

Ordinance No.: 25-04

**ORDINANCE OF THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS OF COLUMBIA COUNTY,
GEORGIA AMENDING CHAPTER 90, ZONING, ARTICLE IV, SUPPLEMENTAL
REQUIREMENTS, SECTION 90-140 LANDSCAPING; REPEALING ANY
CONFLICTING ORDINANCES AND ESTABLISHING AN EFFECTIVE DATE**

THIS ORDINANCE adopted by the Board of Commissioners of Columbia County, Georgia (the “Board”).

WHEREAS, the Board desires to clarify certain provisions of the Columbia County Code of Ordinances pertaining to landscaping and street trees and

WHEREAS, the Board desires to adopt provisions that protect the integrity and character of the County’s natural environment.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT ORDAINED by the Board and it is hereby ordained by the authority of the same as follows:

Section 1. Amendment of Chapter 90, Zoning. Article IV, Supplemental Requirements, Section 90-140 Landscaping, is hereby modified pertaining to landscaping and street trees; as attached in Exhibit “A” and made a part hereof.

Section 2. Repeal of Conflicting Ordinances. Any Ordinances in conflict with this Ordinance shall be repealed to the extent necessary to eliminate such conflict.

Section 3. Effective Date. This Ordinance shall become effective upon the date of its adoption following the second reading of the Ordinance.

ADOPTED, this 20th day of May, 2025.

**Board of Commissioners of
Columbia County, Georgia**

By: _____

**Douglas R. Duncan, Jr.
Its Chairman**

Attest: _____

**Patrice R. Crawley
Its Clerk**

Sec. 90-140. Landscaping

(a) *Applicability.*

- (1) *New construction.* Any new building or site improvement must comply with the landscaping and screening requirements of this section.
- (2) *Exceptions.* These regulations shall not apply to the construction or renovation of a single-family detached dwelling or two-family dwelling.
- (3) *Maintenance and repair.* An existing building or site may be repaired, maintained or modernized without providing additional landscaping or screening, provided there is no increase in gross floor area or improved site area.
- (4) *Additions.*
 - a. When an existing use is increased in gross floor area or improved site area by up to 25 percent cumulatively, landscaping and screening is required for the additional floor or site area only.
 - b. When an existing use is increased in gross floor area or improved site area by more than 25 percent cumulatively, both the existing building and site area and the additional floor or site area must conform to the landscaping and screening requirements of this section.
- (5) *Change in use.* A change in use only triggers the application of these requirements if a previously-developed site or building has been unused for one year or longer, or when there is a specific use standard requiring landscaping or screening for the new use.

(b) *Landscape plan required.*

- (1) Before any building permit is issued, the building, use, or site must be found by the director of planning services to be in compliance with all requirements of this section. The director of development services cannot allow occupancy or use of a building until advised by the director of planning services that the building, use, or site meet the requirements of this section.
- (2) Landscape design and planning must be integrated with the overall design concept for any project; therefore, site plan approval will evaluate landscaping schemes as to their relationship to the existing natural landscape, developed, or proposed landscapes on adjacent properties and the public rights-of-way, and the building or buildings existing or proposed on the subject property and adjacent sites.
- (3) Landscape plans shall be prepared by a landscape architect, architect, or engineer legally registered under the laws of this state regulating the practice of landscape architecture, architecture, or engineering, and shall affix their seal to such plan. Landscape designers and installers may prepare landscape plans upon review and approval of the director of planning services.

(c) *Alternative landscape plan.*

- (1) At the discretion of the planning services director, alternate landscaping plans, plant material, planting methods, or landscape design may be used where unreasonable or impractical situations would result from application of landscaping requirements, or where necessary to protect existing vegetation, or where a more creative plan is proposed which substantially complies with the intent of these requirements. Landscaping requirements may be reduced if existing trees or other types of existing vegetation are preserved. Alternative plans, materials, or methods may be justified from natural conditions such as streams, natural rock formations, topography, and other physical conditions related to the site. Lot configuration and the presence and location of utility easements may justify an alternative landscaping plan.

Exhibit "A"

(d) *Landscape strip.*

(1) Non-residential and multi-family developments are required to maintain a minimum ten-foot wide landscape strip adjacent to any public or private street, or along any common driveway serving the purpose of a public or private street.

- a. For sites containing 50—100 parking spaces, the landscape strip must be 20 feet wide.
- b. For sites containing 100—200 parking spaces, the landscape strip must be 25 feet wide.
- c. For sites containing more than 200 parking spaces, the landscape strip must be 30 feet wide.

(2) The landscape strip shall be planted as follows:

- a. One shade tree for every 40 feet of frontage shall be provided. Trees shall be a minimum of two and one half caliper inches at the time of planting, and must be selected from the list of approved tree species in section 90-145 or as approved by the Planning Services Director or their his or her designee. When overhead powerlines are present, one small or medium tree may be planted for every 30 feet of frontage.
- b. One evergreen shrub for every four feet of frontage shall be provided. Each shrub shall be a species native or suitable to the region.
- c. Plantings may be evenly spaced or grouped to achieve an attractive effect, as long as the minimum required plantings are met.
- d. The remainder of the landscape strip shall be sodded, planted with groundcover species, and/or mulched to ensure stabilization.
- e. Landscape strips wider than ten feet shall be planted with tree and shrub quantities proportional to the width of the strip (e.g. a 20-foot wide landscape strip would require two shade trees for every 40 feet of frontage and two shrubs for every four feet of frontage).

(3) Parking spaces, driveway surfaces, and stormwater facilities may not encroach within the landscape strip. Driveway crossings and sidewalks may encroach at the most perpendicular angle as possible. Low-impact stormwater facilities such as bio-swales and rain gardens may encroach within the landscape strip upon the approval of the director of planning services.

(e) *Street trees.* Street trees may be provided as a substitute for a required landscape strip, upon approval by the planning services director, within the Evans Town Center Overlay District (ETCOD) or a Node Protection Overlay District (NPOD), and shall be maintained within, or adjacent to, all existing and proposed street rights-of-way in accordance with the following requirements:

- (1) Street trees shall be planted at a spacing of 40-45 feet on-center for shade trees or 20-25 feet on-center for ornamental and understory trees along the entire length of the street frontage of the proposed development, or as approved by the planning services director based on the development plans. Ornamental and understory trees shall be used as street trees only when there is an overhead obstacle which would preclude the use of taller-growing shade trees. At intersections, spacing and placement of trees within 120 feet of an intersection shall require the shall be reviewed in consultation with Columbia County Engineering Services Department's approval for traffic safety during plan review. A list of acceptable street trees is available in section 90-145.
- (2) Street trees shall be planted in a minimum six-foot wide tree lawn between the curb and sidewalk, and shall be planted no closer than three feet from the curb or sidewalk. The planning services director may approve an alternate planting plan to avoid conflicts with utilities.
- (3) Street trees shall include only those trees listed in the approved list of tree species in section 90-145,

Exhibit "A"

unless use of an alternative species is approved by the planning services director.

Exhibit "A"

- (4) Street trees shall be located in a manner that minimizes conflicts with underground and above-ground utility lines.
 - (5) A street tree planting plan shall be included with the development plan, and shall detail species, placement, size, number of trees, and the party responsible for perpetual maintenance.
 - (6) Street trees shall be installed prior to the issuance of a certificate of occupancy for the building to which the street trees closest relate. Street trees that are proposed in areas that are not associated with a building shall be installed on a timeline agreed to by the developer and the Planning Services Director and noted on the planting plan.
- (f) *Interior parking lot landscaping.*
- (1) In addition to all other landscape requirements, all parking lots subject to this section shall provide and maintain landscaped planting areas within the interior of the parking lot. These standards shall not apply to parking structures. Each planting area shall consist of at least 180 square feet, or as approved by the administrator.
 - (2) In cases where the area required for the construction of the minimum parking spaces as required by section 90-135 would cause the removal of a historic or heritage tree, the administrator may modify the landscaping requirements and/or the parking requirements in order to preserve the affected historic or heritage tree.
 - (3) Interior planting areas shall be designed within parking areas as:
 - a. Islands located at the end of parking bays;
 - b. Islands located between parallel rows of cars, used to visually separate parking areas into pods;
 - c. Driveway medians, which shall have a minimum width of six feet.
 - (4) Each interior planting area shall contain approved shade trees and be planted at the following rates:
 - a. One shade tree and eight shrubs for every 2,000 square feet, or portion thereof, of the total parking lot area, including drives and service areas.
 - b. Not more than 12 continuous parking spaces shall be allowed in a row of parking without separation by a 180 square foot median containing at least one shade tree.
 - (5) Each parking space must be located within 60 feet of a tree measured from the closest point of the parking space to the tree trunk.
 - (6) Proposed shade trees being used to meet the interior parking lot landscaping requirements shall be located no further than ten feet and no closer than four feet, from the edge of pavement.
 - (7) Existing shade trees may be used to meet the interior parking lot landscaping requirements at the discretion of the administrator if the tree(s) meet the intent of the interior parking lot landscaping requirements and the tree protection requirements.
 - (8) Trees used to comply with interior parking lot requirements shall not count toward the number of trees required to meet the street tree requirements.
 - (9) No more than 25 percent of required shrubs may be deciduous.

(Code 1979, § 2-16-69; Ord. No. 02-16, §§ 3, 4, 2-18-2003; Ord. No. 05-06, § 2, 6-7-2005; Ord. No. 06-04, §§ 1—5, 11-7-2006; Ord. No. 10-10, § 1(Exh. A), 11-2-2010; Ord. No. 16-09, § 1(Exh. A), 6-7-2016; Ord. No. 19-15, § 1(Exh. A), 12-17-2019)

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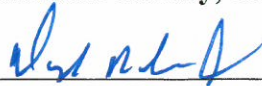
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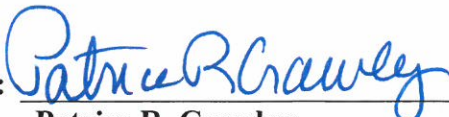
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