

CHAPTER 530 – SITE PLAN REVIEW

ARTICLE I. GENERAL PROVISIONS

530.10. Purpose. Site plan review standards are established to promote development that is compatible with nearby properties, neighborhood character, natural features and plans adopted by the city council, to minimize pedestrian and vehicular conflict, to reinforce public spaces, to promote public safety, and to visually enhance development. The regulations recognize the unique character of land and development throughout the city and the need for flexibility in site plan review.

530.20. Definitions. As used in this chapter, the following words and phrases shall mean:

Public pathway. Any publicly owned pathway, greenway or bike trail including, but not limited to, the Midtown Greenway, Loring Greenway or the Humboldt Greenway.

530.30. Buildings and uses subject to site plan review.

(a) *In general.* Table 530-1, Buildings and Uses Subject to Site Plan Review, lists all buildings and uses subject to site plan review. The site plan review requirements of this chapter shall apply to the establishment or expansion of any building, principal use or freestanding accessory parking garage listed on the table, except as otherwise provided by this section. Site plan review shall not be required where the property has received site plan approval and is in full compliance with such approval, and the establishment or expansion of the use does not alter the approved site plan. Any person with a legal or equitable interest in a property may choose to voluntarily file an application for site plan review for any building or use not listed in Table 530-1, Buildings and Uses Subject to Site Plan Review. Voluntary applications shall be subject to administrative site plan review.

(b) *Downtown districts.* Any building containing fifty thousand (50,000) square feet or more of gross floor area located in the Downtown districts shall be exempt from the general landscaping and screening requirements. The parking and loading landscaping and screening requirements shall apply.

Table 530-1 Buildings and Uses Subject to Site Plan Review

<p>Any new principal non-residential or mixed use building. The site plan review application may be reviewed administratively if both of the following apply: (1) The project or proposal does not include any other land use application requiring a public hearing. (2) The building contains less than twenty thousand (20,000) square feet of gross floor area.</p>
<p>Any addition to a non-residential or mixed use building that would increase its gross floor area by two thousand five hundred (2,500) square feet or more. The site plan review application may be reviewed administratively if each of the following apply: (1) The project or proposal does not include any other land use application requiring a public hearing. (2) The building addition contains less than twenty thousand (20,000) square feet of gross floor area.¹</p>
<p>Any building or use containing five (5) or more new or additional dwelling units or rooming units.² The site plan review application may be reviewed administratively if both of the following apply: (1) The project or proposal does not include any other land use application requiring a public hearing. (2) The proposal includes fewer than ten (10) new or additional dwelling units or rooming units.</p>
<p>Any use with a drive-through facility</p>
<p>Automobile services uses</p>
<p>Freestanding accessory parking garages containing thirty (30) or more new or additional parking spaces³</p>

Principal parking facilities containing ten (10) or more new or additional parking spaces ⁴
Public services and utilities uses
Recycling facility
Single and two-family dwellings and multiple-family dwellings having three (3) or four (4) dwelling units The site plan review application shall be reviewed administratively and shall be subject to the standards of Article VI, Single and two-family dwellings and multiple-family dwellings having three (3) or four (4) dwelling units.
Transportation uses

¹ Additions that total two thousand five hundred (2,500) square feet or more in any three (3) year period shall be subject to site plan review.

² Additions that total five (5) or more dwelling or rooming units in any three (3) year period shall be subject to site plan review and additions that total ten (10) or more dwelling or rooming units in any three (3) year period shall require a public hearing and shall not be eligible for administrative review.

³ Additions that total thirty (30) or more parking spaces in any three (3) year period shall be subject to site plan review.

⁴ Additions that total ten (10) or more parking spaces in any three (3) year period shall be subject to site plan review.

530.40. Application for site plan review. Any person having a legal or equitable interest in a property may file an application for site plan review on a form approved by the zoning administrator, as specified in Chapter 525, Administration and Enforcement. The zoning administrator shall determine whether the application requires site plan review or administrative site plan review pursuant to Table 530-1, Buildings and Uses Subject to Site Plan Review.

530.50. Hearing on application for site plan review. The city planning commission shall hold a public hearing on each complete application for site plan review as provided in Chapter 525, Administration and Enforcement. All findings and decisions of the city planning commission concerning site plan review shall be final, subject to appeal to the city council as specified in Chapter 525, Administration and Enforcement.

530.60. Administrative site plan review. The zoning administrator shall conduct the administrative review of all applications for administrative site plan review. All findings and decisions of the zoning administrator shall be final, subject to appeal to the city planning commission, as specified in Chapter 525, Administration and Enforcement.

530.70. Required findings for site plan review. The city planning commission or zoning administrator shall make each of the following findings before approving a site plan review application:

- (1) The site plan conforms to all applicable standards of this chapter.
- (2) The site plan conforms to all applicable regulations of this zoning ordinance and is consistent with the applicable policies of the comprehensive plan and applicable small area plans adopted by the city council.

530.80. Alternative compliance. The city planning commission or zoning administrator may approve alternatives to any site plan review requirement upon finding any of the following:

- (1) The alternative meets the intent of this chapter and the site plan includes amenities or improvements that address any adverse effects of the alternative. Site amenities may include but are not limited to additional open space, additional landscaping and screening, green roof, decorative pavers, ornamental metal fencing, architectural enhancements, transit facilities, bicycle facilities, preservation of natural features, restoration of previously damaged natural environment, rehabilitation of existing structures that have been locally designated or have been determined to be eligible to be locally designated as historic structures, and design which is similar in form, scale and materials to existing structures on the site and to surrounding development.
- (2) Strict adherence to the requirements is impractical because of site location or conditions and the proposed alternative meets the intent of this chapter.

- (3) The proposed alternative is consistent with applicable development plans or development objectives adopted by the city council and meets the intent of this chapter.

530.90. Conditions and guarantees for site plan review.

- (a) *In general.* The city planning commission or zoning administrator may impose such conditions on any proposed site plan and require such guarantees as it deems reasonable and necessary to protect the public interest and to ensure compliance with the standards and purposes of this zoning ordinance and the applicable policies of the comprehensive plan .
- (b) *Performance bond or letter of credit.* The city planning commission or zoning administrator may require a performance bond or letter of credit to be supplied by the applicant guaranteeing completion of required site improvements as a condition of site plan approval. The amount of such bond shall be set at one hundred twenty-five (125) percent of the estimated cost of the improvements.

530.100. Changes in approved site plan.

- (a) *Minor changes.* The zoning administrator may authorize minor changes in the placement and size of improvements and the type of exterior materials for an approved site plan, if the changes are required because of conditions that were unknown at the time the permit was approved, and the zoning administrator determines that the changes are consistent with the intent of this chapter and the findings made by the city planning commission or zoning administrator in connection with the approval of the site plan.
- (b) *Other changes.* Changes to the site plan affecting bulk regulations, parking and loading, or components of the site plan other than minor changes in the placement and size of improvements and the type of exterior materials shall require amendment to the site plan. The requirements for application and approval of a site plan amendment shall be the same as the requirements for original application and approval.

ARTICLE II. BUILDING PLACEMENT AND DESIGN

530.110. Building placement.

- (a) *In general.* The placement of buildings shall reinforce the street wall, maximize natural surveillance and visibility, and facilitate pedestrian access and circulation. The first floor of buildings shall be located not more than eight (8) feet from the front lot line, except where a greater yard is required by this zoning ordinance. In the case of a corner lot, the building wall abutting each street shall be located not more than eight (8) feet from the lot line, except where a greater yard is required by this zoning ordinance. The area between the building and the lot line shall include amenities such as landscaping, tables and seating. Buildings shall be oriented so that at least one (1) principal entrance faces the public street rather than the interior of the site. In the case of a corner lot, the principal entrance shall face the front lot line.
- (b) *Exceptions.* The city planning commission or zoning administrator may approve alternatives to these requirements, subject to section 530.80, provided that where applicable, any adverse effects shall be mitigated by a decorative fence, masonry wall, or planted materials that reinforce the street wall.

530.120. Building design.

- (a) *Building walls.* Building walls shall provide architectural detail and shall contain windows as required in this section in order to create visual interest and to increase the security of adjacent outdoor spaces by maximizing natural surveillance and visibility. In larger buildings, architectural elements, including recesses or projections, windows and entries, shall be emphasized to divide the building into smaller identifiable sections. Blank, uninterrupted walls that do not include windows, entries, recesses or projections, or other architectural elements, shall not exceed twenty-five (25) feet in length. Exterior materials shall be durable, including but not limited to masonry, brick, stone, stucco, wood, metal, and glass. The exterior materials and appearance of the rear and side walls of any building shall be similar to and compatible with the front of the building. The use of plain face concrete block as an exterior material shall be prohibited where fronting along a public street, public sidewalk, public pathway, or adjacent to a residence or office residence district.

(b) *Entrances, windows, and active functions.*

(1) *Residential uses.* Principal entrances shall be clearly defined and emphasized through the use of architectural features such as porches and roofs or other details that express the importance of the entrance. Multiple entrances shall be encouraged. Twenty (20) percent of the walls on the first floor and ten (10) percent of the walls on each floor above the first that face a public street, public sidewalk, public pathway, or on-site parking lot, shall be windows as follows:

- a. Windows shall be vertical in proportion.
- b. Windows shall be distributed in a more or less even manner.

Minimum window area at the first floor or ground level shall be measured between two (2) and ten (10) feet above the adjacent grade. Minimum window area on walls above the first floor shall be measured between the upper surface of a floor and the upper surface of the floor above.

(2) *Nonresidential uses.* Principal entrances shall be clearly defined and emphasized through the use of architectural features such as roofs, or other details that express the importance of the entrance. Multiple entrances shall be encouraged. Thirty (30) percent of the walls on the first floor and ten (10) percent of the walls on each floor above the first that face a public street, public sidewalk, public pathway, or on-site parking lot, shall be windows as follows:

- a. Windows shall be vertical in proportion.
- b. Windows shall be distributed in a more or less even manner.
- c. The bottom of any window used to satisfy the ground floor window requirement may not be more than four (4) feet above the adjacent grade.
- d. First floor or ground floor windows shall have clear or lightly tinted glass with a visible light transmittance ratio of six-tenths (0.6) or higher.
- e. First floor or ground floor windows shall allow views into and out of the building at eye level. Shelving, mechanical equipment or other similar fixtures shall not block views into and out of the building in the area between four (4) and seven (7) feet above the adjacent grade. However, window area in excess of the minimum required area shall not be required to allow views into and out of the building.
- f. Industrial uses in Table 550-1, Principal Uses in the Industrial Districts, may provide less than thirty (30) percent windows on the walls that face an on-site parking lot, provided the parking lot is not located between the building and a public street, public sidewalk or public pathway.
- g. In multiple tenant buildings, each individual ground level tenant space that faces a public street, public sidewalk, public pathway, or on-site parking lot shall comply with the minimum window requirements of this section.

Minimum window area at the first floor or ground level shall be measured between two (2) and ten (10) feet above the adjacent grade. Minimum window area on walls above the first floor shall be measured between the upper surface of a floor and the upper surface of the floor above.

(3) *Ground floor active functions.* Except for industrial uses in Table 550-1, Principal Industrial Uses in the Industrial Districts, the first floor or ground level of buildings shall be designed to accommodate active functions by ensuring that parking, loading, storage, or mechanical equipment rooms are limited to no more than thirty (30) percent of the linear building frontage along each wall facing a public street, public sidewalk, or public pathway.

(c) *Roof lines.* The form and pitch of roof lines shall be similar to surrounding buildings.

(d) *Parking garages.*

(1) *Design.* In addition to compliance with the other standards of this article, parking garages shall comply with the following:

- a. In the downtown districts, requirements for active uses between the ground floor of principal and accessory parking garages and any public sidewalk, as required by Chapter 549, Downtown Districts, shall apply. In all other districts, parking garages shall comply with provisions of this article requiring active functions on the ground floor.
- b. Above the ground floor, in any structure that includes a principal or accessory parking garage, parking and loading shall be limited to no more than thirty (30) percent of the linear frontage of each floor facing a public street, public sidewalk, or public pathway.
- c. Vehicles and internal garage lighting shall be screened as viewed from the public right-of-way and nearby properties.
- d. Where two (2) or more levels of parking are provided above ground, the top level of parking garages shall be enclosed or screened as viewed from above.
- e. All garage elevations shall use exterior materials to cover and diminish the visibility of any sloping floor.
- f. Design features that facilitate future conversion of parking garages to other uses, including flat floors, are encouraged.

(2) *Floor area in downtown districts.* The combined, above-grade floor area of principal and accessory parking garages in the downtown districts shall not exceed the gross floor area of all other uses located on the same zoning lot.

(e) *Exceptions.* The city planning commission or zoning administrator may approve alternatives to these requirements, subject to section 530.80, provided that the security of the surrounding area is considered and that any adverse effects are mitigated through the use of wall enhancements or architectural features, including display windows, that create visual interest.

ARTICLE III. ACCESS AND CIRCULATION

530.130. Pedestrian access. Clear and well-lighted walkways shall connect building entrances to the adjacent public sidewalk and to any parking facilities located on the site. Such walkways shall be a minimum of four (4) feet in width.

530.140. Transit access. Where transit shelters are provided, such shelters shall be well lighted and weather protected, and shall be placed in locations that promote security through natural surveillance and visibility.

530.150. Vehicular access.

(a) *In general.* Vehicular access and circulation shall be designed to minimize conflicts with pedestrian traffic and with surrounding residential uses. Curb cuts for vehicles shall be consolidated wherever possible.

(b) *Vehicular alley access.* Where vehicular alley access is provided, traffic shall be directed to minimize impact upon residential properties. Alley access shall be prohibited for the following uses when located on a block containing any residence or office residence zoning:

- (1) Automobile services uses.
- (2) Transportation uses.
- (3) Any use with a drive-through facility.
- (4) Any non-residential use over four thousand (4,000) square feet.

(c) *Exceptions.* The city planning commission or zoning administrator may approve exceptions to allow alley access where strict adherence is impractical because of site location or conditions and the exception meets the intent of this section. The city planning commission or zoning administrator shall accept input from the fire, police, and public works departments and shall consider, but not be limited to, the following factors when determining whether to approve an exception:

- (1) The number of residential uses on the block and their use of the alley.
- (2) The number of commercial uses on the block and their use of the alley.
- (3) The location of the site on the block and its proximity to the end of the block.
- (4) Other access to/from the site.
- (5) The nature of the use and the number of vehicle trips the site is expected to generate.
- (6) Public safety and crime prevention.
- (7) The hours and days of operation of the use.
- (8) Alley design and traffic safety impacts.

(d) *Service access.* Access for service vehicles shall be provided which does not conflict with pedestrian traffic. Where practical, truck loading areas shall be located away from residence and office residence districts.

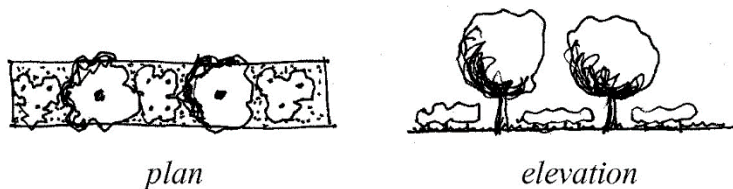
(e) *Reduction of impervious surface.* To the extent possible, site plans shall minimize the use of impervious surfaces. The use of interlocking pavers capable of carrying a wheel load of four thousand (4,000) pounds is encouraged for areas that serve low impact parking needs such as remote parking lots, parking facilities for periodic uses and parking in natural amenity areas.

ARTICLE IV. LANDSCAPING AND SCREENING

530.160. General landscaping and screening.

(a) *Required landscaping.* Overall composition and location of landscaped areas shall complement the scale of the development and its surroundings. In general, larger, well-placed contiguous planting areas shall be preferred to smaller, disconnected areas. Not less than twenty (20) percent of the site not occupied by buildings including all required landscaped yards shall be landscaped as follows (for purposes of this provision, a canopy or service area canopy shall not be considered a building):

- (1) Not less than one (1) canopy tree for each five hundred (500) square feet, or fraction thereof.
- (2) Not less than one (1) shrub for each one hundred (100) square feet, or fraction thereof.
- (3) The remainder of the landscaped area shall be covered with turf grass, native grasses or other perennial flowering plants, vines, shrubs or trees.



General Landscaping: Plan/Elevation

(b) *Required screening.* Where screening is required by this zoning ordinance, such screening shall be six (6) feet in height, unless otherwise specified, except in required front yards where such screening shall be three (3) feet in height. Required screening shall be at least ninety-five (95) percent opaque throughout the year, unless otherwise specified. All screening shall be subject to the regulations of Chapter 535, Regulations of General Applicability governing fences. Required screening shall be satisfied by one (1) or a combination of the following:

- (1) A decorative fence.



Required Screening: Decorative fence

- (2) A masonry wall.



Required Screening: Masonry wall

- (3) A hedge.



Required Screening: Hedge

(c) *Required landscaped yard and screening.* Where both a landscaped yard and screening is required by this zoning ordinance, such required landscaped yard shall be satisfied by one (1) of the following:

- (1) Along a rear or interior side lot line, locate the required landscaped yard inside or outside the required screen.



Required Landscaped Yard and Screening: Yard outside the required screen

- (2) Along a public street, public sidewalk or public pathway, locate the required landscaped yard outside the required screen unless such screen is highly decorative and is less than sixty (60) percent opaque, such as a wrought iron fence.



Required Landscaped Yard and Screening: Yard inside or outside the required screen

530.170. Parking and loading landscaping and screening.

(a) *In general.* Parking and loading facilities, and all other areas upon which motor vehicles may be located, including but not limited to drive-through facilities, pump island service areas and stacking spaces, shall comply with the standards of this chapter and the applicable regulations of this zoning ordinance. Where this section requires a landscaped yard, such yard shall remain unobstructed from the ground level to the sky, except that fencing shall be allowed.

(b) *Parking and loading fronting along a public street, public sidewalk or public pathway.* Parking and loading facilities, and all other areas upon which motor vehicles may be located fronting along a public street, public sidewalk or public pathway shall comply with the following standards:

- (1) A landscaped yard at least seven (7) feet wide shall be provided along the public street, sidewalk or pathway, except where a greater yard is required. If a parking facility contains over one hundred (100) parking spaces, the minimum required landscaped yard shall be increased to nine (9) feet in width.
- (2) Screening consisting of either a masonry wall, fence, berm or hedge or combination thereof that forms a screen three (3) feet in height and not less than sixty (60) percent opaque shall be provided, except that where areas are devoted principally to the parking or loading of trucks or commercial vehicles of more than fifteen thousand (15,000) pounds screening six (6) feet in height and not less than sixty (60) percent opaque shall be required.
- (3) Not less than one (1) tree shall be provided for each twenty-five (25) linear feet or fraction thereof of parking or loading area lot frontage.

(c) *Parking and loading abutting or across an alley from a residence or office residence district, or any permitted or conditional residential use.* Parking and loading facilities and all other areas upon which motor vehicles may be located that abut or are across an alley from a residence or office residence district or a permitted or conditional residential use shall comply with the following standards:

- (1) A landscaped yard at least seven (7) feet wide shall be provided along the property line or alley, except where a greater yard is required. If a parking facility contains over one hundred (100) parking spaces, the minimum required landscaped yard shall be increased to nine (9) feet in width.
- (2) Screening at least ninety-five (95) percent opaque shall be provided as specified in section 530.160(b).

(d) *Interior landscaping of parking lots.* The corners of parking lots where rows of parking spaces leave areas unavailable for parking or vehicular circulation shall be landscaped as specified for a required landscaped yard. Such spaces may include architectural features such as benches, kiosks or bicycle parking.

(e) *Distance to trees.* In parking lots of ten (10) spaces or more, no parking space shall be located more than fifty (50) feet from the center of an on-site deciduous tree. Tree islands located within the interior of a parking lot shall have a minimum width of seven (7) feet in any direction.

530.180. Landscaping of other areas. All other areas not governed by sections 530.160 and 530.170 and not occupied by buildings, parking and loading facilities or driveways, shall be covered with turf grass, native grasses or other perennial flowering plants, vines, mulch, shrubs, trees or edible landscaping.

530.190. Ecological function. In its review of landscaped areas the city planning commission shall include consideration of the following:

- (1) Interception and filtration of precipitation and stormwater through maximizing multiple-layered vegetative cover.
- (2) Reduction of reflectance and urban heat island effects through increasing canopy cover.
- (3) Conservation of energy through strategic shading and the use of windbreaks.
- (4) Selection and placement of plant materials to limit required maintenance of landscaped areas.
- (5) Preservation or restoration of natural amenities.

530.200. Plant material standards. Landscape species shall be indigenous or proven adaptable to the climate, but shall not be invasive on native species. Plant materials shall comply with the following standards:

- (1) All required trees shall be a minimum of two and one-half (2.5) inches caliper in size, except cluster or multiple trunk specimens, which shall be a minimum of one (1) inch caliper in size.
- (2) All required shrubs shall be a minimum of one (1) gallon container size.
- (3) All landscape materials shall be tolerant of specific site conditions, including but not limited to heat, cold, drought and salt.

- (4) Landscape materials that are used for screening shall be of a size that allows growth to the desired height and opacity within two (2) years.

530.210. Installation and maintenance of materials. Installation and maintenance of all landscape materials shall comply with the following standards:

- (1) Areas to be landscaped shall be prepared and improved as specified by current Minnesota Department of Transportation standards for soil preparation and drainage.
- (2) All landscape materials shall be installed to current industry standards.
- (3) Maintenance and replacement of landscape materials shall be the responsibility of the applicant or property owner including the maintenance of any trees planted in the public right-of-way. An adequate water supply shall be indicated in the site plan. Landscape maintenance should incorporate environmentally sound management practices, including the following:
 - a. The use of water and energy efficient systems such as drip irrigation.
 - b. Pruning primarily for plant health and replacing dead materials annually.
 - c. Anticipating and allowing plant community succession.

530.220. Exceptions to landscaping and screening requirements. The city planning commission may approve the substitution or reduction of landscaped plant materials, landscaped area or other landscaping or screening standards, subject to section 530.80, provided one (1) or more of the following exists:

- (1) The proposal will allow a site plan of exceptional design that includes amenities such as public seating, an outdoor plaza or transit shelter that will enhance the area or that is more consistent with the design of the site or the surrounding area.
- (2) The proposal will allow a site plan that is more consistent with the character of the area.
- (3) Existing plant materials, walls, fences or the topography of the site and its surroundings make the required landscaping or screening less necessary.
- (4) The required landscaping or screening will hinder truck access and service necessary to the operation of the use.
- (5) The required landscaping and screening may obstruct views of traffic or reduce natural surveillance of the site.

ARTICLE V. ADDITIONAL STANDARDS

530.230. Concrete curbs and wheel stops. All parking lots and driveways shall be designed with wheel stops or discontinuous curbing to provide on-site retention and filtration of stormwater. Where on-site retention and filtration is not practical, the parking lot shall be defined by six (6) inch by six (6) inch continuous concrete curb.

530.250. Site context.

- (a) *In general.* To the extent practical, site plans shall minimize the blocking of views of important elements of the city such as parks and greenways, significant buildings and water bodies.
- (b) *Shadowing.* To the extent practical, buildings shall be located and arranged to minimize shadowing on public spaces and adjacent properties. A shadow analysis may be required that demonstrates the impact that the proposed building would have on shadowing of public spaces and adjacent properties.
- (c) *Wind.* To the extent practical, buildings shall be designed to minimize the generation of wind currents at ground level.

530.260. Crime prevention through environmental design. Site plans shall employ best practices to increase natural surveillance and visibility, to control and guide movement on the site, and to distinguish between public and non-public spaces. Site plans shall include the following crime prevention design elements:

- (1) Natural surveillance and visibility. Design the site, landscaping, and buildings to promote natural observation and maximize the opportunities for people to observe adjacent spaces and public sidewalks.
- (2) Lighting levels. Provide lighting on site, at all building entrances, and along walkways that maintains a minimum acceptable level of security while not creating glare or excessive lighting of the site.
- (3) Territorial reinforcement and space delineation. Locate landscaping, sidewalks, lighting, fencing and building features to clearly guide pedestrian movement on or through the site and to control and restrict people to appropriate locations.
- (4) Natural access control. Locate entrances, exits, signs, fencing, landscaping, and lighting to distinguish between public and private areas, control access, and to guide people coming to and going from the site.

530.270. Historic preservation. To the extent practical, site plans shall include the rehabilitation and integration of locally designated historic structures or structures that have been determined to be eligible to be locally designated as historic structures. Where rehabilitation is not feasible, the development shall include the reuse of significant features of historic buildings.

RELATED RESOURCES:

[Administrative Site Plan Review for Single- and Two-Family Dwellings and Multiple-Family Dwellings Having Three or Four Dwelling Units](#)

[Planning Handouts and Technical Bulletins](#)

[Planning Applications](#)