult to modify the systems. There are a myriad of irrigation methods, materials, and equipment manufacturers. For a road project with 100+ individual parcels, it becomes nearly impossible to estimate the level of effort and expense to modify and extend each individual sprinkler irrigation system.

Potential Solutions for Consideration

- **Code Clarification:** Modify the Landscape Ordinance to specify that compliance applies only to redeveloped or improved properties, and exempt properties that are simply impacted by road reconstruction.
- **Cost to Cure:** Provide financial resources to private property owners to supplement the cost of landscape repair. Transfer responsibility of the landscaping decisions from the road project to the property owner, through upfront payments or reimbursement.
- **City-sponsored Irrigation and Maintenance:** The City already provides streetscape irrigation and maintenance for certain districts and corridors, usually those included in a special assessment district (CBD/Sugar House). Expand this concept to establish a Streetscape Maintenance Program. This would shift responsibilities from Parks Division and offer high level of service landscaping outside CBD/Sugar House boundaries.

Sustainability – Peter Nelson (peter.nelson@slc.gov)

Sustainability supports the provisions found in the general standards, landscaping standards section that support minimum vegetation standards, permeability of artificial turf, and minimum separations of artificial turf from tree trunks and shrubs B.4. (a, b & d).

Urban Forestry – Tony Gliot (tony.gliot@slc.gov)

The Urban Forestry Division has reviewed the proposed text amendment to Chapter 21A.48 and can provide the following comments:

- **PERMISSABILITY OF ARTIFICIAL TURF-**
From the Urban Forestry Division's perspective, permitting artificial turf in required yard setbacks is contrary to the city's interests of promoting health and livability. Not only does artificial turf increase the urban heat island effect, but it also adversely affects existing tree health and new tree potential which ultimately makes it more difficult for a city to grow

and maintain vital tree canopy. Furthermore, artificial turf sheds plastic fibers and rubber crumb which will contaminate soil, water and (in general our living environment).

Reasons in favor of allowing artificial turf (likely including water savings, and reduced maintenance) can better be realized through sound landscaping decisions that do not come at the expense of environmental pollution and increased heat island effects the cities residential neighborhoods. There should also be concern that, if allowed, artificial turf may be more heavily utilized in lower income parts of the city (contributing further to livability discrepancies).

Lastly, the requirement to keep artificial turf installation 4 feet from the base of a tree will not sufficiently protect tree roots from damage during and after turf installation. And though artificial turf is not permitted in the parkstrip, parkstrip trees are likely to be adversely impacted by artificial turf installation in front yards (as a result of reduced water, soil compaction, and temperature increases).

- **LANDSCAPE PLANS AND IRRIGATION-**
21A.48.040: RESPONSIBILITY AND MAINTENANCE (Section D.4.A) states that, when a landscape plan is required.....street trees shall be irrigated with a permanent automatic irrigation system. The proposed changes to 21A.48.50 (section A.1) state that single and two-family dwellings are exempt from submitting a landscape plan. This seems to imply that the city will no longer require permanent automatic irrigation systems for new single and 2-family dwellings.

As permanent automatic irrigation systems are the most effective and efficient way of watering parkstrip trees, this change would directly conflict with the city's priorities and interests in sustaining and growing urban tree canopy as the city grows and develops. The costs of installing automatic irrigation systems in association with a new (or substantially altered) residential structure is minuscule compared to the total cost of such projects, yet the lasting benefit to the neighborhood is substantial. This code chapter should seek to improve the beauty, livability, and health of city neighborhoods. Removing a reasonable requirement would result in consistent and efficient tree watering would be doing the opposite.

Additionally, how is the UF Division expected to administer a requirement to plant street trees if there is no requirement for a landscape plan that shows what has been proposed and approved to be planted?

- **TREE GRATES-**
21A.48.080: GENERAL STANDARDS (section C.1.B) briefly speaks to 'Tree Grates' as an option when the area around required street trees is impervious. Considering the challenges that the City is currently having with regards to the maintenance of these sidewalk grates (damaged to hardscape, missing grates, damaged grates, faulty irrigation systems) would this be a good time to incorporate new language that appropriately places the responsibility for maintenance, upkeep, and ADA compliance on the adjacent property owner?

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments from the perspective of how the proposed text amendment may impact the City's tree canopy. These changes do not appear to be in the best interests of the city's urban trees.

ATTACHMENT D: Public Process and Comments

Public Notice, Meetings, Comments

The following is a list of public meetings that have been held, and other public input opportunities, related to the proposed project since the applications were submitted:

- January 8, 2026 – A 45-day notice was sent to all city recognized community organizations. No formal comments have been received at the time of publishing.
- January 13, 2026 – The project was posted to the Online Open House webpage.

Notice of the public hearing for the proposal included:

- By February 20, 2026 – Public notice posted on City and State websites and Planning Division list serve.

Public Input

Staff received two comments concerning this amendment. One comment was against artificial turf, while the other was in favor of artificial turf.

Any comments received after the publishing of this staff report will be forwarded to the Planning Commission for consideration.