

Chapter 17.34 LANDSCAPING

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17.34.010 Purpose.

The purpose of this chapter is to protect and enhance Carmel-by-the-Sea's dominant Monterey Pine urbanized forest and landscaped amenities. It is also the purpose of this chapter to provide for water conservation, and to protect environmentally sensitive habitat areas from degradation by providing for the restoration of native vegetation in and around these areas. (Ord. 2004-02 § 1, 2004; Ord. 2004-01 § 1, 2004).

17.34.020 Applicability.

The provisions of this chapter shall be considered minimum standards and shall apply to all new development, or substantial alteration of existing development, proposed on private property anywhere in the City of Carmel-by-the-Sea. This chapter shall also apply to any development located in the ESHA overlay district that will disturb existing or potential native plant habitat. (Ord. 2004-02 § 1, 2004; Ord. 2004-01 § 1, 2004).

17.34.030 Relation to Chapter 17.48 CMC, Trees and Shrubs.

All new landscaping shall be installed and maintained in conformance with the standards in Chapter [17.48](#) CMC, Trees and Shrubs. (Ord. 2004-02 § 1, 2004; Ord. 2004-01 § 1, 2004).

17.34.040 Plan Requirements.

All new development or substantial alteration of existing development shall require submittal and approval of a forest enhancement and management plan and a landscape plan.

A. Site Plan. Prior to the submittal of design plans, a site plan shall be prepared by a qualified professional documenting topography, drainage features, existing trees and structures, street edge treatments, and existing conditions on adjacent properties.

B. Preliminary Site Assessment. Following submittal of the site plan, the City's planning staff and City Forester shall prepare a preliminary site assessment that includes an evaluation of the design character, streetscape attributes, potential historic resources, and forest resources of the block and neighborhood, as well as the resource constraints of the site.

C. Forest Enhancement and Maintenance Plan. Following the preparation of a preliminary site assessment, applicants shall submit a forest enhancement and maintenance plan which shall:

1. Address the impacts of the proposed development on the existing forest conditions of the site.
2. Recognize the constraints of the land and work within these limitations.
3. Minimize the extent of the excavation and fill on a site to avoid adverse impacts on trees, consistent with Chapter [17.48](#) CMC, Trees and Shrubs, and to ensure that new development follows the natural contours of the site.

D. Landscape Plan. Following approval of the forest enhancement and maintenance plan, a landscape plan shall be submitted in a manner and form established by the City Forester. Landscape plans shall document all proposed plantings as well as any tree removal, replacements, or relocations and shall document how new plantings will conform with the forest enhancement and maintenance plan. Landscape plans shall include the following:

1. Contents Required. Approved landscaping plans shall include a separate and simplified account of required new and replacement trees in eight-and-one-half-inch by 11-inch format to allow the Director to monitor the establishment of new trees and their growth to maturity. The account shall include a map of the location of required new and replacement trees, the date each tree was planted, and the size and species of each tree planted.
2. Approval Authority. The decision-making authority for the development permit shall also approve the landscaping plan or may delegate approval authority to the Planning Director who

shall review the plan in consultation with the City Forester. (Ord. 2004-02 § 1, 2004; Ord. 2004-01 § 1, 2004).

17.34.050 Relation to Landscape Design Guidelines.

All landscape plans shall be incorporate as many features recommended by the City's residential design guidelines as are appropriate and feasible for the proposed project. (Ord. 2004-02 § 1, 2004; Ord. 2004-01 § 1, 2004).

17.34.060 General Landscaping Standards.

A. Plant Selection.

1. Landscape designs shall use plant species similar in character to those species established along the block and on adjoining properties except that use of invasive species is prohibited.
2. A minimum of 75 percent of new plant materials on a site shall be native plants and/or noninvasive drought-tolerant plants as determined by the City Forester.
3. Much of Carmel's forested charm comes from the informality of unplanted public rights-of-way. This also provides for off-street parking and adequate space for public safety vehicles to pass through the streets safely. All plants within landscaped areas on any public right-of-way adjacent to private property shall be drought-tolerant and low water use predominantly native species as determined by the City Forester.
4. A minimum of 75 percent of new plant materials in all open space areas on project sites in the commercial, R-4, and R-1 districts shall be planted with drought-tolerant and low water use species as determined by the City Forester.

B. Landscape Design.

1. Plant material located in areas visible from the street or other public places shall be arranged in a relaxed, informal pattern consistent with the character of the Carmel forest. Formal, unnatural arrangements shall be avoided except for focal points.
2. The use of bedding plants and exotic flowering species shall be limited to small accents at walkways, entries, or near special site features, unless otherwise approved by the City Forester.

C. Paving Materials and Design.

1. Paving materials used for driveways, patios, and walkways, shall be consistent in color and texture with native materials. Use of materials that allow for percolation of rain into the soil and reduce water run-off is encouraged.

2. Paved areas shall be designed to be small, informal, and intimate. Large, continuous areas of paving shall be avoided. Additional landscaping may be required to soften the appearance of paved areas.

D. Irrigation and Maintenance.

1. Landscaping plans for projects in any zoning district shall, where feasible, require the use of water retention storage devices such as cisterns or underground bladders to capture precipitation or surface runoff for landscape maintenance purposes or detention basins or berms to retain water on-site for natural percolation into the soil.

2. Irrigation systems shall be designed to minimize the use of water. Landscaping irrigation systems for projects in any zoning district shall use low-output sprinkler heads and/or drip irrigation.

3. Landscaping plans for projects in any zoning district that include paved areas shall include design features such as sand-set paving and/or drainage collection and distribution systems that enhance surface water percolation.

4. Privately installed irrigation systems within a public right-of-way adjacent to private property shall require the approval of an encroachment permit and shall be allowed only in the commercial and R-4 zoning districts. (Ord. 2004-02 § 1, 2004; Ord. 2004-01 § 1, 2004).

17.34.070 Landscaping Standards for Residential Districts.

A. General Standards.

1. All properties, private and public, located in the R-1 or R-4 district shall contribute to the urbanized forest or other vegetation characteristic of the neighborhood by harboring an appropriate mix of upper and lower canopy trees and/or shrubs consistent with the neighborhood context and the neighborhood streetscape. Forested neighborhoods shall perpetuate the Monterey Pine, Monterey Cypress, Coast Live Oak or Redwood forest that predominates in the vicinity.

2. Proposed residential projects shall preserve adequate space for the growth of trees or other vegetation.

3. When the Planning Commission reviews building plans for proposed projects, adequate space shall be preserved for the growth of trees or other vegetation and the Commission shall ensure that such space is used for this purpose through the review and approval of landscaping plans. The purpose of this requirement is to perpetuate and enhance the established forest character throughout the district on both public and private property in each neighborhood where it exists. The proposed location of upper canopy trees shall also be studied for their impact on the protected viewshed in the R-4 district established in Chapter [17.12](#) CMC.

B. Public Right-of-Way in the R-1 District.

1. Landscaping in public rights-of-way in the R-1 district is limited to drought-tolerant plants that are native and are consistent with the character of the Monterey Peninsula environment.

2. Plants should be natural in character and informally arranged to reflect the surrounding forest atmosphere. Landscaping shall not include bedding plants, highly colorful flowering plants and “formal plant arrangements.”

3. Landscaping should consist of leafy ground covers, low shrubs and/or trees of the urbanized forest. Natural dirt rights-of-way with pine needles is also permitted. Parking spaces may be defined in the unpaved right-of-way with landscaping.

4. Paving, gravel, boulders, logs, timbers, planters or other above-ground encroachments are prohibited, except paving for driveways. Pathways paved only with decomposed granite or other soil materials made of soil materials are permitted. (Amended during 8/09 update; Ord. 2004-02 § 1, 2004; Ord. 2004-01 § 1, 2004).

17.34.080 Landscaping Standards for Commercial Districts.

A. Landscaping Requirements for All Commercial Development. The following standards apply to all commercial districts in the City.

1. A minimum of 50 percent of the required open space on each site shall be landscaped. Landscaping may include nonliving materials such as garden benches, water features and patterned paving treatments as long as the combined total area of such plant alternatives is not used as more than 25 percent of the required landscaping on any site. All landscaping improvements shall include upper canopy trees on-site and/or in the sidewalk in front of the property whenever possible.

2. Building sites contiguous to the R-1 district shall provide sufficient landscaping and trees to blend visually with open space and landscaping on adjacent sites.

B. Landscaping Requirements for Gasoline Stations. Landscaping shall be provided and maintained in a healthy state to give an attractive appearance to the public street along 80 percent of the street frontage not occupied by driveways. Planting shall be of a type that will provide a minimum height of four feet along no less than 60 percent of the required landscaped frontage.

C. Landscape Requirements for Surface Parking Areas. Building sites incorporating surface parking lots shall include at least 15 percent of the site area in landscaping. Landscaping shall be distributed along all street frontages and pedestrian walkways that are adjacent to parking areas to help screen parked automobiles from view. Plant species and/or planters should be designed to achieve a height of at least five feet above the surface of the parking lot except where this would conflict with safe visibility or good site design. Landscaping shall also be provided within the interior of surface lots to break up large expanses of paving. Parking lots with four or more vehicles shall provide interior landscaping of at least 10 square feet per vehicle. (Ord. 2004-02 § 1, 2004; Ord. 2004-01 § 1, 2004).

17.34.090 Landscaping Standards for Overlay Districts.

A. Beach Overlay and Park Overlay District. The following standards apply to the park overlay district.

1. New native trees or other significant native vegetation shall be planted between the buildings on the site and the adjoining parklands when such vegetation would enhance the visual resources of the park by screening the buildings from public view, and when there is adequate space available to make such landscaping practical.

2. At least 75 percent of all landscaped areas on the property visible from the park shall be planted with drought-tolerant and/or native species. Areas of the site adjacent to parklands shall be landscaped and designed to establish a natural transition to the parkland vegetation. Trees approved for removal shall be replaced by two or more native specimen trees listed in the forest management plan preferably on-site or, if necessary, in the adjoining park as determined by the City Forester. Invasive species shall be removed if currently established.

B. ESHA Overlay District. Landscaping plans for projects in the ESHA overlay district shall provide for native vegetation restoration consistent with performance criteria established in the biological resources report required in CMC [17.20.220\(D\)](#). The plan shall also be consistent with all standards set forth in CMC [17.20.220](#), Environmentally Sensitive Habitats. (Ord. 2004-02 § 1, 2004; Ord. 2004-01 § 1, 2004).

Disclaimer: The city clerk's office has the official version of the Carmel-by-the-Sea Municipal Code. Users should contact the city clerk's office for ordinances passed subsequent to the ordinance cited above.

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