

Chapter 18.90

LANDSCAPING

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18.90.010 Specific purposes.

The specific purpose of this chapter is to establish standards for landscaping. The landscaping standards are intended to:

- A. Improve the appearance of the community by requiring aesthetically pleasing low water use landscaping on public and private sites;
- B. Soften the appearance of urban development;
- C. Ensure appropriately designed and maintained landscaping elements that allow natural surveillance;
- D. Generate and preserve community identity to reinforce a sense of place that is unique to various neighborhoods and districts throughout the city and supports our unique desert environment.
- E. Encourage the use of drought-tolerant, native or adapted plant species and demonstrate appropriate design and maintenance techniques and discourage the use of nonnative invasive plants which require more water and have a negative impact on the city's natural environment; and

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F. Provide environmental improvements, such as mitigating air and storm water pollution, providing shade, and reducing the effects of the urban heat island. [Res. 21-09; Ord. 21-05 § 2; Res. 14-36 § 404.01; Ord. 14-12 § 1.]

18.90.020 Applicability and exemptions.

A. *Applicability.* The regulations of this chapter shall apply to:

1. *Proposed Developments.* All buildings and uses of land, except active agricultural buildings located further than 100 feet from public rights-of-way.
2. *Existing Properties.* After the effective date of this code, for any proposed change to the primary exterior features of a building, such as alterations to entranceways, porches, driveways, and front yards, or exterior additions that project into the front yard, an increase in parking, or a change in use or building occupancy designation, the standards of this chapter apply.

B. *Exempt Projects.* The requirements of this chapter do not apply to:

1. Interior or upper-story additions to existing nonresidential or residential construction that add less than 20 percent to the existing floor area;
2. The establishment of an accessory use on the same lot as an existing primary use, such as the installation of an accessory office space, with no expansion of floor area or outdoor area occupied; and
3. A change in occupancy of a building that does not involve a change in the use type (e.g., the use classification). [Res. 21-09; Ord. 21-05 § 2; Res. 14-36 § 404.02; Ord. 14-12 § 1.]

18.90.030 General requirements.

A. *Landscaped Areas.* Required landscaped areas shall be maintained free from encroachment by any use, structure, vehicle, or feature not a part of the landscaping design, except for the fire

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hydrants and related fire protection devices, mailbox clusters, pedestals, poles, cabinets, utility-housing boxes, or other permanent fixtures as approved for emergency or service access.

1. Landscaping plant materials, in addition to the healthy cacti and trees retained on site, should consist of drought-tolerant indigenous plant materials and species listed in the landscape regulations of the Arizona Department of Water Resources Pinal A.M.A. Plant List or similar document. Plant types not currently on the ADWR Pinal AMA list proposed for on-site landscaping shall be approved by the zoning administrator or authorized designee.

2. Where turf abuts decomposed granite or similar inorganic landscape material, a hardscape edging material such as brick or concrete curb/mow-strip shall be provided.

3. Where vehicular cross-access is provided between adjoining properties that are not part of group commercial, office, or industrial development, a 15-foot-wide perimeter landscape yard except where drive aisle occurs shall be provided.

B. *Tree Size.* Required trees shall meet the growth dimensions specified in the Arizona Nursery Association "Recommended Tree Specification," latest edition, a copy of which will be maintained on file by the planning division and available upon request. The zoning administrator may approve deviations from these minimum specifications based on availability, if a deviation is requested prior to installation.

C. *Shrubs.* Required shrubs shall have a minimum mature growth height of 18 inches. At least 50 percent of required shrubs shall be a minimum of five gallons in size upon installation, but in no case shall any shrub be less than one-gallon size.

D. *Ground Cover.* Required ground cover may be of two types:

1. Vegetative ground cover consisting of living plant materials characterized by horizontal as well as vertical growth, generally not exceeding 18 inches in height.

2. Inert ground cover consisting of ~~gravel~~, **¾ inch screened** decomposed granite, crushed rock **minimum ¾ inch screened**, desert tree mulch, or other approved materials. The use of "desert cobble" that looks like the desert floor, consisting of natural desert covers and seed mix, is encouraged. Minimum depth of inert material shall be two and one-half inches.

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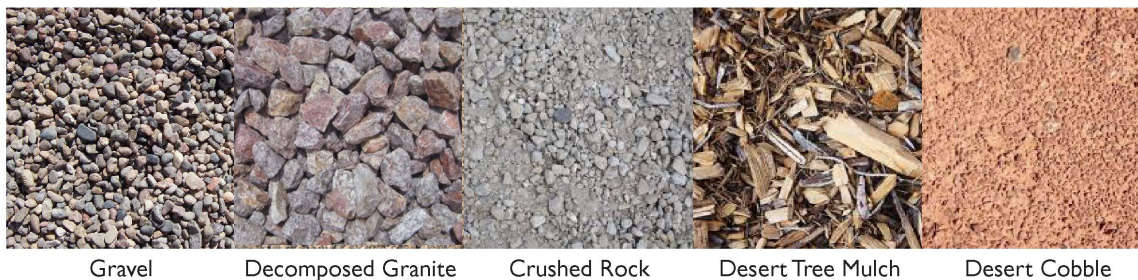


Figure 18.90.030.D. Ground Cover Types

E. *Irrigation Systems.* Required irrigation systems shall be underground automatic watering systems, unless the lot is served by ~~functioning~~ **existing** flood irrigation. Irrigation and plantings within three feet of public utilities, such as but not limited to electrical transformers, light poles and fixtures, and communication services, shall be limited to drip systems so as to not overspray to cause undue corrosion to utility structures.

F. *Paving and Hardscape Materials.* Paving and ground treatment shall be an integral part of site and landscape design. **The City strongly encourages the use of permeable or porous paving that allows more water to infiltrate the ground.**

G. *Minimum Open Space Required.* The following indicates the minimum required open space by zoning district.

1. Any parking area landscaping that exceeds the minimum requirements of the code shall be counted as open space if determined by the zoning administrator that the landscape area enhances the general area proposed.
2. Open space does not include parking areas except parking lots for trailheads and/or for the neighborhood parks (not parking lots required for other uses).
4. Bicycle trails (not bike lanes within the pavement section), pedestrian trails, equestrian tracts, and trailheads may also be calculated as open space.
5. Landscape buffers and landscaped medians shall be a minimum of 10 to 15 feet in width in order to be calculated as part of the required open space.

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6. Open space does not include retention and/or detention basins that are concrete lined or non-landscaped, vacant lots, or undeveloped lots.
7. **As noted below in Table 1, all** residential zoning districts **shall provide a minimum of 60% of the** ~~shall have a minimum of 60 percent of the~~ required open space for any ~~development and should be developed~~ as “useable” open space with the recreational amenities needed to support the new neighborhood **as defined in Chapter 17.30.040 of the City of Maricopa Subdivision Guidelines.** ~~demand incorporated into that open space.~~
8. ~~Not more than 50 percent of the required open space shall be attributed to golf course use or ancillary golf uses.~~

Table 1 Open Space Requirements by Zoning Districts

Zoning District	Required Percentage of Open Space
Rural Districts	0% (1 – 49 lots; min. lot size 54,000 sq. ft.) 2% (50+ lots; min. lot size 54,000 sq. ft.) 10% (1 – 49 lots; min. lot size 20,000 sq. ft.) 12% (50 + lots; min. lot size 20,000 sq. ft.)
Residential Districts	15% (1 – 99 lots; min. lot size 12,000 sq. ft.) 17% (100+ lots; min. lot size 12,000 sq. ft.) 20% (1 – 99 lots; min. lot size 7,000 sq. ft.) 22% (100+ lots; min. lot size 7,000 sq. ft.)
Mixed Use Districts	15%
Commercial Districts	10% (20 acres or less in size) 15% (greater than 20 acres in size)
Industrial Districts	10% (100 acres or less in size) 15% (greater than 100 acres in size)
Public Institutional Districts	10% (20 acres or less in size) 15% (greater than 20 acres in size)

[Res. 21-09; Ord. 21-05 § 2; Res. 14-36 § 404.03; Ord. 14-12 § 1.]

18.90.040 Site landscaping on non-single-family lots.

A. Landscaping in Visible Yards.

1. *Standards.* Off-site street landscaping and on-site landscape buffer setback standards must comply with MCC [17.30.050](#). Street-facing yards, parking areas, and on-site landscaping shall comply with this code.
2. *Allowable Uses.* Yards that are visible from public streets and not used for parking lanes, or pedestrian walkways or allowable outdoor facilities shall be exclusively maintained as landscaped areas with plant materials and may include monument signs, parking screen walls, and retention basins as well as utility boxes and related equipment.
3. *Exceptions.* Outdoor seating for restaurants and cafes may encroach:
 - a. In NC Districts, up to 50 percent of the width of the required landscape area; and
 - b. In mixed use districts, the entire width of the required landscape area. The city encourages the use of tree wells and planters to help define outdoor seating areas and to enhance urban spaces.
4. *Numbers of Plants.* Except as otherwise required by the subdivision regulations, the required on-site plantings for multiple-family, mixed use, commercial, and institutional developments shall include a minimum of one tree and six shrubs per 650 square feet of landscaped area, with 40 percent ground cover. Industrial developments shall provide one tree and six shrubs per 1,000 square feet of landscaped area, with 25 percent ground cover. Where conflict occurs between the provisions of this code and MCC Title [17](#), Subdivisions, the more restrictive provision shall apply.
5. *Minimum Size.* In addition to minimum landscaping required in MCC [17.30.050](#), minimum size of plant materials shall be as follows:
 - a. *Trees.*
 - i. A minimum of 50 percent of the total required trees shall be 24-inch box trees.
 - ii. No trees shall be smaller than 15-gallon size.
 - b. *Shrubs.*

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- i. A minimum of 50 percent of the total required shrubs shall be five-gallon size or larger.
 - ii. No shrubs shall be less than one-gallon size.
- c. *Substitutions.* Substitutions for the above requirements may be made according to the following table:

Table 18.90.040.A.5.C Tree Substitutions

Tree to be placed on site	15-gallon tree equivalent	24-inch box tree equivalent
24-inch box tree	2 trees	-
36-inch box tree	3 trees	2 trees
48-inch box tree	4 trees	3 trees
60-inch or larger box tree	-	4 trees

6. *Ground Cover.* All landscape areas shall be covered with materials such as three-quarters inch Mountain Vista Brown landscape rock or similar material in combination with supplemental shrubs and ground covers, accents, flowers, and vines.

7. *Retention Basins.*

- a. Retention basins may not occupy more than 50 percent of the minimum required front yard and street side yard setback landscape areas.
- b. Basins along street frontages shall be incorporated into the landscape plan and designed to appear natural or integrated with the site plan and architecture of the site.
- c. Retention basins shall be constructed in accordance with plans approved by the city engineer and shall conform to grading and landscape plans approved by the city of Maricopa.
- d. The City encourages the compliance with rainwater harvesting practices for all integrated retention basins.**

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B. *Adjacent Lot Lines.*

1. *Buffer Zones Adjacent to Residential Zoning Districts and Open Space.*

a. *Requirement.* Properties located adjacent to residential districts, community trail systems, and open space areas shall have a landscaped buffered area with a minimum width of 25 feet for commercial and mixed-use districts, and 40 feet for industrial districts. In no case shall it exceed a 3:1 slope. At a minimum, buffer areas shall contain a minimum of one tree and two shrubs every 25 feet, or portion thereof, to provide visual screening between uses in addition to the minimum required landscaping on site.

b. *Ground Treatment.* The buffer zone except for pedestrian walkways shall be covered with materials such as decomposed granite, desert varnish or cobble, desert tree mulch, or turf, in combination with supplemental shrubs and ground covers, accents, flowers, and vines.

c. *Areas Visible from Rows, Public Parking or Drive Aisles.* Landscape material placement shall be designed to concentrate plantings in areas of high visibility to screen parking, loading, and trash enclosures from adjacent rights-of-way, properties, and pedestrian areas.

C. *Landscaping of Interior Setbacks.* Where a lot located in a commercial or mixed-use district is adjacent to a residential district, at least 25 feet of the depth of such setbacks must be landscaped, and remain free from parking, driveways, and encroachment by any structures that are not part of the landscaping design. For properties that are adjacent to nonresidential districts, at least 40 feet of the depth of interior setbacks must be landscaped, unless specified elsewhere in this code.

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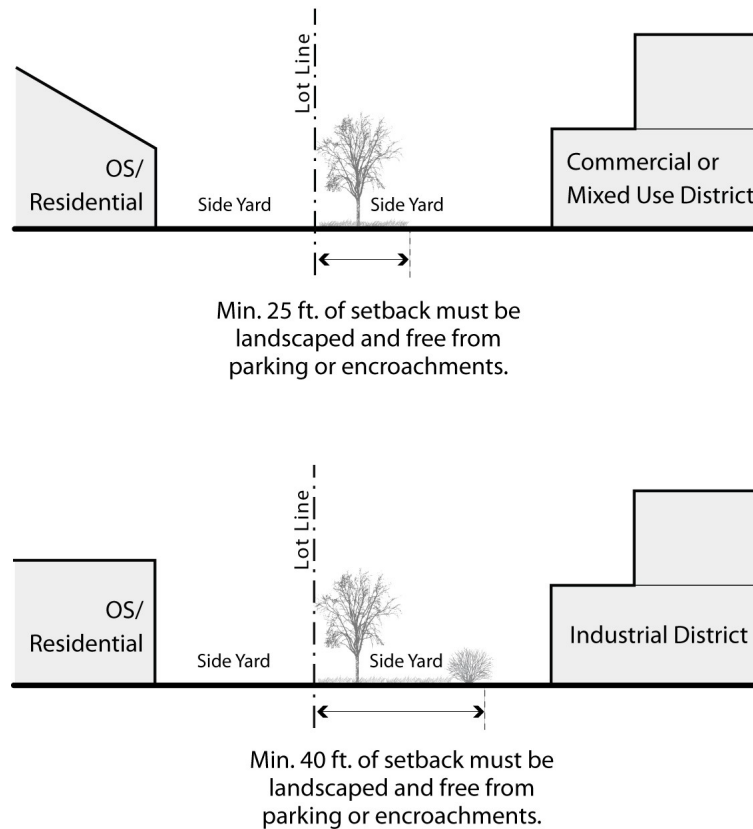


Figure 18.90.040.C. Landscaping of Interior Setbacks

[Res. 22-12; Ord. 22-03 § 2; Res. 21-09; Ord. 21-05 § 2; Res. 14-36 § 404.04; Ord. 14-12 § 1.]

18.90.050 Parking lot landscaping.

A. *Applicability.* The interior parking lot landscaping standards of this section apply to all off-street parking lots containing 10 or more parking spaces with exceptions where shade structures are provided for parking spaces. They do not apply to readapted residential properties in the MU-H Overlay District or vehicle/equipment storage lots or vehicle and equipment sales lots.

B. *Landscape Islands.*

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1. Parking lot landscape islands shall be installed at each end of a row of stalls and in between for a maximum of eight contiguous parking spaces.
2. Landscape islands shall be a minimum of eight feet wide and 15 feet in length for single-row and 30 feet in length for double-row parking. All measurements are to face of curb. Projects may be eligible for sustainable development bonus incentives if increased landscaping is provided.
3. Radius curbing shall be provided along drive aisles with a minimum four-foot radius. Curb cuts promoting rainwater harvesting are strongly recommended.
4. For rows of more than 16 parking spaces, landscape islands shall be staggered.

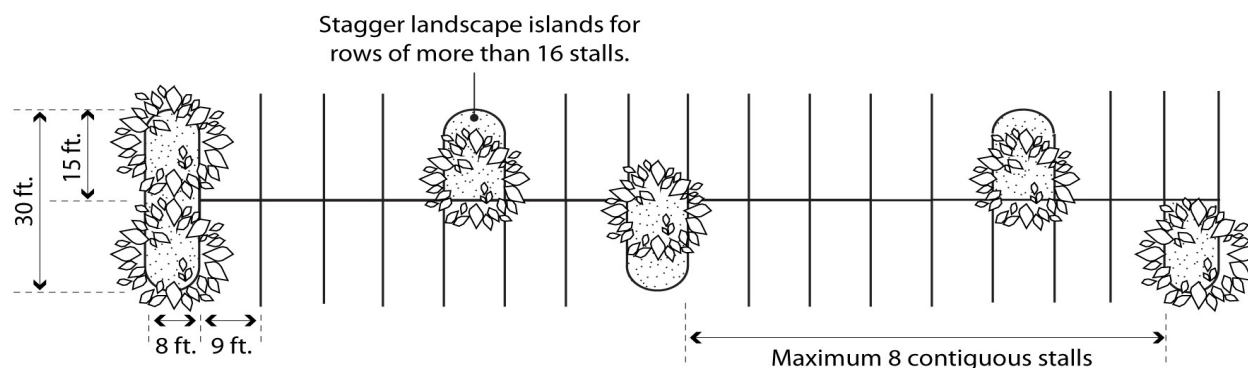


Figure 18.90.050.B.4. Landscape Islands

5. The maximum length of a covered parking canopy shall be 15 contiguous parking spaces. Landscape islands within a row of parking may be eliminated when a conflict with the covered parking canopy occurs. However, landscape islands must be installed at the end of all parking rows.
6. When parking canopies are adjacent to each other in a single row, the total length of each canopy shall not exceed 15 parking stalls and the adjoining canopies shall be separated by at least a 24-foot-wide landscape island as depicted in the following illustration:

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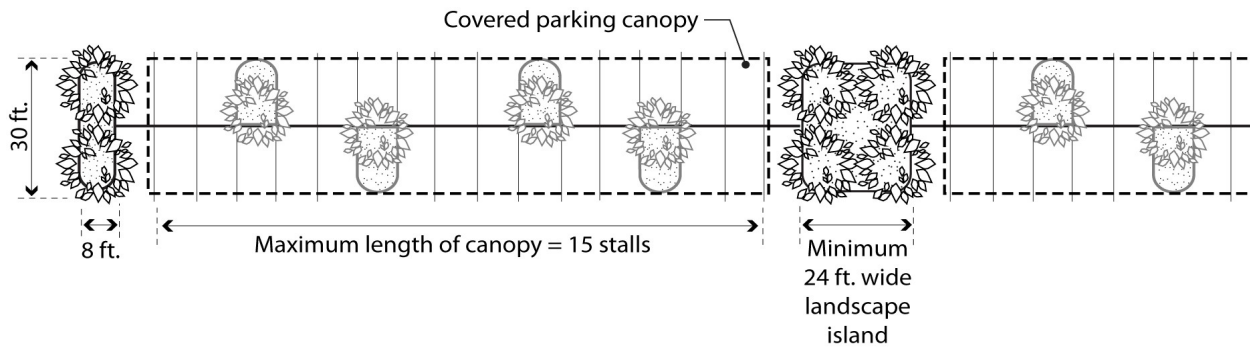


Figure 18.90.050.B.6. Adjacent Canopies

7. For parking lots containing more than 200 spaces, one eight-foot-by-15-foot staggered landscape island may be replaced with two landscape islands of at least 25 square feet clear landscape area each. Each landscape island/planter shall contain at least one tree and three shrubs. These landscape islands/planters may be designed in any combination of shape and size provided the minimum clear landscape area dimension is five feet.

8. To minimize conflict, a landscape island shall not be located adjacent to an ADA parking stall.

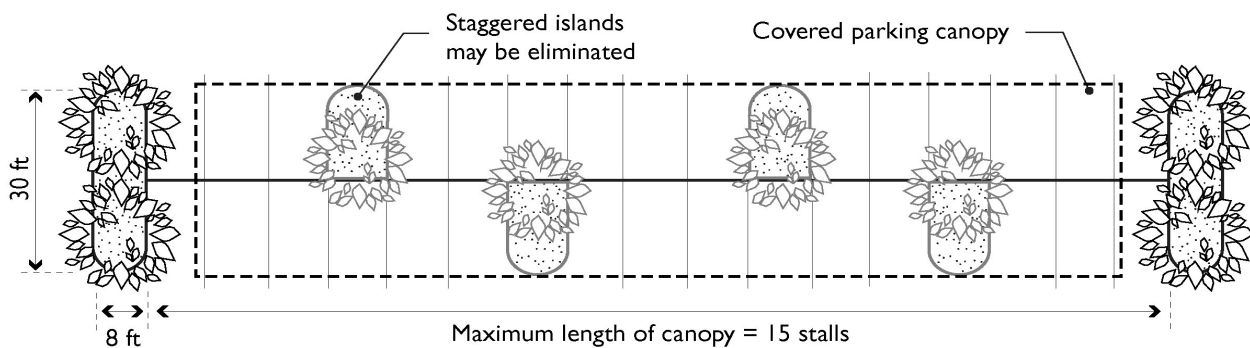


Figure 18.90.050.B.7. Covered Canopies

C. *Medians*. Where divider medians occur adjacent to head-in parking, vehicle overhang shall be as follows:

1. *Single-Row Parking*. A minimum seven-foot (or nine feet if a two-foot overhang is provided) landscape area is required. The required median width does not include a sidewalk.

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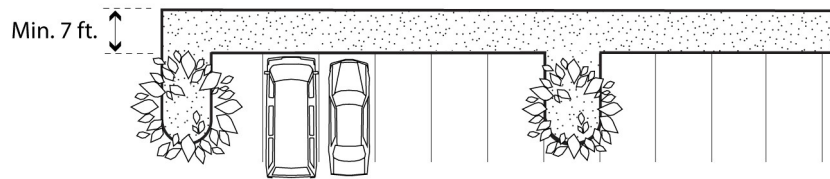


Figure 18.90.050.C.1. Single-Row Parking

2. *Double-Row Parking.* A minimum eight-foot landscape area (or 11 feet if a two-foot overhang is provided on both sides of median) measured from face of curb to face of curb is required where the median width does not include a sidewalk.

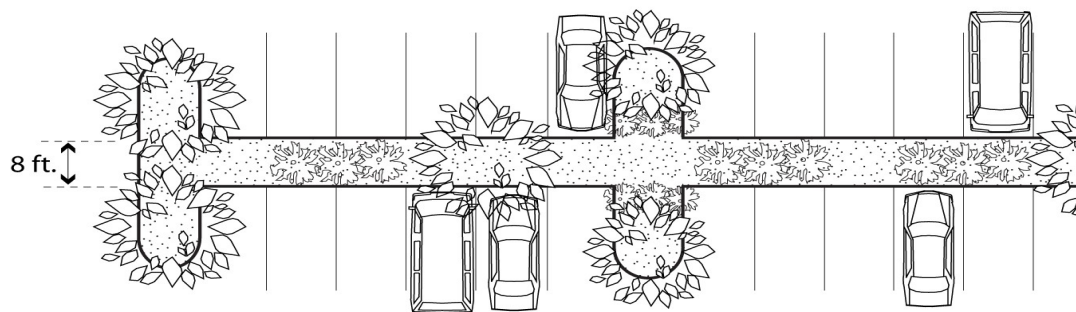


Figure 18.90.050.C.2. Double-Row Parking

3. *Medians with Sidewalks.* When a sidewalk is located within a median, shade trees should be placed so that at least 25 percent of the sidewalk is shaded at noon. The sidewalk shall be no less than four feet in width.

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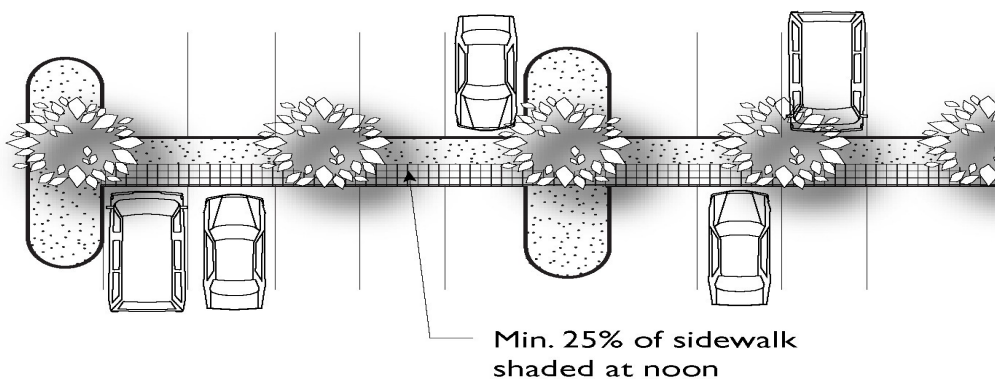


Figure 18.90.050.C.3. Medians with Sidewalks

D. *Plant Materials.*

1. *Number of Plants.*

a. *Parking Lot Landscape Islands.* One shade tree and three shrubs shall be provided for every 15-foot parking island.

b. *Parking Lot Divider Medians.* In addition to the above requirements, a minimum of one shade tree and six shrubs shall be provided for every eight parking spaces.

2. *Size of Plants.* A minimum 60 percent of the required trees shall be at least 24-inch box, and the remaining can be a minimum of 15-gallon box. Substitution based on plant size is not permissible for trees planted within the interior of a parking lot.

3. *Ground Cover.* All landscape planting areas that are not dedicated to trees or shrubs shall be permeable. No hardscape materials are permitted in designated planting areas.

[Res. 21-09; Ord. 21-05 § 2; Res. 14-36 § 404.05; Ord. 14-12 § 1.]

18.90.060 Required Landscape Maintenance

A. Individual property owners and/or Homeowner Associations shall properly maintain all landscape materials and landscaped areas, including that within the public rights-of-way adjacent to the development, in accordance with the approved landscape plan, except in and along public rights-of-way and easements where the City of Maricopa has agreed to provide maintenance.

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Replacement of dead trees along arterial and collector streets shall be by the individual property owners or the Homeowner's Association and shall be completed within three (3) months from the date of removal.

B. Minimum maintenance requirements for all landscape areas subject to an approved landscape plan are as follows:

1. All landscape areas shall be maintained in a neat and clean condition.
2. All landscape materials shall be maintained in a healthy, trimmed and weed-free condition to conform to the approved landscape plan.
3. Landscape materials shall be replaced as necessary to conform to the approved landscape plan.
4. Plant material that dies shall be replaced promptly upon its demise.
5. Plant material shall be maintained in a natural growth pattern or characteristic mature form.

C. Areas designated and intended for stormwater management shall be maintained in accordance with all City of Maricopa requirements.

D. Except for routine maintenance of landscape areas in accordance with this section, modifications to existing landscape materials subject to an approved landscape plan, are subject to Zoning Administrator approval. The Zoning Administrator may determine that, based on the scope of the modifications, a new landscape plan must be submitted, subject to approval as provided in this Zoning Ordinance.

E. It shall be unlawful for any person to:

1. Strip, excavate or remove topsoil, or store soil on a site, except in accordance with approved plans.
2. Severely prune plant materials to the extent that the plant materials' purpose in the approved landscape plan has been nullified.
3. Alter, or allow deterioration of, areas designated and intended for stormwater management, to invalidate the

18.90.0670 Alternative compliance.

An applicant who can demonstrate that the intent of this chapter can be exceeded, in whole or in part, may submit an alternative landscape plan (ALP) prepared in accordance with this section. The ALP shall include a narrative that clearly details the modifications being requested and explains how they enhance the landscape design principles listed below.

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A. *Required Elements*. In order to qualify for consideration, an ALP shall demonstrate compliance with the following:

1. *Use of Drought-Tolerant or Native Vegetation* achieved by the preservation of existing native vegetation or the incorporation of drought-tolerant or native vegetation.
2. *Compatibility with Surrounding Uses and Desert Environment*. A greater degree of compatibility with surrounding uses and the desert environment than a standard landscape plan would offer. Such as, rainwater harvesting practices and/or other sustainable development practices. The number of shrubs and trees proposed depends on the type of shrub or tree planted and size at full maturity.
3. *Water Efficiency*. Use of water-efficient, drip irrigation systems, and xeriscaping at appropriate locations is essential.

B. *Approval and Required Findings*. ALPs may be submitted in conjunction with any development application, including PAD plans. An ALP may be approved by the reviewing body upon finding that:

1. There are unique characteristics of the property, site design, storm water management, or use that warrant special consideration to modify or deviate from the requirements of this chapter and that these characteristics are not self-created.
2. The ALP meets or exceeds the minimum standards for plant materials of this chapter, while recognizing the unusual site design or use restraints on the property and specific characteristics of the landscape design justify declaration from specific members or pre-approved plans established for standard landscape plans.
3. Approval of an ALP will provide for both increased consistency and compatibility with adjacent properties and the natural desert environment.
4. The ALP demonstrates innovative use of plants and efficient use of water. [Res. 21-09; Ord. 21-05 § 2; Res. 14-36 § 404.06; Ord. 14-12 § 1.]

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The Maricopa City Code is current through Ordinance 22-20, passed August 16, 2022, and Resolution 22-40, passed August 16, 2022.

Disclaimer: The city clerk's office has the official version of the Maricopa City Code. Users should contact the city clerk's office for ordinances passed subsequent to the ordinance cited above.

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