

## **STAFF REPORT ON PETITION FOR SUBDIVISION REGULATION AMENDMENT**

### **SRA 2021-2: AMENDMENT TO ARTICLE 6: STREET TREE LOCATION NEAR INTERSECTIONS**

INITIATED BY: Urban County Planning Commission as requested by the Divisions of Environmental Services and Traffic Engineering

PROPOSED TEXT: See attached. Amendments to Article 6 are shown in red with additions underlined and deletions ~~strikethrough~~.

#### **STAFF REVIEW:**

The Urban County Planning Commission, at the request of the Divisions of Environmental Services and Traffic Engineering, initiated an amendment to Article 6-10 of the Land Subdivision Regulations regarding the location of street trees near intersections. The primary intent of this revision is to improve safety at street intersections within the community, particularly within and between residential developments. The following revision is proposed:

6-10(b)(2) LOCATION CRITERIA - Two options shall be permitted at the developer's discretion. The first option shall be to place the trees within a planting easement with a minimum width of 5', to be located immediately adjacent and parallel to the street right-of-way. The second option shall be to plant the trees within the street right-of-way between the street curb and the sidewalk in the area, commonly called the "utility strip." The developer's choice shall be shown on the appropriate subdivision and development plans, and shall be consistent on any given street. Large and small trees may be planted in a utility strip with a width of seven (7) feet or greater. Medium trees may be planted in a utility strip with a width of five (5) feet or greater. No street tree shall be located in the right-of-way within ~~fifty (50)~~ seventy-five (75) feet of the street intersection.

6-10(c)(1) TYPE, NUMBER, AND LOCATION - A continuous 6' high hedge shall be required with the same species to be used for the entire frontage of the development. Where possible, the hedge should be planted in the right-of-way, and 3' from the right-of-way fence. Trees should be planted in the right-of-way with the exact location to be approved by the Traffic Engineer and the Commercial Landscape Examiner. All trees are to be planted a minimum of 10' from the right-of-way fence. Where there is less than 10' between the right-of-way fence and the sidewalk, or where there is no sidewalk, less than 10' feet between the right-of-way fence and the curb line of the arterial street, no trees are required. No street tree shall be located in the right-of-way within ~~fifty (50)~~ seventy-five (75) feet of the intersection. Trees shall be required as described in Table B. (The Planting Manual and Plant Materials List shall be used to meet the minimum requirements set forth herein).

Street tree location relative to the street intersection(s) has been identified as a long term visibility problem in our community by the Division of Traffic Engineering and the Division of Environmental Services. The trees can potentially block the view of traffic control devices, oncoming traffic, pedestrians and cyclists. This is aggravated by other human activities that can impede the line of sight necessary to maintain safe and functional intersections. This is true in both our urban and rural environments, hence the change in both subsections 6-10(b)(2) and 6-10(c)(1). Blocking a traffic control device or intersection visibility can create a situation that leads to accidents resulting in injury, loss of property, loss of life and can impeded the safe and efficient provision of public services. The number of required street trees will not change, only the location; therefore, the goal of increasing the tree canopy coverage in Fayette County will not be impacted by the proposed amendment.

This amendment to the Land Subdivision Regulations is in agreement with the 2018 Comprehensive Plan, and will serve to implement the recommendations of the adopted Comprehensive Plan. Specifically, this amendment is supported by the following policies:

- Theme A “Growing Successful Neighborhoods”
  - Design Policy #1 - Utilize a people-first design, ensuring that roadways are moving people efficiently and providing pedestrian infrastructure that is context sensitive to the vehicle environment and land uses.
  - Design Policy #5 - Provide pedestrian-friendly street patterns & walkable blocks to create inviting streetscapes.
  
- Theme D “Improving a Desirable Community”
  - Connectivity Policy #5 – Streets should be designed for the desired speed, using built-in traffic calming measures such as roundabouts, narrower street widths, chicanes, medians, etc.

In summary, this proposed amendment will enhance traffic, pedestrian and cyclist safety; reduce traffic accidents and assist in better response times for emergency services, all of which benefit the community.

The Staff Recommends: **Approval**, for the following reasons:

1. The proposed amendment to Article 6-10 of the Land Subdivision Regulations to reduce street tree conflicts near intersections will improve public health and safety by improving visibility and reducing accidents at intersections.
2. The number of required street trees remains unchanged; therefore, the goal of increasing the tree canopy coverage in Fayette County will not be impacted by the proposed amendment.
3. The proposed amendment to Article 6-10 of the Land Subdivision Regulations will enhance the safe provision of public services, as police, fire, emergency services and waste management all utilize local streets within residential neighborhoods and along rural roads on a daily basis.