

Landscape Manual Update Introduction

Planning Board Meeting
December 4, 2025



Background

Section 16.124 of the Subdivision and Land Development Regulations establish the Landscape Manual as the technical manual used to prepare landscape plans.

Current Landscape Manual

- *Adopted January 4, 1993*
- *Amended March 2, 1998*

July 1, 2010

The Department of Planning and Zoning Updated the Recommended Street Tree List (Appendix B) and Recommended Plant List (Appendix C)



August 2024 Kick Off Meeting

Developed a Three Phase Process


Phase 1: Data collection in the form of focus groups led by our consultant in the fall and winter of 2024.

Phase 2: Research and outline development in the spring of 2025

Phase 3: The final phase = Drafting, Reviewing and Editing in the summer and fall of 2025.

Ongoing community outreach

comment collection through DPZ website and dedicated landscapemanualupdate@howardcountymd.gov e-mail address

 **Howard County**
M A R Y L A N D

County Executive Calvin Ball

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Landscape Manual Update


The Landscape Manual establishes standards of performance for preparing landscape plans.

Contact Us
410-313-2350

EMAIL US

Overview

The Department of Planning and Zoning is embarking on an update and rewrite of the Howard County Landscape Manual. The current manual was adopted in 1993 and provides landscaping guidance for new residential and commercial developments. The Landscape Manual directs items such as required landscape plantings, the type of perimeter landscape buffers and screening required between adjacent land uses, the perimeter and internal landscaping for parking lots, and the placement of street trees.



Phase 1: Focus Groups

Three information gathering meetings were held in person and designed to collect comments and input on the current manual's strengths and weaknesses. The three groups were

1. an internal Howard County review agency group,
2. a development community group of developers and consultants and
3. a meeting with community members.

The input gathered in the focus groups are summarized in the **Phase 1 Summary Report** completed January 2025.

Phase 1 Summary Report

completed
January 2025.

HOWARD COUNTY LANDSCAPE MANUAL UPDATE

PHASE 1 - SUMMARY REPORT



Phase 2: Research & Outline Development

Following the focus group, our consultant reviewed available resources and studied solutions already implemented in surrounding jurisdictions.

- Collected and compared Landscape Manuals and ordinances in 11 neighboring jurisdictions
- Compiled a spread sheet to compare requirements across the jurisdiction
- Investigated approaches to common conflicts such as solar over parking

Phase 2 conclude with a recommended draft outline and supporting research to inform changes and updates.

Phase 3: Drafting, Reviewing & Editing

The [50% Draft](#) was available for review in August 2025. An announcement and survey was sent out to the focus group attendees.

- Use of Section numbering suggested and implemented
- Frequent work sessions to discuss content edits between staff and SRI
- Staff revised content and provided guidance
- SRI continued edits, suggesting changes and seeking DPZ input and guidance
- DPZ discussed changes internally and provided example projects for SRI to test with updated tables

The final draft was complete in early October 2025 and was reviewed and by The Design Advisory Panel (DAP) October 22, 2025. After this Planning Board meeting, DPZ will pre-file with the County Council at the end of this month for their consideration in early 2026. The final product will be a digital publication with links within the document.



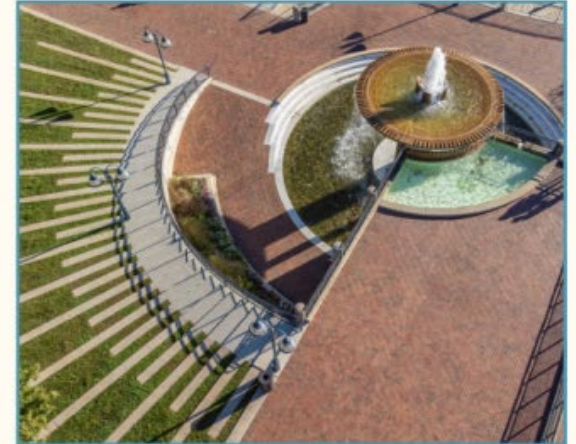
Goals of the Landscape Manual Update

- Fine tune requirements
- Add clarity
- Support other County initiatives

Landscape Manual



January, 2026



Qualified Professionals & Alternative Landscape Designs

2.1 Qualifications to Prepare Plans:

- Major development, Maryland licensed Landscape Architect
- Smaller development, Certified Professional Horticulturists or Chesapeake Bay Landscape Professional

2.7.2 Alternative Landscape Plans

- Landscape Architect may propose alternative landscape plans
- Must meet landscape intent outlined in Section 3.1

Section 3.1: Intent by Land Use/ Development Type

- Outlines the purpose and intent of landscape requirements for each land use/ development type
- Included land uses/development types:
 - Residential, Open Space & Recreation Open Space, Ground-mount Solar Collectors, Commercial, Industrial, Mixed Use, Institutional and Government Uses, Scenic Roads, and Historic Structures & Areas

Section 3.2: Landscape Edges & Site Conditions



Section 3.2: Landscape Edges & Site Conditions

Section 3.2.1.a Landscape Edge Types:

- Modified planting requirements for landscape edge types

Landscape Edge Type	Landscape Character	Shade Trees/ Linear Feet	Evergreen Trees/ Linear Feet	Shrubs/ Linear Feet
A	Light Buffer	1:60	0	0
B	Moderate Buffer	1:50	1:40	0
C	Heavy Buffer	1:40	1:20	0
D	Screen	1:60	1:10	0
E	Buffer - Parking Adjacent to Roadway	1:40	0	1:4

Table 1 – Landscape Edge Types				
Edge Type	Description	Shade Trees / Linear Feet	Evergreen Trees / Linear Feet	Shrubs / Linear Feet
A	Light Buffer	1:60	0	0
B	Moderate Buffer	1:50	1:40	0
C	Heavy Buffer	1:40	1:20	1:8
D	Screen	1:60	1:15	1:8
E	Parking Adjacent to Roadway (buffer)	1:40	0	1:4

FIGURE 1A – LANDSCAPE EDGES

LANDSCAPE EDGE – TYPE A

600 Linear Feet

REQUIRED

1 Shade Tree / 60 LF = 10 Shade Trees

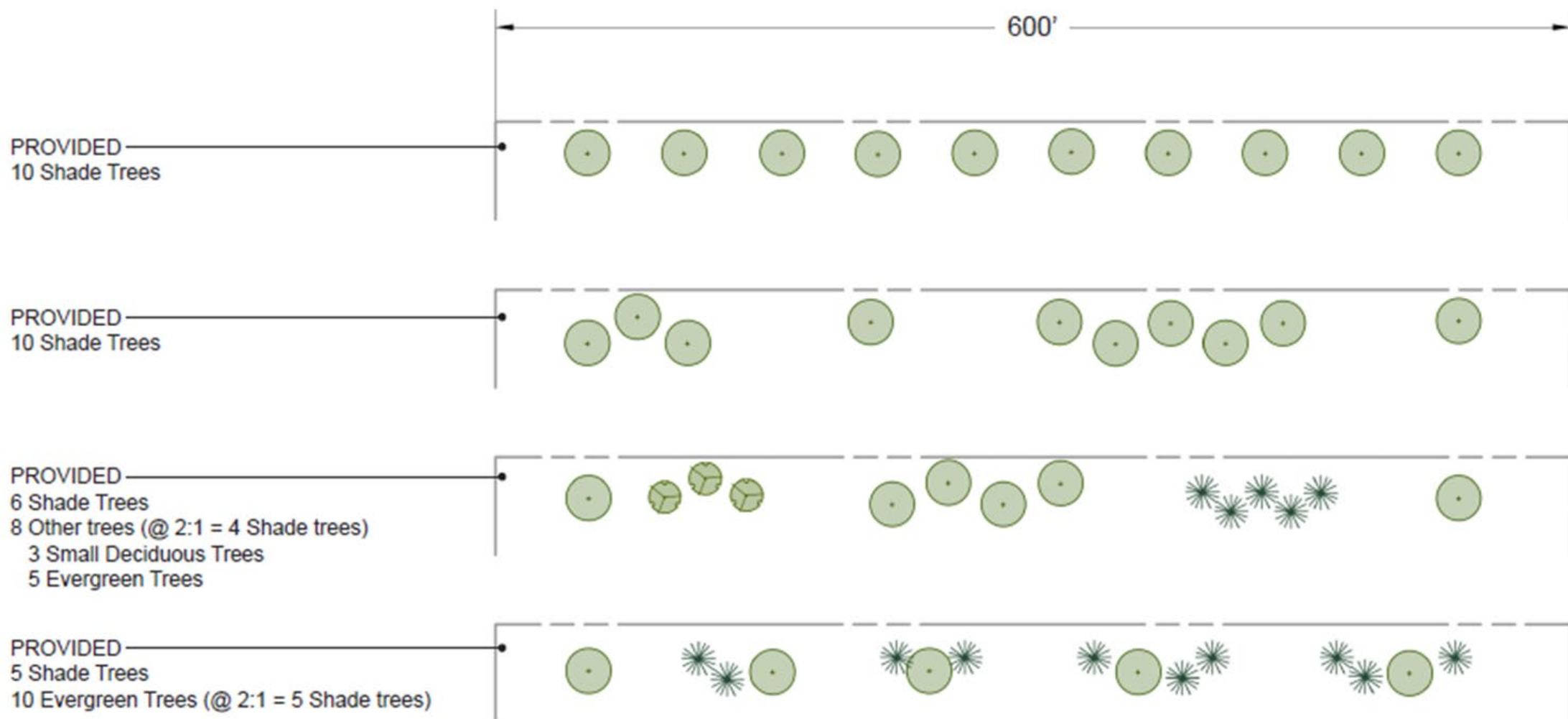


FIGURE 1B – LANDSCAPE EDGES

LANDSCAPE EDGE – TYPE B

600 Linear Feet

REQUIRED

1 Shade Tree / 50 LF = 12 Shade Trees

1 Evergreen Tree / 40 LF = 15 Evergreen Trees

Shade Tree



Small Deciduous Tree



Evergreen Tree



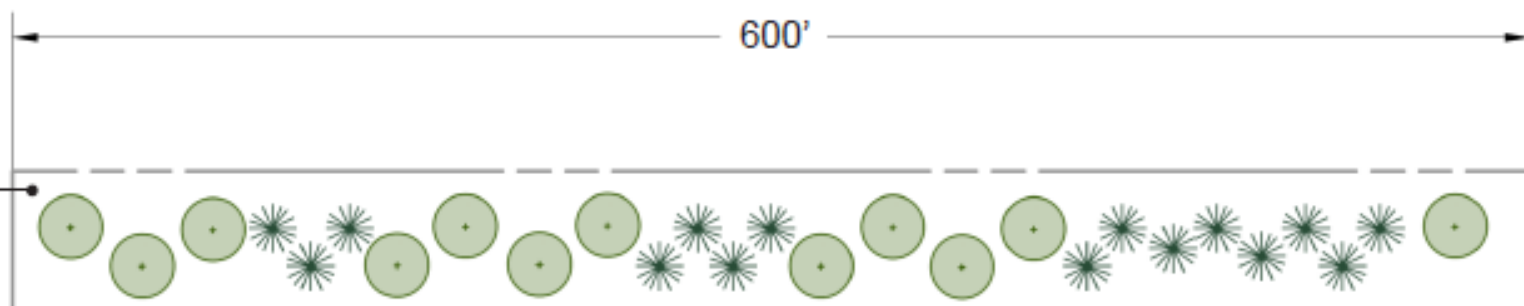
Shrub



PROVIDED

12 Shade Trees

15 Evergreen Trees



PROVIDED

6 Shade Trees

12 Other Trees (@ 2:1 = 6 Shade trees)

6 Small Deciduous Trees

6 Evergreen Trees

15 Evergreen Trees



PROVIDED

8 Shade Trees

8 Small Deciduous Trees (@ 2:1 = 4 Shade trees)

12 Evergreen Trees

15 Shrubs (@ 5:1 = 3 Evergreen Trees)



FIGURE 1C – LANDSCAPE EDGES

LANDSCAPE EDGE – TYPE C

600 Linear Feet

REQUIRED

1 Shade Tree / 40 LF = 15 Shade Trees

1 Evergreen Tree / 20 LF = 30 Evergreen Trees

1 Shrub / 8LF = 75 Shrubs

Shade Tree



Small Deciduous Tree



Evergreen Tree



Shrub

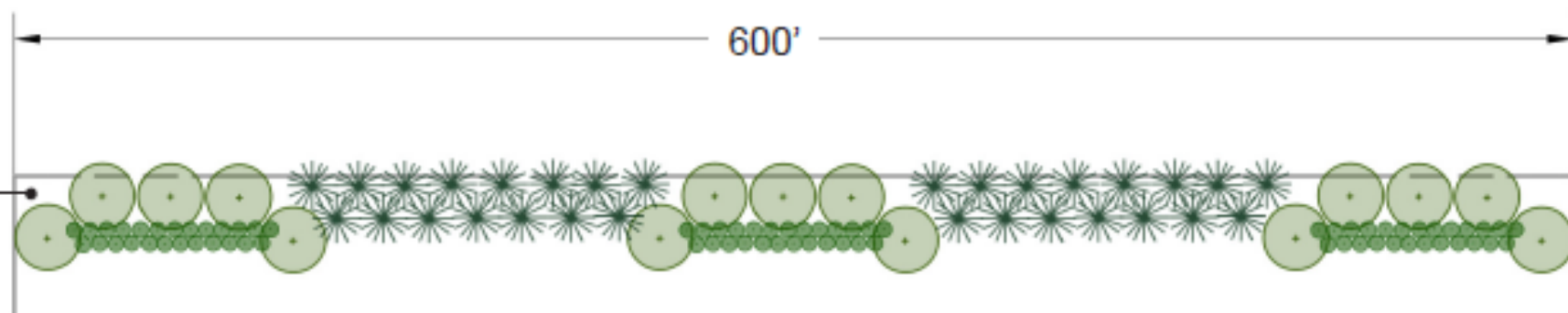


PROVIDED

15 Shade Trees

30 Evergreen Trees

75 Shrubs



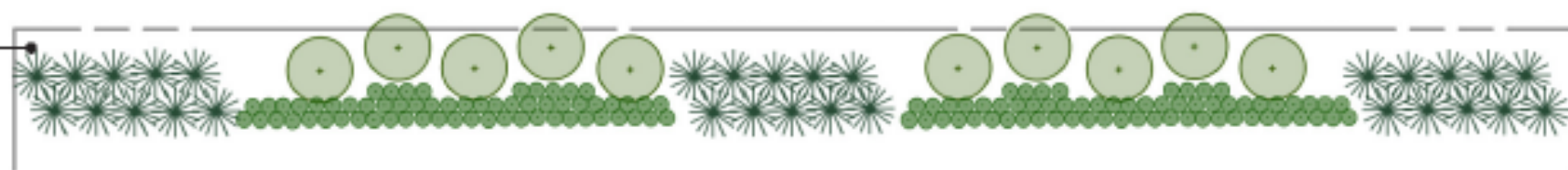
PROVIDED

10 Shade Trees

50 Shrubs (@ 10:1 = 5 Shade trees)

30 Evergreen Trees

75 Shrubs



PROVIDED

Berm to meet 30% of Required plants

11 Shade Trees (70% of 15)

21 Evergreen Trees (70% of 30)

53 Shrubs (70% of 75)

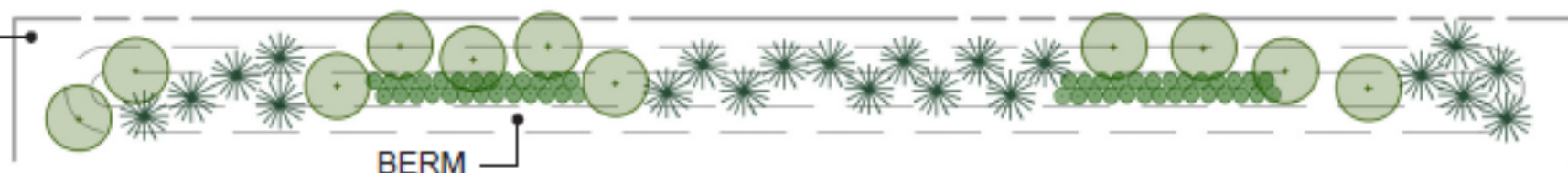


FIGURE 1D – LANDSCAPE EDGES

LANDSCAPE EDGE – TYPE D

600 Linear Feet

REQUIRED

1 Shade Tree / 60 LF = 10 Shade Trees

1 Evergreen Tree / 15 LF = 40 Evergreen Trees

1 Shrub / 8 LF = 75 Shrubs

Shade Tree



Small Deciduous Tree



Evergreen Tree



Shrub

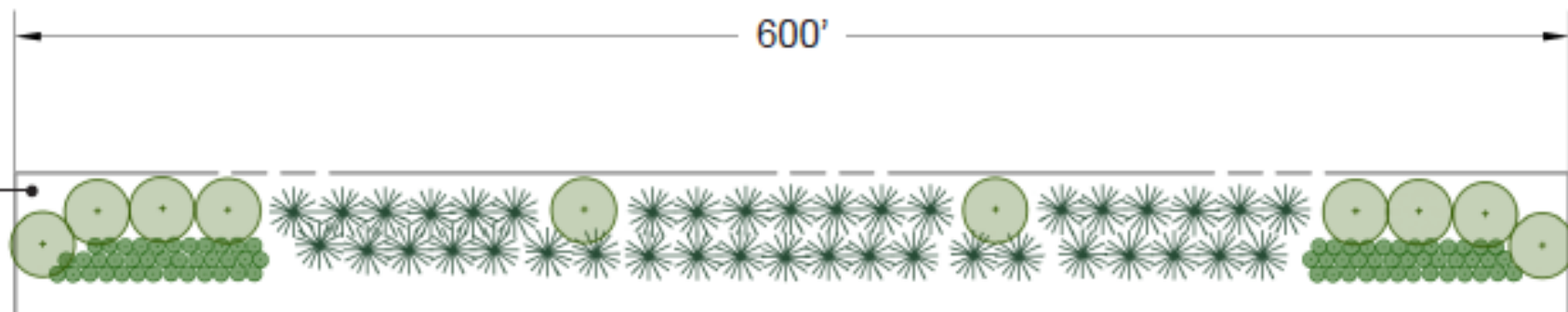


PROVIDED

10 Shade Trees

40 Evergreen Trees

75 Shrubs



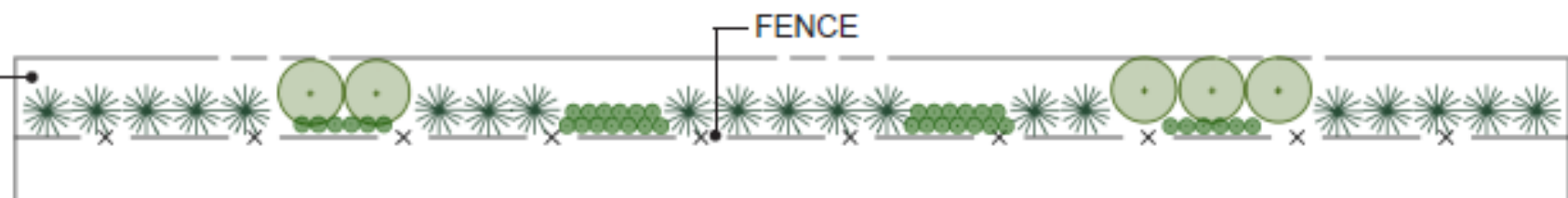
PROVIDED

Solid Fence/Wall to meet 50% Required plants

5 Shade Trees (50% of 10)

20 Evergreen Trees (50% of 40)

38 Shrubs (50% of 75)



PROVIDED

5 Shade Trees

10 Small Deciduous Trees (@ 2:1 = 5 Shade trees)

40 Evergreen Trees

75 Shrubs

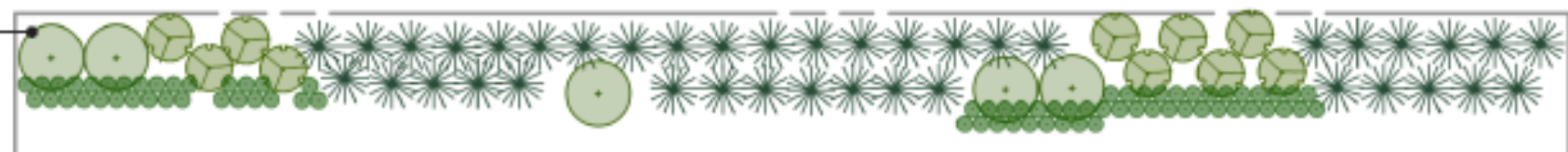


FIGURE 1E – LANDSCAPE EDGES

LANDSCAPE EDGE – TYPE E

600 Linear Feet

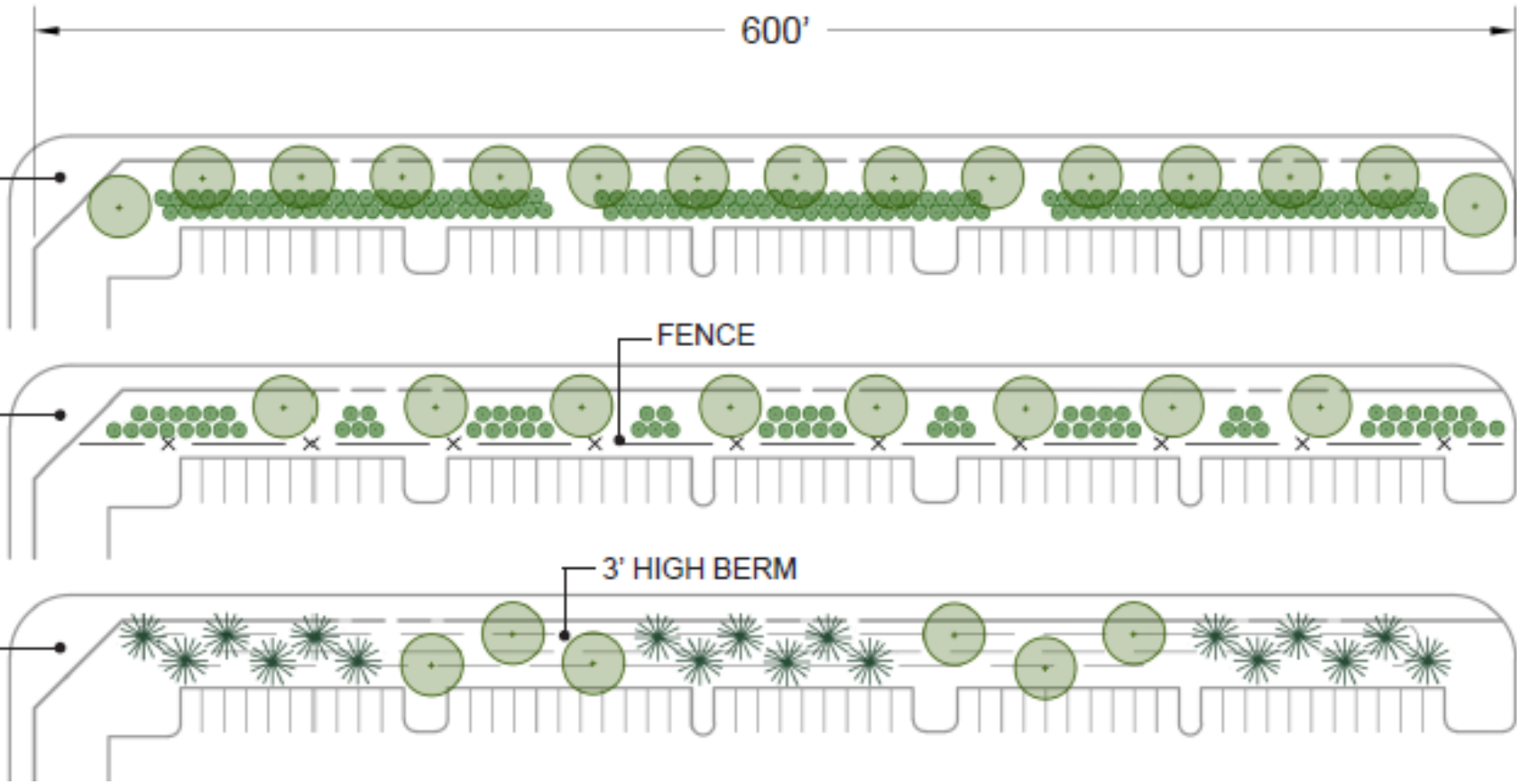
REQUIRED
1 Shade Tree / 40 LF = 15 Shade Trees
1 Shrub / 4 LF = 150 Shrubs

PROVIDED
15 Shade Trees
150 Shrubs

PROVIDED
Solid Fence/Wall to meet 50% Required plants
8 Shade Trees (50% of 15)
75 Shrubs (50% of 150)

PROVIDED
6 Shade Trees
18 Evergreen Trees (@ 2:1 = 9 Shade trees)
0 Shrubs (Berm to meet 100% of Required Shrubs)

- Shade Tree
- Small Deciduous Tree
- Evergreen Tree
- Shrub



Section 3.2: Landscape Edges & Site Conditions

Internal
Landscaping



Section 3.2: Landscape Edges & Site Conditions

Section 3.2.8 Residential Development Internal Landscaping:

- Adjust landscaping ratio for apartment buildings

Table 7 – Residential Development Internal Landscaping

	Required Plantings	Placement
Single Family Attached, Mobile Homes	1 Shade Tree ¹ per 2 units	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• open space• other on-site locations meeting the intent of regulations• residential lots
Apartments (1-4 stories)	1 Shade Tree ¹ per 5 units	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• open space• other on-site locations meeting the intent of regulations
Apartments (5+ stories)	1 Shade Tree ^{1,2} per 7 units (a mix of shade trees, ornamental trees and shrubs is encouraged using substitutions below)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• open space• building edge / foundation• other on-site locations meeting the intent of regulations
<p>¹ Small deciduous or evergreen trees may be substituted for shade trees at a 1:1 ratio. Shrubs may be substituted for shade trees at 10:1. No more than 50% of the required shade trees may be substituted.</p> <p>² Shall be <i>native species</i></p>		

Section 3.2: Landscape Edges & Site Conditions

Section 3.2.8 Residential Development Internal Landscaping:

- Single Family
Attached

Number of Units = 53

REQUIRED

1 Shade Tree / 2 Units

53 Units / 2 = 27 Shade Trees

PROVIDED

17 Shade Trees

20 Other Trees (@ 2:1 substitution)

10 Small Deciduous Trees

10 Evergreen Trees



Section 3.2: Landscape Edges & Site Conditions

Section 3.2.8 Residential Development Internal Landscaping:

- 1 – 4 Story
Apartments

Number of Stories = 3
Number of Units = 70

REQUIRED

1 Shade Tree / 5 Units

70 Units / 5 = 14 Shade Trees

PROVIDED

10 Shade Trees

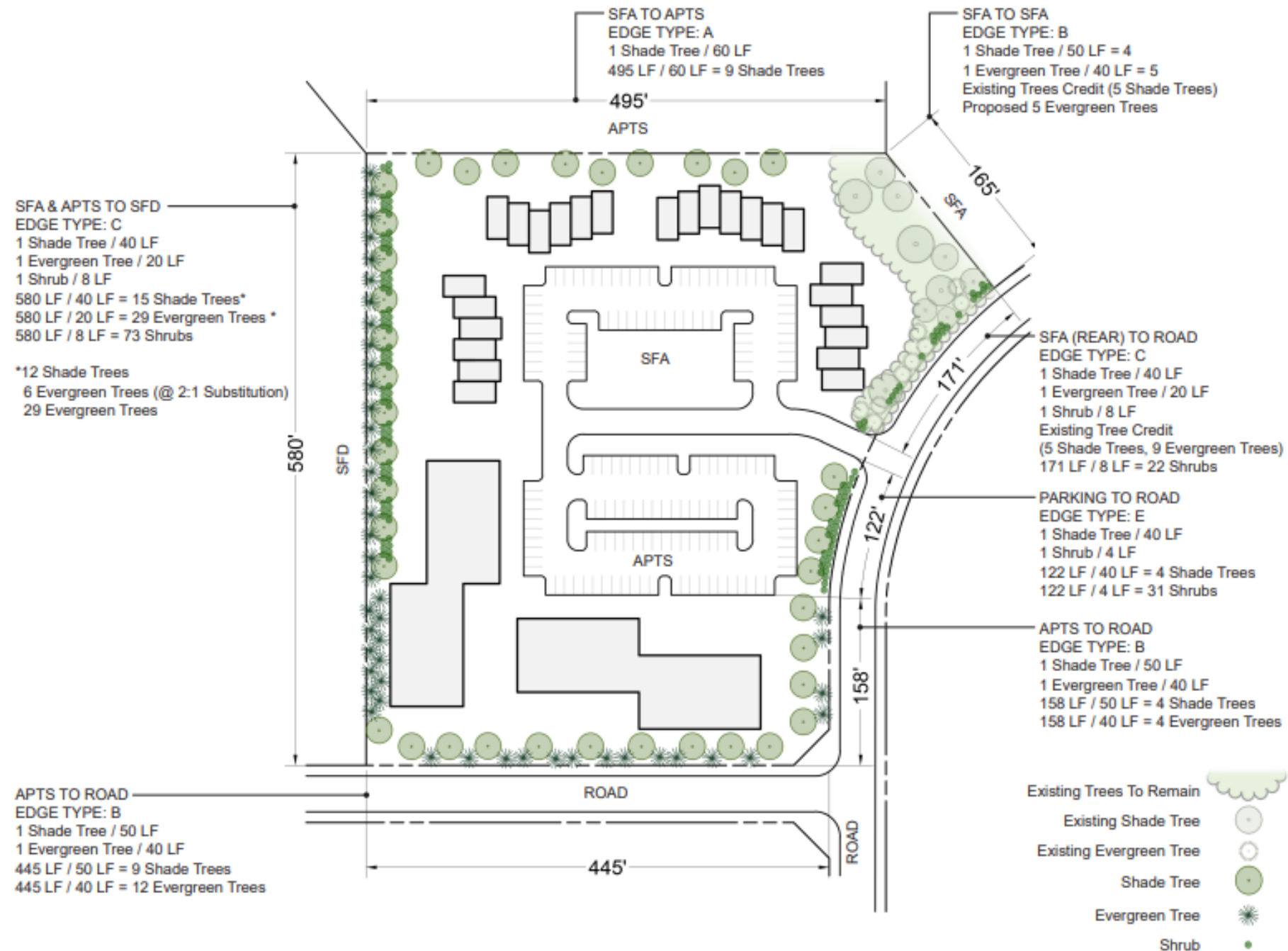
8 Other Trees (@ 2:1 substitution)

8 Small Deciduous Trees



Section 3.2: Landscape Edges & Site Conditions

Single Family Attached & Apartment Building Perimeter Landscaping



Section 3.2: Landscape Edges & Site Conditions

Section 3.2.9 Recreational Open Space:

- Add planting bed landscaping requirements
 - Delineate recreation open space areas for the community
 - Provide a wider variety of plantings
- Encourage participation with the Howard County Bee City program

Section 3.2: Landscape Edges & Site Conditions

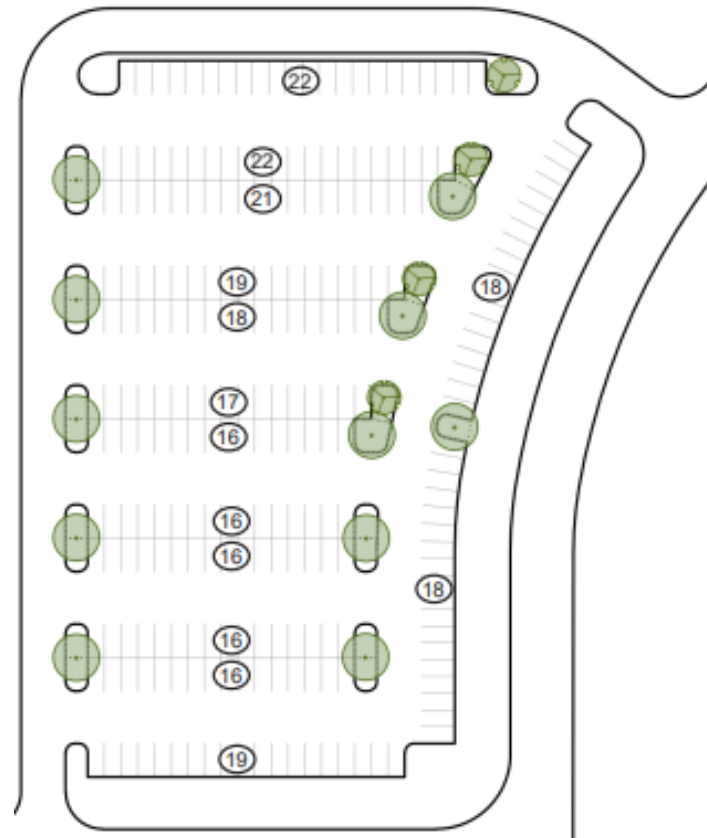


Section 3.2: Landscape Edges & Site Conditions

Section 3.2.5: Parking Lots

- Standard Calculation

Non-residential



Number of Parking Spaces: 254

REQUIRED

1 Island / 20 Spaces @ 200 SF Min. Area & 12' Min. Width
254 Spaces / 20 Spaces = 13 Islands
(13 Islands x 200 SF = 2,600 SF min.)

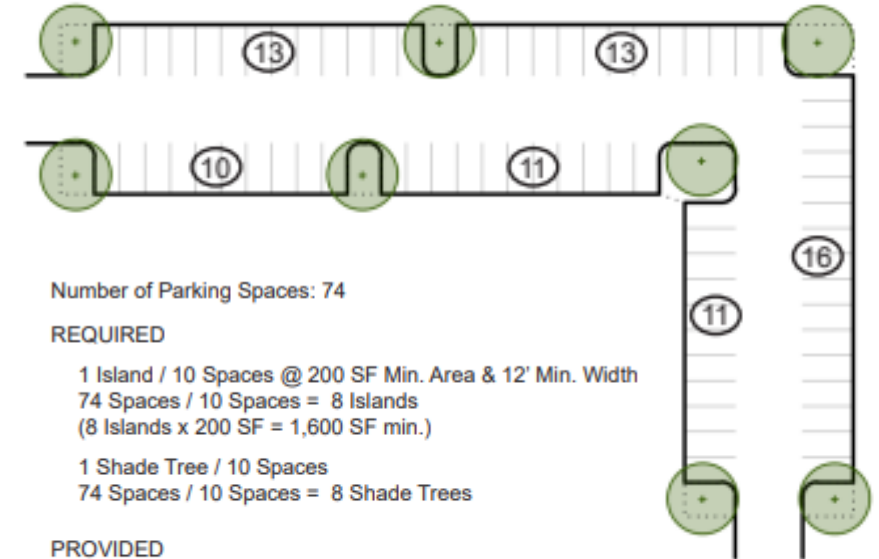
1 Shade Tree / 20 Spaces
254 Spaces / 20 Spaces = 13 Shade Trees

PROVIDED

21 Typical Islands (@ 200 SF min.)
Total Area of Landscaped Islands = 4,816 SF

11 Shade Trees
4 Small Deciduous Trees

Residential



Number of Parking Spaces: 74



REQUIRED

1 Island / 10 Spaces @ 200 SF Min. Area & 12' Min. Width
74 Spaces / 10 Spaces = 8 Islands
(8 Islands x 200 SF = 1,600 SF min.)

1 Shade Tree / 10 Spaces
74 Spaces / 10 Spaces = 8 Shade Trees

PROVIDED

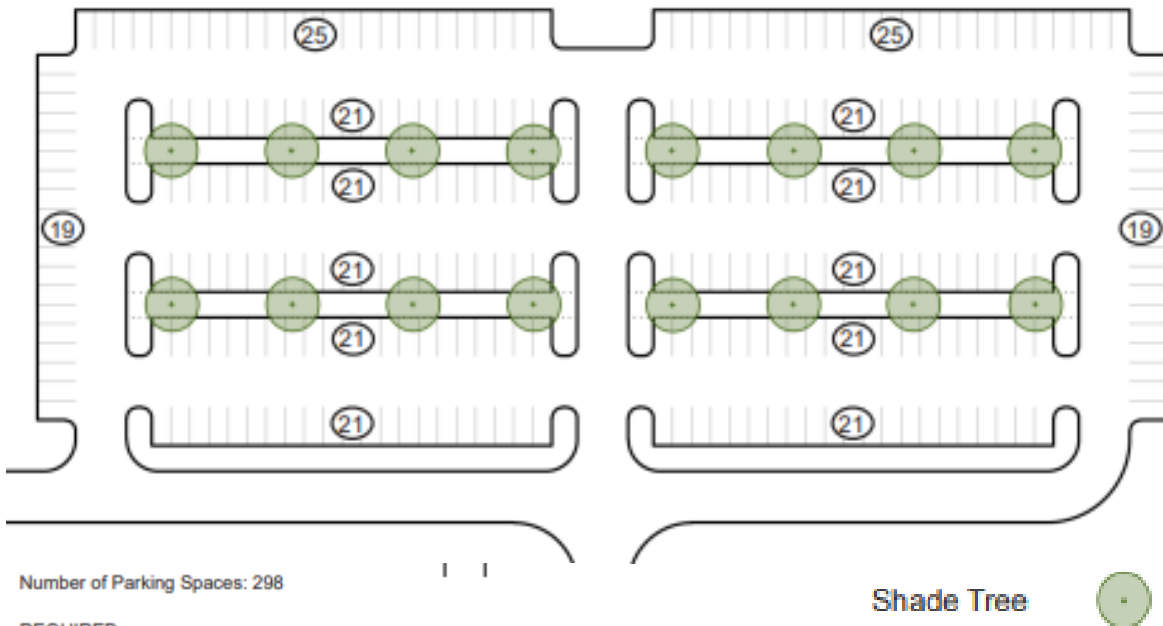
8 Typical Islands (@ 200 SF min.)
Total Area of Landscaped Islands = 2,217 SF
8 Shade Trees

Shade Tree 
Small Deciduous Tree 

Section 3.2: Landscape Edges & Site Conditions

Section 3.2.5: Parking Lots – Alternative Calculation

Non-residential



Number of Parking Spaces: 298

REQUIRED

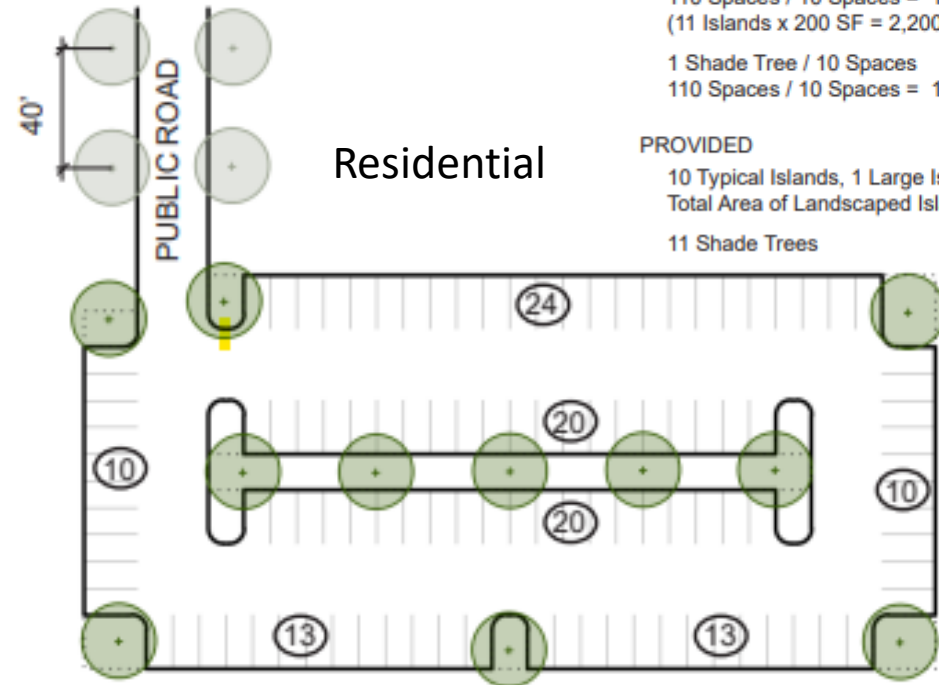
1 Island / 20 Spaces @ 200 SF Min. Area & 12' Min. Width
298 Spaces / 20 Spaces = 15 Islands
(14 Islands x 200 SF = 2,800 SF min.)

1 Shade Tree / 20 Spaces
298 Spaces / 20 Spaces = 15 Shade Trees

PROVIDED

16 Typical Islands (@ 200 SF min.), 4 Long Islands (@ 800 SF min.)
Total Area of Landscaped Islands = 13,508 SF

16 Shade Trees



Number of Parking Spaces: 110

REQUIRED

1 Island / 10 Spaces @ 200 SF Min. Area & 12' Min. Width
110 Spaces / 10 Spaces = 11 Islands
(11 Islands x 200 SF = 2,200 SF min.)

1 Shade Tree / 10 Spaces
110 Spaces / 10 Spaces = 11 Shade Trees

PROVIDED

10 Typical Islands, 1 Large Island (@ 800 SF min.)
Total Area of Landscaped Islands = 5,062 SF

11 Shade Trees

Section 3.2: Landscape Edges & Site Conditions

Section 3.2.10 Ground-Mount Solar Collectors:

- Solar Canopies over Parking
 - Address compatibility and provide flexibility with parking lot landscaping and solar canopies
- Commercial Solar Facilities
 - Include landscape requirements outlined in HB1036 – Renewable Energy Certainty Act

Section 4.1: Native Plants & Biodiversity

- Support local ecosystems and promote biodiversity
- Native plantings are required for the following landscape conditions:
 - Perimeter landscape edges
 - Residential development internal landscaping
 - Recreation open space
 - Ground-mount solar collectors
 - Stormwater management facilities
- Species diversity requirements apply to all required landscape plantings

Section 4.1: Native Plants & Biodiversity

- 4.1.1 Native Plants Requirements
- Percentage of plant palette required to be native

Table 11 – Minimum percentage of plants required to be native species

Plant Type	Percentage Native
Shade Trees	70%
Small Deciduous Trees	70%
Evergreen Trees	40%
Shrubs	60%
Herbaceous Perennials/Grasses	80%

Section 4.1: Native Plants & Biodiversity

- 4.1.2 Species Diversity Requirements
- Maximum percentage of plant palette permitted to be comprised of one species

Table 12 – Species diversity, Trees

Number/Qty of Plants per Plant Type - Trees	Maximum Percentage of one species
1-10	100%
11-30	50%
31-60	40%
61-100	25%
101+	20%

Table 13 – Species diversity, Shrubs

Number/Qty of Plants per Plant Type - Shrubs	Maximum Percentage of one species
1-10	100%
11-50	50%
51-100	30%
100-250	15%
250+	10%

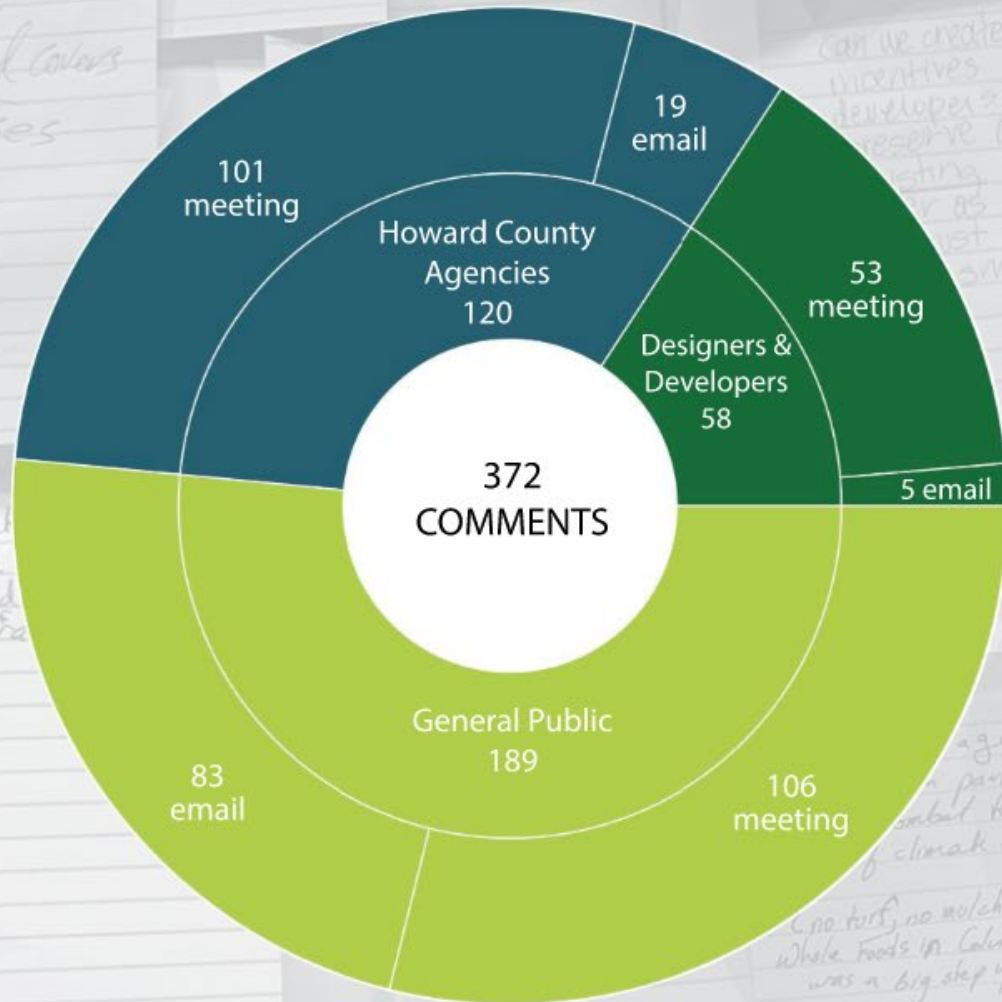


Landscape Manual Update

Planning Board Meeting
December 4, 2025



Focus Groups - Comments



- Conflicts, Clarity, Coordination
- Scenarios to address
- Requested additions & revisions
- Suggested resources

Comments – Common Threads



Prioritize NATIVE PLANTS, prohibit all invasive species and remove them from the plant list

Include HERBACEOUS PERENNIALS and GRASSES and GROUNDCOVERS in the manual's requirements

Encourage BIODIVERSITY by requiring more VARIETY of species, particularly of STREET TREES, and support POLLINATORS by giving credit for pollinator gardens and native MEADOWS.

Encourage the use of islands as STORMWATER MANAGEMENT facilities, or requiring NATIVE plants rather than turf grass.

Lack of MAINTENANCE of installed landscape plants is a problem. Consider including maintenance GUIDELINES for property owners.

Require a LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT to design and seal landscape plans

Create INCENTIVES to developers for preserving EXISTING TREES by giving CREDIT towards requirements

Reevaluate TREE SPACING requirements - too many trees are required in some project types, and trees are installed too close together or to other site features.

Address CONFLICTS between current requirements and SOLAR CANOPIES in parking lots, UTILITIES, such as overhead wires, and within utility EASEMENTS

Research & Outline Development

Landscape manuals and/or regulations of other local jurisdictions

Anne Arundel County

Baltimore City

Baltimore County

Carroll County

City of Frederick

Frederick County

Harford County

Montgomery County

Prince George's County

Arlington County (VA)

Washington D.C.

Overarching Goals for Updated Outline

- Restructure for clarity and ease of use when applying requirements to each unique project site
- Respond to today's landscape conditions, environmental regulations and initiatives
- Address conflicts and coordination items

Qualifications to Prepare Landscape Plans

Precedents from surrounding jurisdictions requiring a licensed Professional Landscape Architect (PLA) to prepare and seal Landscape Plans

Testing Updates on Example Projects

While drafting the updated manual, we assessed some of the new and updated requirements by testing them using hypothetical scenarios and previously approved landscape plans

Section 3.2.5.b Parking Lot Internal Landscaping

Section 3.2.8 Residential Development Internal Landscape

Section 3.2.9 Recreation Open Space

Section 3.2.5.b Parking Lot Internal Landscaping

Non-Residential
Parking Lot

Hypothetical
example

280 spaces

Current requirements:

1 shade tree / 20 spaces → 14 shade trees

1 island / 20 spaces → 14 islands @ 200sf min. each

Proposed requirements – Alternate Calculation:

When providing continuous landscaped islands between long parking bays, groups of parking spaces may exceed the maximum 24 spaces & planting requirement is 1 shade tree / 60 LF landscaped island between bays

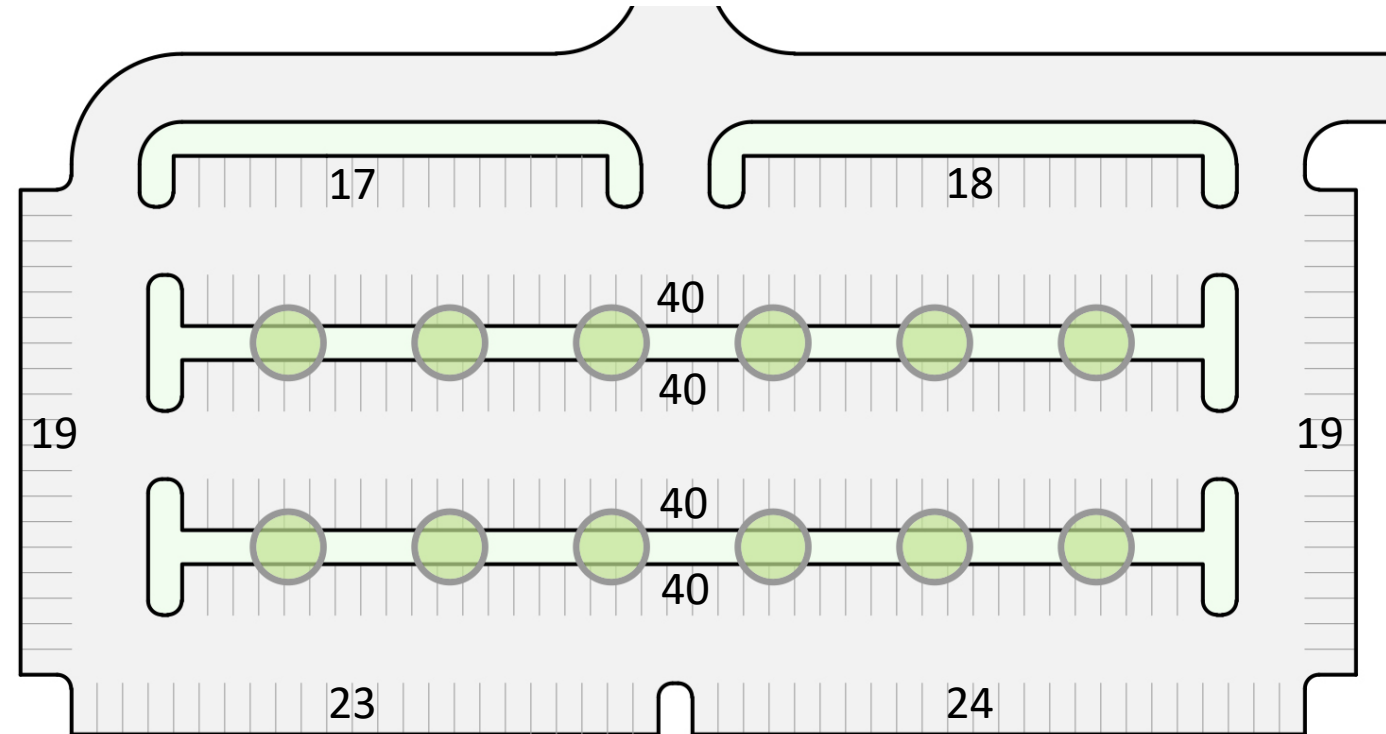
Parking bay separated by
continuous landscaped area
40 spaces x 9' LF = 360 LF

@

1 shade tree / 60 LF

6 shade trees for each
continuous landscaped island

12 shade trees total



Section 3.2.8

Residential Development Internal Landscape

Current requirements:

Residential Development Internal Landscaping		
	Required Plantings	Placement
Single Family Attached, Mobile Homes	1 Shade Tree ¹ per 1 unit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> residential lots open space other on-site locations meeting the intent of regulations
Apartments (1-4 stories)	1 Shade Tree ¹ per 3 units	
Apartments (5+ stories)	1 Shade Tree ¹ per 3 units	

¹ Small deciduous or evergreen trees may be substituted for shade trees at a 2:1 ratio. No more than 50% of the required shade trees may be substituted.

Updated requirements:

Table 7 – Residential Development Internal Landscaping		
	Required Plantings	Placement
Single Family Attached, Mobile Homes	1 Shade Tree ¹ per 2 units	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> open space other on-site locations meeting the intent of regulations residential lots
Apartments (1-4 stories)	1 Shade Tree ¹ per 5 units	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> open space other on-site locations meeting the intent of regulations
Apartments (5+ stories)	1 Shade Tree ^{1,2} per 7 units (a mix of shade trees, ornamental trees and shrubs is encouraged using substitutions below)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> open space building edge / foundation other on-site locations meeting the intent of regulations

¹ Small deciduous or evergreen trees may be substituted for shade trees at a 1:1 ratio. Shrubs may be substituted for shade trees at 10:1. No more than 50% of the required shade trees may be substituted.

² Shall be native species

Section 3.2.8 Residential Development Internal Landscape

Apartments
(5+ stories)

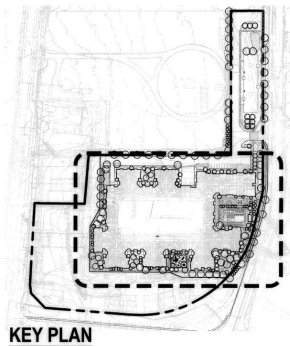
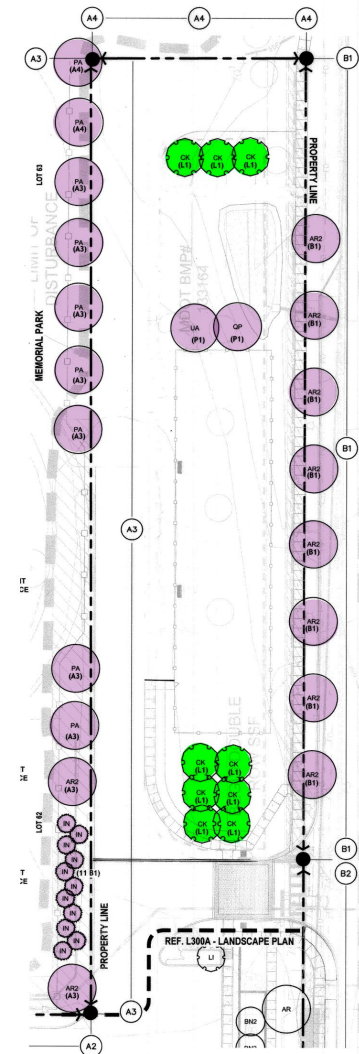
Previously
approved
landscape plan
SDP-18-002

SDP-18-002 – Current requirements:

250 dwelling units (DU) @ 1 shade tree / 3 DU → 84 shade trees

SDP-18-002 – Proposed requirements, Apartments (5+ stories):

250 dwelling units (DU) @ 1 shade tree / 7 DU → 36 shade trees



Section 3.2.8 Residential Development Internal Landscape

Apartments
(5+ stories)

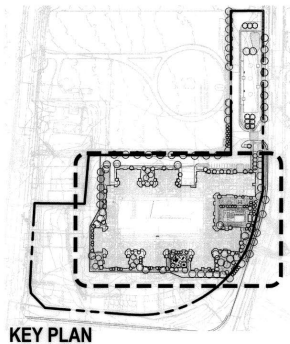
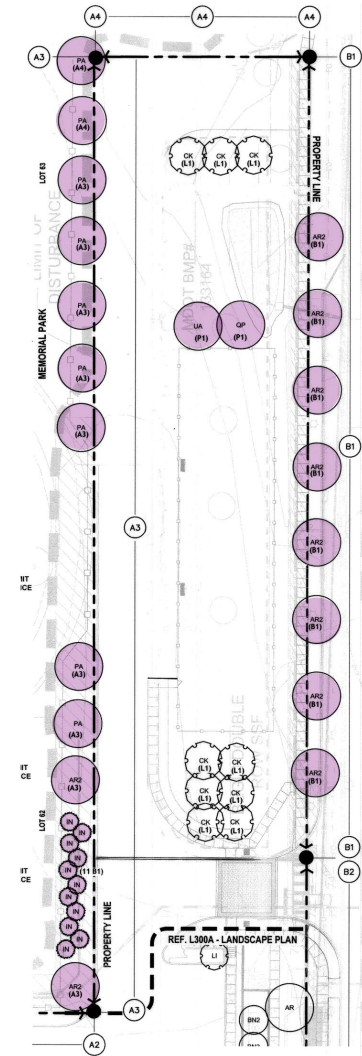
Previously
approved
landscape plan
SDP-18-002

SDP-18-002 – Current requirements:

250 dwelling units (DU) @ 1 shade tree / 3 DU → 84 shade trees

SDP-18-002 – Proposed requirements, Apartments (5+ stories):

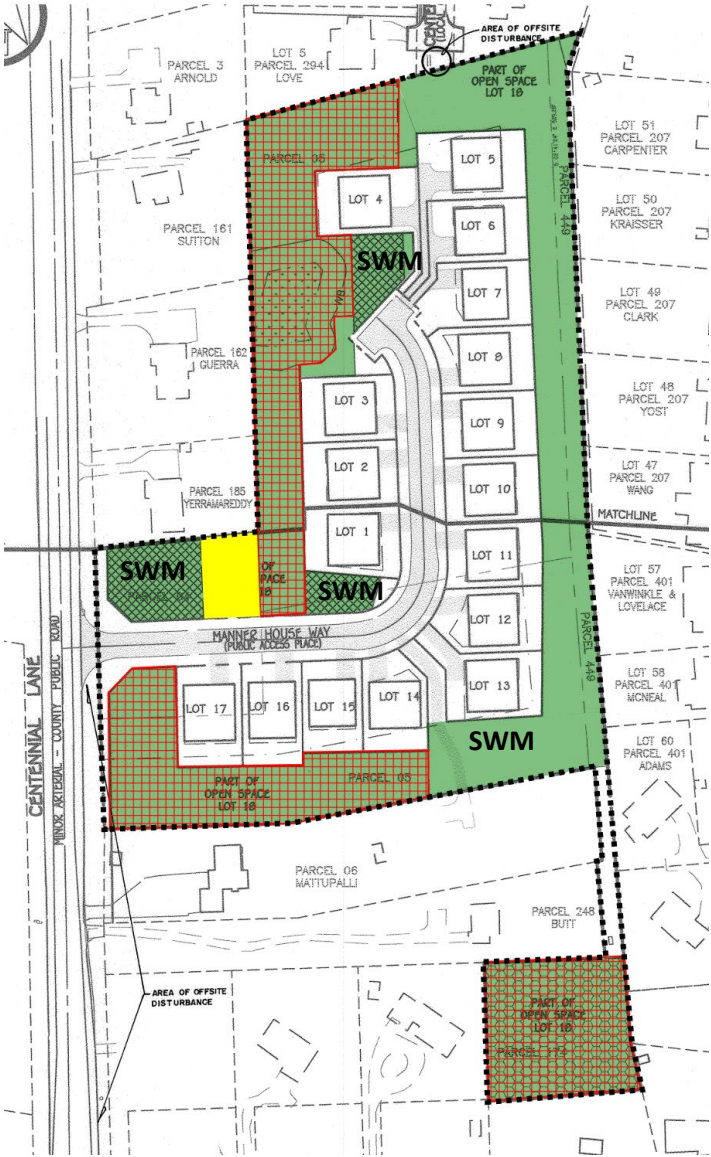
250 dwelling units (DU) @ 1 shade tree / 7 DU → 36 shade trees



Section 3.2.9 Recreation Open Space

New Landscape
Requirement

Previously
approved
landscape plan
F-20-010



Green:

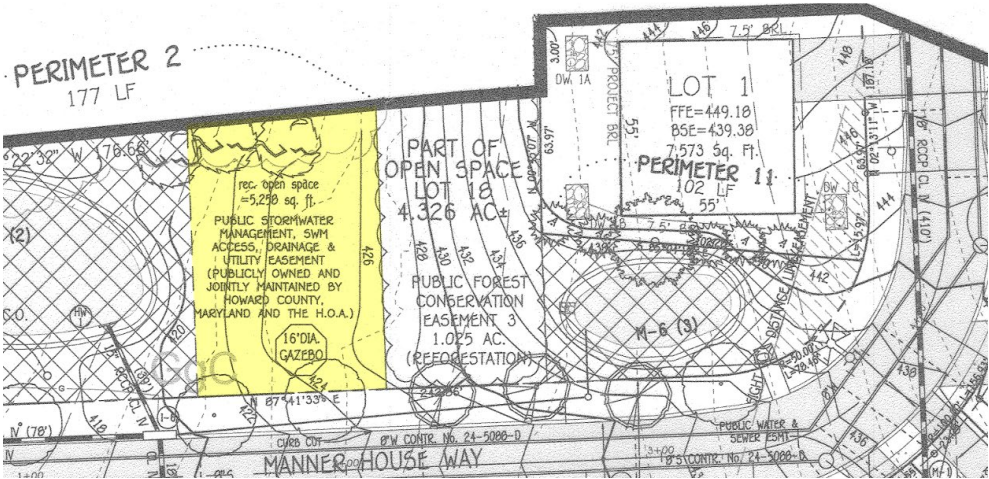
Open Space

Yellow:

Recreation Open Space

Red Hatch:

Forest Conservation Easement



F-20-010 Recreation Open Space (Example)

Required: 5,100 SF

Provided: 5,258 SF

Per updated manual, Plant Bed Area Required = 300 SF

Required Recreation Open Space	Plant Bed Area Required ¹
For first 5,000 SF	100 SF
For each add'l 1,000 SF	100 SF
¹ Minimum Area = 300 SF; Maximum Area = 1,200 SF	

Minimum 4 native shrubs per 300 SF plant bed, in addition to required residential development internal landscape plantings

➡ Remaining plant bed area shall be identified as available for Bee City Plantings

5,000-7,999 SF required recreation open space = 300 SF plant bed area

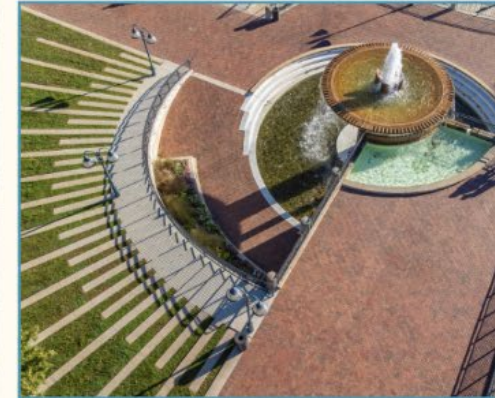
8,000 SF required recreation open space = 400 SF plant bed area

9,000 SF required recreation open space = 500 SF plant bed area

Landscape Manual

 **Howard County**
Department of Planning
& Zoning

January, 2026



Planning Board, Subtitle 9

Section 16.900(j) of the Subdivision and Land Development Regulations outlines the duties of the Planning Board to include:

(1) Recommendations on Planning and Zoning:

(i) Recommendations. The Planning Board shall make recommendations to the County Council and the Zoning Board on all matters relating to:

The Planning and Zoning of the County, the adoptions and amendment of regulations regarding the Planning and Zoning of the County, and amendments to the zoning map regulations.

Planning Board, Subtitle 9

Section 16.124 of the Subdivision and Land Development Regulations defines the intent of landscape requirements:

- (i) Enhance the physical appearance of County development.
- (ii) Buffer potentially incompatible land uses.
- (iii) Screen undesirable views.
- (iv) Improve the environmental performance of new development by reducing stormwater runoff, air pollution, glare, and noise.
- (v) Promote energy conservation.
- (vi) Prevent damage to and unnecessary removal of vegetation.
- (vii) Conserve the value of property and neighborhoods.