



CITY OF RICHMOND

Department of Planning & Development Review *Staff Report*

CPCR.2020-017: To declare an intent to amend the Official Zoning Ordinance for the purpose of providing more robust parking lot and parking area landscaping standards.

To: City Planning Commission
From: Land Use Administration
Date: May 4, 2020

PETITIONER

City of Richmond
900 East Broad Street
Richmond, VA 23219

LOCATION

The study area will include the entire city of Richmond.

PURPOSE

To conduct a study of examples and best practices from other localities, as well as collect positive and negative examples in Richmond, then create a new set of standards for parking lot and parking area landscaping.

SUMMARY & RECOMMENDATION

This Resolution of Intent is to initiate the creation of enhanced parking lot landscaping standards, in order to enhance the urban environment, add long-term value to property and surrounding neighborhoods, create visual barriers between parking lots and surrounding neighborhoods, mitigate the urban heat island effect and reduce stormwater runoff.

The current standards in §§ 30-710.10 through 30-710.16 have not been changed since last updated in 2003, and new standards that are reflective of current best practices are needed in order to better achieve a more attractive streetscape and further reduce negative environmental impact of parking areas and parking lots.

Staff recommends approval of the Resolution

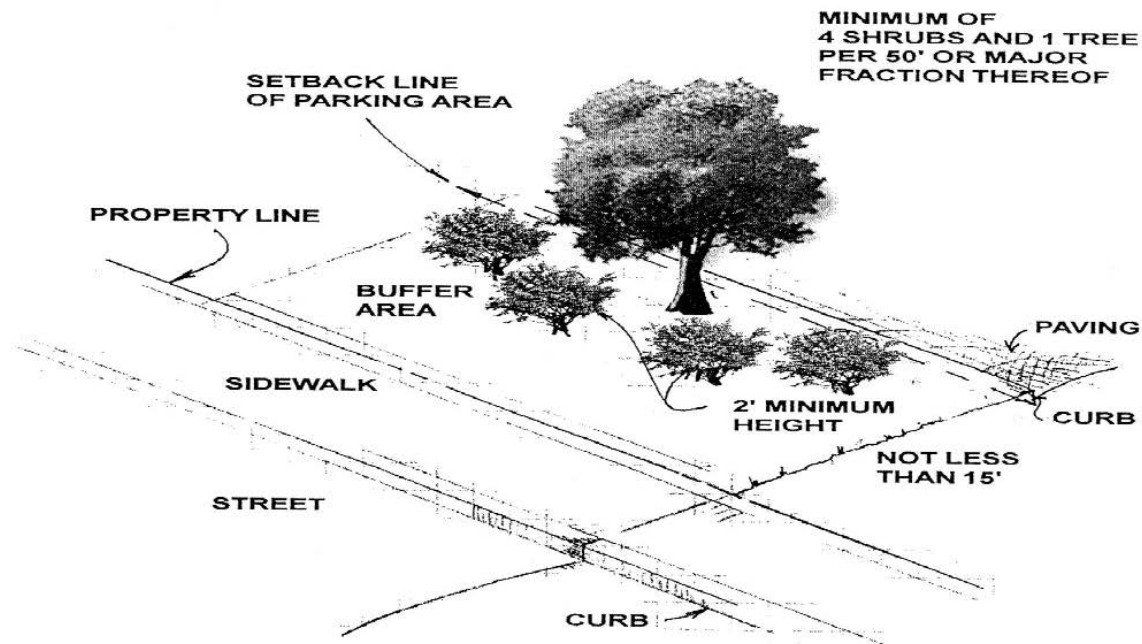
FINDINGS OF FACT

Background

Currently, Section 30-710 of the Official Zoning Ordinance provides perimeter buffer requirements with eight buffer alternatives, and interior landscaping only in some cases. Each zoning district is assigned up to four buffer alternatives, ranging from shrubs only to shrubs and opaque walls or fences, to combinations of shrubs and trees. The standards are written in such a way that they

do not always achieve the desired effect when, as is often the case, they are implemented to the letter of their requirements.

For example, buffer F, one of the alternatives in most districts, shows a diagram of a mature tree with closely grouped shrubs with a minimum height of 2' (see below). It requires a setback depth of not less than 15 feet that shall include trees and shrubs at a rate of not less than one tree and four shrubs for each 50 linear feet along a street frontage. However, one tree and four shrubs per 50 feet does not satisfactorily screen the parking lot (imagine that the diagram shows that amount of landscaping in about a 20 foot space). New standards should specify shrub's height at maturity and that they must be tall enough to cover the headlights of vehicles. Additionally, new standards must require that plants are watered regularly and replaced if they die.



Master Plan

Richmond's 2001 Master Plan "emphasizes Richmond's commitment to accommodate high quality development with community enhancement and environmental quality in mind". More detailed parking lot landscaping standards will help achieve this commitment.

The Richmond 300 Master Plan will make a recommendation to increase landscaping in parking areas. This effort will help begin to achieve that goal.

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