

# Mapleton City Planning Commission Staff Report

Meeting Date: August 14, 2014

**Item:** 5

**Applicant:** Mapleton City

**Location:** City-wide

**Prepared by:** Sean Conroy, Community Development Director

**Public Hearing Item:** Yes

**Zone:** All

## **REQUEST**

Consideration of an ordinance amending Mapleton City Code Chapter 17.15.050 regarding front yard landscaping requirements for new single family dwellings.

## **BACKGROUND AND PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

Mapleton City Code (MCC) Chapter 17.15 outlines the landscaping requirements for new development in the City. The purpose of the requirements is to “*foster aesthetically pleasing development which will protect and preserve the appearance, character, health, safety and welfare of the community.*” MCC Chapter 17.15.050 currently requires that a minimum of 75% of the front yard of new single family dwellings be landscaped in turf grass. The proposed ordinance amends MCC Chapter 17.15.050 to include the following:

- Allows a maximum of 75% grass in the front yard as opposed to requiring a minimum of 75% grass.
- Allows no more than 40% of the front yard to be covered with hardscape (driveway, walkway, patios, etc.)
- Requires that at least 20% of the area not planted with grass or covered with hardscape shall include plants and/or trees.
- Limits the height of plants in parkways to 36 inches.

## **EVALUATION**

**Water Conservation:** While Utah is one of the most arid states in the country, it continues to be one of the highest water users per capita. Mapleton City has been promoting water conservation for many years, however, some of the City’s ordinances contradict the goal of water conservation. The City’s current ordinance requiring that at least 75% of the front yard of all homes be plated with sod is inconsistent with water conservation goals.

The proposed ordinance establishes a maximum amount of grass that could be planted rather than mandating that the majority of the front yard be planted with grass. This will allow property owners more flexibility in how they landscape their front yards and will allow for more water conserving landscape options.

As currently drafted, the ordinance would allow for a lawn-free front yard. If the Commission is concerned with this possibility, one option would be to establish a minimum amount of the front yard, 30% for example, that would need to be planted with sod. This would allow for a balance of sod and other landscape treatments.

**Hardscape:** The proposed amendments limit the amount of hardscape that could be installed within the front setback to 40%. For example, a lot that is 100 feet wide and has a front setback of 30 feet would be allowed up to 1,200 square feet of hardscape ( $100 \times 30 \times .40 = 1200$ ). Installing an excessive amount of paving within the front setback would be contrary to the stated purpose of the landscape ordinance, which is to foster aesthetically pleasing development. Excessive hardscape also contributes to storm water runoff pollution.

**Parkways:** The Planning Commission and City Council recently approved an amendment to the landscaping requirements for parkways (area between curb and sidewalk) to allow xeriscaping (drought tolerant plantings). The proposed amendments include one modification to the xeriscaping standards that would limit the height of plants in the parkway to no more than 36 inches a maturity. This limitation is to avoid vegetation that could create site vision problems or a landscape barrier.

**STAFF RECCOMENDATION**

Recommend adoption of the attached ordinance to the City Council.

**ATTACHMENTS**

1. Draft Ordinance.

**Attachment "1"**  
**(Changes shown in strikeout and underline)**

**17.15.050: LANDSCAPE REQUIREMENTS FOR SINGLE-FAMILY HOMES:**

It is the intent of this section to ~~provide~~ encourage aesthetically pleasing front yards and the use of water conserving landscaping. ~~a guide for all single family homes, however, this section shall be required for all homes constructed on any lot less than an acre in size. These standards shall also apply to any of the aforementioned zones with a "cluster or transferable development right" overlay zone, as well as any lot one acre in size or less. This section shall apply to all new subdivision lots.~~ This section shall only apply to the front yards of residential homes. For the purposes of this section, the front yard shall be defined as the area within the required front yard setback of the zone in which the lot is located. Unless otherwise agreed upon by the developer of a subdivision, the homeowner, within one calendar year of receiving a certificate of occupancy, must provide landscaping with the following minimum standards:

A. No more than forty percent (40%) of the front yard shall include hardscape. For the purposes of this section "hardscape" shall be defined as any non-permeable hard surface located within the front setback (i.e. driveways, walkways, porch, stoop, patio, etc.). If a public sidewalk is located within a public utility easement on the lot, the sidewalk shall not be included in the hardscape limitations.

AB. No less ~~more~~ than seventy five percent (75%) of the landscapeable area of the front yard shall be lawn or sod, and a combination of shrubs, trees, decorative rock, ground cover or other recognized landscape materials such as wood chips. Areas of the front yard not landscaped shall be "hardscaped" (pathways or patios). Front lawns shall be kept free of weeds, structures, or debris. The landscapeable area shall be defined as the area of the front yard not covered with hardscape. Landscaping in all areas of the front yard not covered with sod or hardscape, shall comply with the following:

1. Plant Coverage: At least twenty percent (20%) of the area shall be covered with vegetation within three (3) years of planting or when planting has reached maturity, whichever comes first. The use of drought tolerant plants and trees is recommended.

2. Ground Cover: Materials such as bark, mulch, soil, shredded plant material, gravel, and landscape rocks may be used in the areas that are not planted.

BC. Automatic surface sprinkling system for front yard is encouraged. This will include lawn area, parkway in front of house and between sidewalk and curb. Each station should provide sufficient water to meet needs of plants being watered.

CD. Separate deep soak irrigation system for street trees and trees planted in planter strips between curb and sidewalk is also encouraged. A drip irrigation system is encouraged for other planting areas.

~~D. Mapleton City recommends using plants with low water requirements.~~

E. Where a parkway or planter strip is present, street trees, as approved by the Mapleton City tree list shall be installed. The number of trees shall be determined by the spread or canopy of the tree at full maturity. Trees shall be no less than one inch (1") caliper in size. Larger trees may be used, but are not recommended. A bond for the trees shall be collected with the building permit for any new home with a parkway in the front or side yard (corner lots). See section 17.15.120 of this title for more information on parkway landscaping.

**17.15.120: PARKWAYS:**

A. All parkways in new developments shall be landscaped in conformance with the provisions of this section.

B. Parkway two feet (2') or more in width shall be landscaped with turf grass or with an approved xeriscape design. Parkway less than two feet (2') in width may be landscaped with impervious materials including brick pavers, concrete pavers or concrete. Asphalt shall not be permitted. For xeriscape designs a landscape plan shall be submitted that satisfies the following:

1. Plant Coverage: Thirty percent (30%) or more of the parkway surface be covered with vegetation, not including required street trees, within three (3) years of planting or when planting has reached maturity, whichever comes first. For lots with two (2) or more street frontages, this standard shall be applied separately to each adjacent parkway on each street frontage. Water conserving plants shall constitute at least eighty percent (80%) of all plants used. With the exception of trees, no planting material shall exceed thirty six (36) inches in height at maturity.