

# Article 11: Landscaping Standards<sup>43</sup>

## 11.01 PURPOSE

The purpose of this section is to protect and promote the public health, safety, general welfare, and beautification of Ross Township through the township's ability to regulate land use in a method that utilizes the benefits of landscaping. Specifically, it is the purpose of this section to:

- (A) Protect privacy and provide buffering land uses of differing intensities;
- (B) Remove, reduce, lessen or absorb the impact between one use or zoning district and another;
- (C) Aid in noise, glare and heat abatement;
- (D) Contribute to the process of air purification, ground water recharge, and control of ground water runoff;
- (E) Prevent or reduce soil erosion and sedimentation and stormwater runoff;
- (F) Enhance energy conservation; and
- (G) Increase and maintain property values.

## 11.02 APPLICABILITY

- (A) This article shall apply to new development and any collective substantial expansion of existing structures, except for individual single-family dwellings and two-family dwellings (duplexes) and parking lots of five spaces or smaller. Substantial expansion of existing structures shall be defined based on the criteria established in [Table 11-1](#).

TABLE 11-1: SUBSTANTIAL EXPANSION	
When Existing Structure is....	A Substantial Expansion is...
0 - 1,000 Sq. Ft.	50% or Greater
1,001 - 10,000 Sq. Ft.	40% or Greater
10,001 - 25,000 Sq. Ft.	30% or Greater
25,001 - 50,000 Sq. Ft.	20% or Greater
50,001 Sq. Ft. and larger	10% or Greater

- (B) The percentage identified in [Table 11-1](#) shall be the aggregate of all expansions that occur after the effective date of this resolution.
- (C) Section [11.05: Buffering between Land Uses](#) shall apply to any size expansion of a structure where such expansion will decrease the setback between the structure and a residential zoning district.
- (D) Where there is no expansion of a structure but the vehicular use area is expanded, this article shall apply to any new vehicular use areas.

<sup>43</sup> The current Butler County regulations do not have much regarding general landscaping and buffering requirements so we are providing this as a generally new article for Ross Township.

**11.03 LANDSCAPING PLAN**

**(A) Landscaping Plan Requirement**

- (1) Any property to which this article applies shall illustrate all proposed landscaping and buffering, including the proposed landscaping material, on a site plan or on a separate landscaping plan as part of the application for a zoning certificate or PUD application, whichever is applicable.
- (2) All plans shall identify the existing plant material that will be retained and all proposed plant materials within the landscaping and buffer areas. This shall include the common and botanical names, sizes and other remarks as appropriate to describe the landscaping material selection.

**(B) Approval of a Landscaping Plan**

Criteria for the approval of a landscaping plan shall be as follows:

- (1) No zoning certificate shall be issued without approval of a landscaping plan.
- (2) Failure to implement the landscaping plan within 12 months of the issuance of a zoning certificate shall be deemed a violation of this resolution.
- (3) The township may seek professional advice from a landscape architect or licensed nurseryman in the review of the submitted plans. The cost of such consultation may be passed on the applicant.

**(C) Changes to an Approved Landscaping Plan**

The Zoning Inspector may authorize minor changes from the requirements of this article.

- (1) For purposes of this subsection, minor changes shall be defined as changes to the landscaping plans that are not visible and do not affect the theme or character established for the subject development project.
- (2) A revised plan shall be submitted to the Zoning Inspector for review and a decision.
- (3) The Zoning Inspector shall have the authority to forward the revised plan to the Zoning Commission for a decision if the Zoning Inspector questions whether the changes are minor.

**11.04 LANDSCAPING MATERIALS AND STANDARDS**

**(A) Responsibility for Installation of Landscaping Materials**

All landscaping and buffering shall be provided by the person in charge of or in control of developing the property, whether as owner, lessee, tenant, occupant or otherwise.

**(B) Use of Landscaped Areas**

Vehicle parking shall not be permitted in landscaped areas.

**(C) Easements**

Nothing shall be planted or installed within any underground or overhead utility, drainage, or gas easement without the consent of the utility provider, easement holder, or the township.

**(D) Landscaping Materials**

The following items are suitable for landscaping materials used individually or in combination with each other, subject to review and approval by the applicable review authority.

**(1) Existing Landscape Material**

- (a) Unless otherwise noted, existing landscape material in healthy condition can be used to satisfy the requirements of this article in whole or in part provided they meet all requirements of this article.
- (b) The applicable review authority shall determine satisfaction of this requirement.

**(2) Walls and Fences**

- (a) Walls and fences shall be constructed of weatherproof materials, including pressure treated wood, redwood, cedar, synthetic lumber, or vinyl, and aluminum or galvanized hardware. Except as specifically noted, chain link fences with or without wooden or synthetic slat material shall not be allowed when used to satisfy landscaping and screening requirements.
- (b) Chain link fences with or without wooden or synthetic slat material shall not be allowed when used to satisfy the buffer requirements of this article.
- (c) Walls and fences may be designed with a finished side on both sides of the fence, but where only one side is finished, the wall and fence shall be designed to orient that finished side away from the subject lot so the finished side faces the adjacent lots.

**(3) Plants**

- (a) All plants shall be living and hardy within the United States Department of Agriculture's Hardiness Zone 6, and thriving in Butler County. Plant materials used in conformance with the provisions of this section shall conform to the standards of the American Association of Nurserymen and shall have passed any inspection required under state regulations.
- (b) Trees shall be balled and burlapped or in containers. Shrubs, vines, and ground covers can be planted as bare root as well as balled and burlapped or from containers.
- (c) All landscaping materials shall be free of noxious weeds, disease, and pests.
- (d) Nursery stock identification tags shall not be removed from any planting prior to inspection and approval of final installation by the township.
- (e) The following are specific standards for landscaping materials.

**(i) Deciduous Trees**

- A. Deciduous trees shall have a minimum caliper of at least two inches Diameter-at-Breast-Height (DBH) and a clear trunk height of six feet that conforms to acceptable nursery industry procedures at the time of planting.
- B. If deciduous trees are to be used for screening purposes, additional materials listed in this article shall be used to create a dense buffer.

**(ii) Ornamental and Understory Trees**

Ornamental and understory trees shall have a minimum height of four feet or a minimum caliper of at least 1.5 inches DBH that conforms to acceptable nursery industry procedures at the time of planting.

**(iii) Evergreen Trees**

- A. Evergreen trees shall be a minimum of six feet in height at the time of planting.

- B. Evergreen plantings used for buffering shall be planted at a maximum distance of 20 feet on center to provide an effective buffer.

**(iv) Shrubs and Hedges**

- A. Shrubs shall be at least 20 inches in height at the time of planting and have a mature height of not less than 36 inches.
- B. Hedges shall be at least 36 inches in height at the time of planting.
- C. All hedges shall be designed to provide an effective, dense screen and mature height of at least six feet within four years after the date of the final approval of each planting when used for perimeter landscaping or screening applications.

**(v) Grass and Ground Cover**

- A. Grass of the fescue, bluegrass or perennial rye families shall be planted in species normally grown as lawns in Butler County.
- B. In swales or other areas subject to erosion, solid sod, erosion reducing net or suitable mulch shall be used and grass seed shall be sown for immediate protection until complete coverage is achieved.
- C. Grass sod shall be clean and free of weeds and noxious pests or diseases.
- D. Ground cover shall be planted in such a manner as to provide 75 percent complete coverage after two growing seasons.

**(f) Additional Landscaping Beyond the Minimum Requirements**

Once the minimum landscape requirements have been met, any size plant may be installed on a lot to supplement the minimum requirements.

**(4) Species Diversity**

- (a) When fewer than 40 trees are required on a site, at least two different species shall be utilized, in roughly equal proportions.
- (b) When 40 or more trees are required on a site, at least three different species shall be utilized, in roughly equal proportions.
- (c) Required shrubs shall utilize the same species diversity requirements.
- (d) Nothing in this subsection shall be construed so as to prevent the utilization of a more diverse number of different species than specified above.

**(5) Earth Mounds or Berms**

Earth mounds or berms may be used as buffers, however, differences in natural elevation between areas requiring a buffer does not constitute an earth mound. Earth mounds shall be constructed of earthen materials and shall conform to the following:

- (a) Mounds or berms shall conform to any county grading requirements. The maximum slope shall be a maximum of one foot in height for every three feet in length.
- (b) Mounds and berms shall be designed with physical variations in height and alignment throughout its length.
- (c) Landscaping plant materials may be installed on mounds or berms and shall be arranged in an irregular pattern to accentuate the physical variation and achieve a natural appearance.

- (d) The landscaping plan shall show sufficient detail to demonstrate compliance with the above provisions, including a plan and profile of the mound or berm, soil types and construction techniques.
- (e) Mounds and berms shall be located and designed to minimize the disturbance of existing trees located on the site or adjacent thereto.
- (f) No part of any mound shall be elevated more than 30 inches above natural grade within 10 feet of any right-of-way or property line, and the toe of such mound shall be located a minimum of three feet from any right-of-way or property line.
- (g) Adequate ground cover shall be used and maintained to prevent erosion of the earth mound and to achieve a natural appearance.
- (h) No mound wastewater treatment system or other similar on-site wastewater treatment system shall count toward the buffering requirement.

**(6) Measurements**

Whenever there is a height measurement related to landscaping and buffering, such measurement shall be taken from the highest finished adjacent grade to the top of the material.

## **11.05 BUFFERING BETWEEN LAND USES**

Development shall provide a buffer between land uses in accordance with this section. The buffer shall have the width, amount of vegetation, and other features to properly mitigate the negative effects of contiguous incompatible uses.

**(A) Buffer Location**

- (1) Buffer areas shall be located between the uses for which they are required to buffer or screen.
- (2) The buffer areas shall be placed on the property being developed, regardless of ownership.

**(B) Buffer Requirements**

- (1) Buffer areas shall be provided as set forth below:
  - (a) When a development in a B-1 a lot subject to the VOD District abuts a residential district, a buffer area with a minimum width of 10 feet shall be provided adjacent to the residential zoning district.
  - (b) When a development in a B-2, B-3, or B-4 District abuts a residential district, a buffer area with a minimum width of 20 feet shall be provided adjacent to the residential zoning district.
  - (c) When a development in a M-1 District abuts a residential district, a buffer area with a minimum width of 30 feet shall be provided adjacent to the residential zoning district.
  - (d) The above buffer widths shall be provided unless a greater setback is required as part of a variance or conditional use.
  - (e) Where the minimum setback for the applicable zoning district differs from the required buffer yard, the more restrictive standard shall apply.
  - (f) For buffering along the side yard, the buffer shall begin, at a minimum, at the front yard building setback line.

**(2) Landscaping Requirement**

The required buffer area shall consist of living vegetative material such as evergreen trees, shrubs, earth mounding, or fencing that complies with the fencing standards of this resolution. Such buffer shall in 100 percent opacity<sup>44</sup>, all year, to a height of six feet or more within one year of planting.

**(C) Height of Screening**

The height of screening shall comply with the following:

- (1) Visual screening walls, fences, mounds, or earthen berms and fences in combination shall be a minimum of six feet high measured from the natural grade, in order to accomplish the desired screening effect.
- (2) Vegetation shall be a minimum of six feet high measured from the natural grade, in order to accomplish the desired screening effect. The required height shall be achieved no later than twelve months after the initial installation.

**(D) Placement of Screening**

The location of the wall, fence, or vegetation shall be placed within the buffer area to maximize the screening effect. Trees, evergreens, and/or hedges shall be adequately spaced and appropriately staggered to meet the screening objectives within two years after the initial installation. The landscaping plan shall indicate the specific type of option(s) to be used.

**(E) Development within Buffers**

- (1) The required buffer shall not contain any development, impervious surfaces, structures, or site features (except fences or walls) that do not function to meet the standards of this section or that require removal of existing vegetation, unless otherwise permitted in this resolution.
- (2) Sidewalks, trails, and other elements associated with passive recreation may be placed in required buffers if all required landscaping is provided.
- (3) Signs may be located in the required buffers.
- (4) Driveways, access roads, and similar uses may cross perpendicularly across a required buffer but shall be designed to limit disturbance of vegetation and shall have a maximum width of 24 feet.
- (5) Overhead and underground utilities that are required for the development are permitted to cross a required buffer.

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**11.06 LANDSCAPING AND SCREENING OF VEHICULAR USE AREAS**

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**(A) Perimeter Landscaping Required**

- (1) The perimeter landscaping requirements of this section shall apply to all off- street vehicular use areas adjacent to a public street or to a lot line where the parking area contains five or more parking spaces.

**(2) Areas Adjacent to Public Streets**

- (a) Vehicular use areas adjacent to public streets shall be separated from the edge of the right- of-way by a perimeter landscape strip no less than 12 feet in width that may include sidewalks.

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<sup>44</sup> We will include a graphic that illustrates 100% opacity.

- (b) The landscape strip shall be planted with one tree for each 50 linear feet or fraction thereof and shall include a hedge, wall, or other opaque durable landscape barrier, which will be at least two feet in height at maturity, along the entire length of the landscape strip. See Figure <>. The landscape strip shall be covered with ground cover where not planted with trees or shrubs.



Figure <>: The above image illustrates an example the provision of a two-foot landscape barrier along the street right-of-way.

- (c) If the above two-foot landscape barrier is constructed of non-living materials, one shrub or vine shall be planted every 10 feet along the barrier.
- (d) Perimeter landscape strips shall be continuous and unbroken except for driveways to access the parking area, sidewalks, or paved trails.

**(B) Interior Landscaping Of Parking Lots**

- (1) For all parking areas with 5 to 50 parking spaces, a total of five percent of the paved area (not including loading spaces or stacking lanes/spaces) shall be landscaped under the provisions of this section.
- (2) For all parking areas with more than 50 parking spaces, a total of 10 percent of the paved area (not including loading spaces or stacking lanes/spaces) shall be landscaped under the provisions of this section.

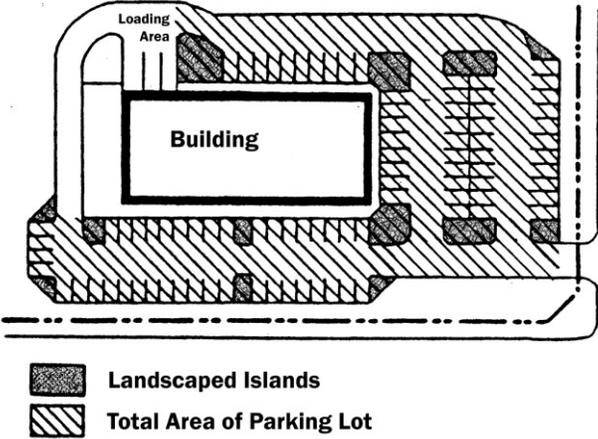


Figure 11-A: Parking Lot Interior Calculation

- (3) The required landscaping shall be located within landscaped islands. Landscaped areas that extend into parking areas from the perimeter landscaping may count toward this requirement but only that area that extended into the parking area. See [Figure 11-A](#). See also [Figure 11-B](#).
- (4) Landscaped areas on the site that are outside of any vehicular use area and do not touch the parking area shall not be counted as interior parking lot landscaped areas.



*Figure 11-B: Landscaping and screening is intended to soften the appearance of large expanses of parking areas and can also provide areas for stormwater management.*

- (5) Landscaped islands shall be developed and distributed throughout the parking lot to define major circulation aisles and driving lanes; and to provide visual and climatic relief from broad expanses of pavement.
- (6) There shall be a minimum of one deciduous tree and one shrub provided for every 15 parking spaces; such trees shall be planted within the required landscaped islands but not all islands are required to have a tree or shrub.
- (7) Additional shrubs or low, spreading plant materials may be planted within the required landscaped islands provided there is no impairment to the visibility of motorists or pedestrians.
- (8) The landscaped islands shall be protected by the installation of continuous curbs or wheel stops at the end of parking spaces to prevent vehicular damage of landscaped areas.
- (9) The landscaped islands should be designed, to the maximum extent feasible, to accommodate stormwater runoff. The use of porous pavement and/or specially designed brick or block is encouraged to increase on-site water detention for plant material and ground water supplies and to reduce problems associated with runoff.
- (10) At a minimum, the interior landscaping shall be designed as follows:
  - (a) **Interior Rows**  
For parking lots with interior rows, one tree shall be located at the ends of interior rows and one at each end of a perimeter row.
  - (b) **Distribution**  
Any remaining required trees shall be evenly distributed along the parking lot perimeter or in interior islands.
  - (c) **Interior Island**  
A curbed landscaped interior island is required for each 20 contiguous parking spaces in a parking row. The island must be three feet in width and the length of the adjoining spaces. If a tree is planted in the interior island the width must be four feet.

**(d) Interior End Island**

A three-foot wide curbed landscaped interior end island is required at the end of all interior rows. The length of the island must be equal to the depth of the adjoining parking spaces. If a tree is planted in the island area the width at the tree planting area must be four feet.

**(e) Interior Mid-Row Island**

For parking lots in excess of 40 spaces, a curbed landscaped interior mid-row island connecting the interior end islands must be provided having a minimum width of three feet. If a tree is planted in the interior mid-row island the width must be four feet.

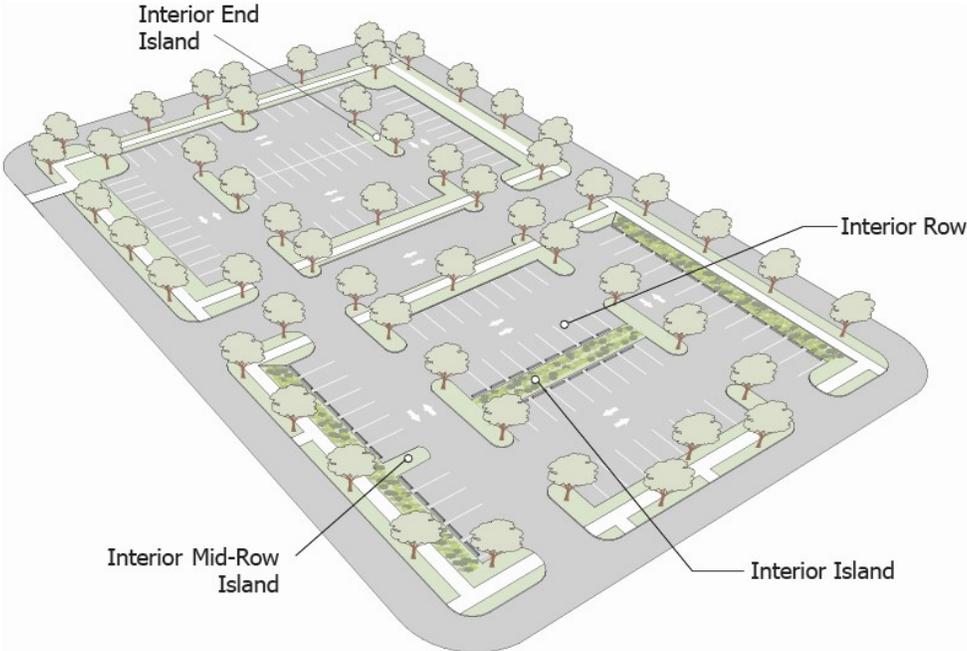


Figure <>: Common Components to Interior Landscaping

**11.07 SCREENING OF OUTSIDE STORAGE AREAS OR OTHER SERVICE AREAS**

**(A) Intent and Applicability**

In addition to all other landscaping standards in this section, screening shall be required to conceal specific nonresidential areas of high visual or auditory impact. Such areas shall be screened at all times, unless otherwise specified, regardless of adjacent uses, districts, or other landscaping material.

**(B) Items to be Screened**

The following areas shall be screened in accordance with this section:

- (1) Large waste receptacles (dumpsters) and refuse collection points (including large recycling containers);
- (2) Loading and service areas;
- (3) Outdoor freezers or other accessory structures;

- (4) Outdoor storage areas (including storage tanks) not subject to the outdoor storage requirements of [Section <>](#);
- (5) Mechanical equipment and utility meters not located on, and screened by, the building or structure.

**(C) Screening Requirements**

- (1) All items to be screened shall be shielded from view from public roads and adjoining residential zoned property.
- (2) All items to be screened shall be located in the side or rear yards.
- (3) All items to be screened shall be provided with a visual screen consisting of fences, walls, berms or approved plant materials or a combination thereof. The screening shall be at least one foot higher than the item to be screened but not less than six feet in height and shall extend along three sides of the items to be screened. For dumpsters, a gate shall be required on the fourth side where access is provided to the dumpster. The gate shall be opaque enough to shield from view the interior of the service area. See [Figure 11-C](#) and [Figure 11-D](#).
- (4) All plant materials used for required screens around service areas shall be of an evergreen variety.
- (5) If an adjacent building provides screening on one side of the service area, only two sides need to be screened, bermed, or walled, with a gate required in front of the service area. The gate shall be opaque enough to shield from view the interior of the service area.
- (6) Roof mounted mechanical equipment shall be screened by parapet walls or other screening device with height not lower than six inches below the height of mechanical equipment. See [Section 10.04\(B\)\(7\)\(e\)](#).

**(D) Fence or Wall Screens**

- (1) Fences or walls shall be compatible with the architectural materials and patterns of the principal structure. See [Figure 11-C](#).
- (2) Under no circumstances shall a wall be constructed of unfinished concrete or cinder block.



*Figure 11-C: Use of a wall and fencing for screening that is architecturally compatible with the principal building.*



Figure 11-D: The above image illustrates a vegetative screen that hides HVAC equipment and a dumpster.

## 11.08 INSTALLATION AND MAINTENANCE

- (A) Required yards and all other portions of the lot not covered by permitted structures shall be landscaped with grass, trees, shrubbery and/or other appropriate ground cover or landscaping material, which at all times shall be pruned, trimmed, and maintained in good and healthy condition.
- (B) All landscaping materials shall be installed and maintained according to accepted nursery industry procedures. The property owner shall be responsible for continued, perpetual maintenance of all landscaping materials, and shall keep them in a proper, neat and orderly appearance, free from refuse, debris, and noxious and unsightly weeds at all times.
- (C) The landscaping shall regularly be kept clean and free of debris, litter, and weeds.
- (D) All unhealthy or dead plant material shall be replaced within 30 days, or by the next planting period, whichever comes first. Replacement material shall conform to the original intent of the landscaping and buffer plan.
- (E) Violation of installation provisions or failure to maintain the landscaping shall constitute a violation of this resolution. Such violation shall be grounds for the Zoning Inspector to require replacement of the landscape material or initiate legal proceedings to enforce the provisions of this resolution.