



Legislation Text

File #: ID 21-0148, **Version:** 1

Public Hearing for the Adoption of an Amendment to the Land Development Ordinance: Amending Subsection (A) of Section 30-10-4.1, Plant Materials, of the Land Development Ordinance to Require a Plant Species and Genus Mix Among Newly Installed Canopy Trees, Understory Trees and Shrubs

Council Priority: Create an Environment to Promote Economic Development Opportunities and Job Creation / Maintain Infrastructure and Provide Sustainable Growth Opportunities

Department: Planning
Council District: All

Public Hearing: Yes
Advertising Date/By: March 4, 2021, and March 11, 2021 / City Clerk

Contact 1 and Phone: Sue Schwartz, 373-2149
Contact 2 and Phone: Steve Galanti, 373-2918

PURPOSE:

The purpose of the text amendment is to amend the Land Development Ordinance (LDO) to require a plant species and genus mix among newly installed canopy trees, understory trees and shrubs. The City Council is required to hold a public hearing on this amendment before considering its approval.

BACKGROUND:

Article 30-10 - Landscaping, of the Land Development Ordinance was adopted with the LDO in 2010, and has not been updated since. The ordinance specifies the number of canopy trees, understory trees, and shrubs that are required in each of the required buffer yards, as well as minimum plant size, but does not make any requirements as to the number of different species that must be included. This frequently leads to planting yards being installed that contain only a single species of shrubs and a single species of tree.

Since 2010, there have been several notable invasions of insect pests and diseases that affect trees and shrubs in our area, most recently the Emerald Ash Borer, which is rapidly killing Ash trees in the city and in the region. Research has shown that groups of urban trees or shrubs containing only one species are much more susceptible to these pests than similar groups that contain several species of tree and shrubs. Having a number of trees of the same species in close proximity allows the insect population or disease to rapidly increase and spread.

At the same time, there has been a growing body of research showing the importance of native trees and shrubs over non-native plants to the survival of birds, pollinators, and other wildlife. This has spawned an interest in trying to replace some of the natural native plants that are being removed during development with native trees and shrubs planted in urban areas.

In January 2020, a group of stakeholders began meeting to develop and propose amendments to the Landscaping section of the LDO. The issue of species diversity was one of the first issues addressed, and the

proposed amendment presented to you was agreed on by the group. The amendment will require a certain minimum number of species, which scales up based on the number of trees or shrubs required, and will require that at least 40% of the plants used on the site be native species. We believe that these changes will promote a healthy and thriving urban forest and landscape for residents, while presenting no disadvantage to developers and business owners.

BUDGET IMPACT:

This item will have no budget impact.

RECOMMENDATION / ACTION REQUESTED:

The Zoning Commission recommended this amendments at its February meeting on a vote of 7-0.

Staff recommends that City Council receive citizen comments and consider adoption of the proposed text amendment.