

POLICY GUIDELINES FOR LANDSCAPING, BUFFER STRIPS, AND SCREENING

**ADOPTED BY THE ALPINE TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION ON
AUGUST 17, 1989**

INTENT The intent of this policy is to promote the public's health, safety, and general welfare by minimizing noise, air, and visual pollution; improving the appearance of off-street parking and other vehicular use, areas buffering incompatible land uses; controlling the appearance of property abutting public rights-of-way; protecting and preserving the appearance, character, and value of the community and its residential neighborhood areas; preventing soil erosion and soil depletion; and promoting soil water retention. The recommendations contained in this document are designed to assist land planners, landscape architects, developers, and builders in providing landscaping for their developments which will meet the desired landscaping objectives of the Alpine Township Planning Commission.

- a) This policy applies to all uses for which site plan review is required under Section 18.02 of the Alpine Township Zoning Ordinance.
- b) For existing and proposed uses which require site plan approval to either expand or be built, landscaping as noted herein should be installed insofar as practical. The Site Plan Review Committee and Planning Commission in its review of the site plan have the authority to vary the landscaping and screening guidelines for such uses. In doing so, the Committee and Commission shall consider the following criteria:
 - 1) The amount of space on the site available for landscaping.
 - 2) Existing landscaping on the site and on adjacent properties.
 - 3) The type of use on the site and size of the development.
 - 4) Existing and proposed adjacent land uses.
 - 5) The effect which the required landscaping would have on the operation of the existing or proposed land use.

GENERAL REGULATIONS

- a) Landscaping shall be installed within one hundred eighty (180) days of occupancy of the building or structure unless a longer period is permitted in writing by the Building Inspector.
- b) All landscaping shall be hardy plant materials and maintained thereafter in a neat, healthy and orderly manner. Withered and/or dead plant materials shall be replaced within a reasonable period of time, but no longer than one growing season.
- c) For the purpose of this Chapter, a corner lot is considered as having two front yards and the appropriate landscaping shall be provided for both.
- d) The extensive use of cobblestones, crushed stones, or other non-living material as a ground cover should be minimized.

GREENBELTS

For all uses where greenbelts are required, the following regulations shall apply:

- a) **WIDTH:** Required greenbelts shall have a minimum width of twenty-five (25) feet, except such greenbelt shall be reduced to ten (10) feet when abutting an existing non-conforming residential use.
- b) **PLANTINGS:** For each twenty-five (25) feet of length or portion thereof of greenbelt, plantings shall consist of:
 - 1. One (1) deciduous canopy tree.
 - 2. One (1) deciduous under-story tree.
 - 3. Three (3) evergreen trees.
 - 4. Four (4) shrubs.
- c) **BERMS AND WALLS:** Earthen berms, not to exceed 3:1 slope and/or decorative walls, may be permitted within a required greenbelt. Credit of up to fifty (50) percent may be given through the use of earthen berms of five (5) to six (6) feet in height or walls of six (6) feet or greater, located where the greenbelt should be.
- d) **MINIMUM PLANT SIZE:** All new plants in any required greenbelt shall meet the minimum size requirements set forth herein.
- e) **LOCATION:** Trees shall be planted no less than five (5) feet from a property line where a greenbelt is located entirely on property in one zoning district. If one property is in two zoning districts, the boundary between the districts may be the approximate midpoint of the greenbelt.
- f) **REQUIRED GREENBELTS – ADDITIONAL PLANTING REQUIREMENTS:** For reasons of conflicting uses, unfavorable topography, or other unique or extenuating physical circumstances, the Site Plan Review Committee or Planning Commission may increase recommended landscape plantings in any required green strip or greenbelt, if in its discretion an increase is found to be necessary to reasonably achieve the intent of this chapter. In making such a determination, the criteria of Section 18.07 (b) of the Zoning Ordinance shall be considered.
- g) **GREENBELTS – REDUCTIONS AND SUBSTITUTIONS OF PLANTINGS:** If a physical hardship exists or existing topography and vegetation are determined by the Committee or Planning Commission to provide equal or better landscape and buffering effect, the Committee may approve modifications to the planting recommendations of this document. The Committee or Planning Commission may require such alternate plantings and visual screens as hedges, fences, walls, and/or combination thereof which it deems necessary to ensure compliance with the intent of this document and Section 18.07 (b) of the Zoning Ordinance herein.

FRONT YARD LANDSCAPING

- a) Except for necessary driveways, frontage roads, service drives, or walkways, the front yard shall be landscaped according to the following minimum requirements:
 - 1) One (1) canopy tree and two (2) evergreen trees plus one (1) additional canopy and evergreen tree for each fifty (50) feet in length of road frontage.
 - 2) One (1) under-story tree plus one (1) for each fifty (50) feet in length of road frontage.
 - 3) Shrubs at a rate of one (1) per each tree required.
- b) CLEAR VISION: Such landscaping shall be located so it does not obstruct the vision of drivers entering or leaving a site.
- c) BERMS: Undulating earthen berms not exceeding six (6) feet in height and 3:1 slopes may be permitted within a required green strip. Credit of up to twenty-five (25) percent may be received against providing the required plantings through the use of berms three (3) feet in height or greater.

PARKING AREA LANDSCAPING

- a) All parking areas over five thousand (5,000) square feet in area, except those parking areas for industrial uses which are located in the rear yard shall be landscaped according to the following minimum requirements:
 - 1) One (1) canopy and one (1) evergreen tree for every ten (10) parking spaces, with a minimum of two (2) trees, shall be planted adjacent to the parking area.
 - 2) For those parking areas which abut the required front yard green strips, credit for the required trees in the green strip shall apply toward the number of trees required for the parking area.
- b) Landscape islands or peninsulas shall be installed at the end of those parking rows which are more than twenty (20) spaces long. Within such rows a landscaped island shall be installed every twenty (20) spaces.
- c) Landscape islands or peninsulas at the end of parking rows shall be a minimum of ten (10) feet in width, by the length of the parking space or spaces, with appropriate curb radius. Islands within parking rows shall be a minimum of four (4) feet wide by the length of the parking space or spaces. Islands shall be separated from the parking area by a rolled or stand-up curb.
- d) Each island or peninsula within a parking area shall contain a minimum of two (2) canopy trees.
- e) Landscaping in and adjacent to parking areas shall be of a height and location which will not block the vision of drivers or pedestrians.

GREENSPACE WITHIN THE PUBLIC RIGHT-OF-WAY AND PRIVATE EASEMENTS.

For the land area lying between the required green strip in the front yard of properties and the edge of pavement of a public or private street, the following standards shall apply:

- a) At a minimum, grass or other living ground cover shall be neatly maintained and kept weed free by the owners of property abutting the public right-of-way or private easement.
- b) Trees within a public right-of-way shall not be planted without the written consent of the Kent County Road Commission or the Michigan Department of Transportation. Trees planted within the public right-of-way shall be located to avoid interference with overhead and underground utility lines.

MINIMUM PLANT SIZE

New plant materials required herein shall meet the following minimum size standards:

Plant material Type	Planting in buffer yards abutting vacant lands	All other plantings
Tree		
Canopy Tree, single stem	1 ½” caliper	2” caliper
Under-Story Tree	6-7 feet (height)	1 ½ “ caliper or clump form
Evergreen Tree (well brushed and dense)	4 feet (height)	5-6 feet (height)
Shrub		
Deciduous	24 inches (height)	36 inches (height)
Evergreen	18 inches (height)	24 inches (height)