

## **Article 7: Screening and Buffering**

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## **Section 7.0 Purpose and Intent**

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The purpose of the following requirements is to enhance the health, safety, and welfare of McClellanville citizens by: protecting the integrity of existing properties from changes wrought by more intense development; ameliorating negative impacts of land uses on adjacent properties such as excessive noise, glare, and visual intrusion; and enhancing the natural drainage of storm water through provision of additional pervious natural buffer areas.

It is the intent of the Town, through these requirements, to promote quality development by enabling flexibility in site design, as well as to encourage the provision of imaginative and attractive vegetative screening that softens the transition between incompatible land uses. The provisions of this section are further intended to complement the requirements of Article VI (Tree Conservation) of this Ordinance.

## **Section 7.1 Applicability**

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### **§ 7.1.1 Screening and Buffers**

Screening and buffers shall be provided wherever the following are established within the Town of McClellanville:

- (a) VC, HC or MC uses abutting, adjacent to, or separated by a right-of-way of sixty (60) or fewer feet in width from an existing property zoned for residential purposes;
- (b) Utility substations, not including electrical transmission and distribution lines and their right-of-ways;
- (c) Dumpsters; and
- (d) Loading and outdoor storage areas.

### **§ 7.1.2 Accessory Uses**

The Zoning Administrator or designee may require the provision of buffer areas and screening, including the installation of fences, for proposed accessory uses where deemed necessary to protect an abutting or adjacent principal or accessory use, upon a finding that the proposed accessory use is incompatible due to the potential for noise, glare, odor or visual impact to the existing and abutting principal or accessory use.

## **Section 7.2 Buffer/Screening Requirements**

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Where buffers or screening are required, either pursuant to the terms of this ordinance, or by virtue of such a finding by the Zoning Administrator, the developer shall provide such in accord with the following requirements:

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**§ 7.2.1 Requirements by Use Types**

**Table 7-1**

| <b>Proposed Land Use Abutting Property Zoned for Residential Uses</b> | <b>VC Use</b>                                                                                                                                         | <b>HC Use (except within the HCD)</b> | <b>MC Use</b>                                                                                                                                            | <b>Utility Substations</b> | <b>Dumpsters, Outdoor Storage &amp; Loading Areas</b> | <b>Accessory Uses</b> |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Minimum Buffer Width                                                  | 10 feet                                                                                                                                               | 20 feet                               | 30 feet                                                                                                                                                  | 25 feet                    | 15 feet                                               | 5 feet                |
| Minimum Screening                                                     | Densely planted or natural vegetative materials that, with or without walls or fences, mitigate visual and external impacts of the nonresidential use |                                       | Densely planted or natural materials, fences or walls, or a combination thereof, to create an opaque screen                                              |                            |                                                       |                       |
| Other Screening                                                       |                                                                                                                                                       |                                       | Fences constructed of brick, iron, wood, or combinations thereof, no greater than eight (8) feet in height shall be provided parallel to such facilities |                            |                                                       |                       |

**§ 7.2.2 Buffer Standards**

- (a) Buffers shall be measured from the property line, inward.
- (b) Small and large trees shall be planted no more than ten (10) feet and twenty (20) feet, respectively, from the buffer yard perimeter.
- (c) Driveways may traverse required buffers, but no parking or other structures shall be sited in the buffer area.
- (d) A buffer width may be reduced five (5) feet with the installation of a substantially opaque wall or fence, at least six (6) feet in height.

**Section 7.3 Modifications**

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It is not the intent of this section to create buffer areas where these requirements are shown to be inappropriate or excessive with reference to the overall depth of an existing parcel. In such cases where:

- (a) An existing opaque and continuous buffer of natural vegetation is proposed for retention;
- (b) Fencing is provided no less than four (4) feet in height;
- (c) The property is adjacent to undevelopable land area a minimum of 300' in depth.

The Zoning Administrator may allow reduction of the average buffer depth by as much as thirty percent (30%), provided such reduction does not result in the proposed development providing a buffer which is substantially less in depth than that of adjacent or facing developments.

## **Section 7.4     Coordination with Other Requirements or Provisions**

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### **§ 7.4.1     Tree Preservation**

- (a) Nothing herein shall be deemed to preclude or be substituted for compliance with Article VI of this Ordinance.
- (b) Trees retained in accordance with Article VI may be utilized in full or partial fulfillment of the requirements of this Article, upon approval by the Zoning Administrator. Such use, however, shall not alone constitute compliance with provisions of this section unless approved by the Zoning Administrator.
- (c) Where the requirements of this Article conflict with those of Article VI, the more restrictive of the two shall apply.

### **§ 7.4.2     Utility Easements**

- (a) In cases where drainage or other utility easements are provided along property lines and prevent location of screening elements and buffer areas, the minimum width of the buffer area shall be measured from the innermost edge of that easement inward.
- (b) Upon approval of the entity owning the easement and the Zoning Administrator, all or a portion of the drainage easement may be utilized as a buffer area and/or contain screening elements.
- (c) Where all or part of such drainage easements are authorized as the buffer area, the owner of such easement shall not be held responsible for removal of or damage to screening elements occurring with periodic maintenance operations.
- (d) Use of private or public utility easements or public drainage easements for buffer areas and screening elements requires written authorization of the easement holder, with copies thereof being submitted to the Zoning Administrator prior to review of any screening plan.

## **Section 7.5     Plan Approvals**

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When screening or buffering is required by Section 7.2, a plan shall accompany any application for a zoning and/or building permit. Such plan, drawn to scale in conjunction with the required site development plan, shall include the following:

- (a) Names and types of proposed land uses, with addresses and tax reference numbers;
- (b) Existing land uses abutting the subject property;
- (c) Location of existing buildings, parking areas, and other improvements on site;
- (d) Location of buffer areas, indicating widths;
- (e) Location, species and circumferences of existing trees to be retained in the screening or buffer areas;
- (f) Schedule of screening proposed to be planted, including location, species caliper, and height quantities of trees, shrubs and other landscape materials;
- (g) Location, height, design and construction details for fences or walls;

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- (h) Tree protection plan, where applicable;
- (i) Tree and landscape planting details;
- (j) Location and width of existing or required drainage easements, along with points of access for maintenance, as approved by the applicable agency responsible for such easements;
- (k) Approval letters or encroachment permits from the easement holder, where buffer areas or landscape elements are to be located in drainage or utility or other easements.

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## **Section 7.6 Performance Standards**

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The following standards apply to the selection, installation and maintenance of all screening and buffer materials required by the provisions of this Article:

### **§ 7.6.1 Plant Selection**

- (a) Vegetative materials used in conformance with the provisions of this ordinance shall be guaranteed to be of healthy, specimen quality and conform to the American Standard for Nursery Stock, (American Standards Institute, Inc. 230 Southern Building, Washington DC 20005) at the time of planting and for one (1) year thereafter.
- (b) All trees, shrubs and groundcovers to be planted shall be hardy to botanical zone eight 'b' (8b). Species chosen shall be suitable for the soil, sun exposure, and hydrological conditions of their proposed locations.
- (c) Trees, shrubs and other plant materials used shall be indigenous to the Coastal Plain of South Carolina as listed on Attachment A of this ordinance to enhance resistance to drought, disease, and pests; to support wildlife; and help achieve aesthetic continuity between the natural environment and planted areas. No less than 75% of all trees and shrubs, and all ornamental grasses, used for landscaping of a site shall be species listed in Appendix A: Native Plants of the South Carolina Coastal Plain.
- (d) Non-native invasive plant materials shall not be used.
- (e) Trees shall have a caliper of at least one (1) inch and shall be a minimum of six (6) feet in height at the time of planting.
- (f) Shrubs shall be at least three (3) gallon size and at least twenty-four (24) inches tall at the time of planting.

### **§ 7.6.2 Installation**

The installation of all landscaping shall be done following the procedures established by the American Association of Nurserymen.

- (a) Trees.
  - (1) All newly planted trees shall be installed in a permeable area no less than three (3) feet in radius measured from the base of the tree.

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- (2) When installing and conserving trees, proper root management considerations shall be acknowledged, e.g. compacted, oxygen-poor soil shall be aerated and topped with six inch (6") sandy loam, where necessary to ensure the health and longevity of the tree(s).
- (3) Unless otherwise specified in this ordinance;
  - a. Small trees shall be planted ten to thirty feet on-center (10' – 30' o.c.).
  - b. Large trees shall be planted twenty to forty feet on-center (20' – 40' o.c.).
  - c. A small tree shall be planted twenty to thirty feet on-center (20' – 30') from a large tree.
  - d. Small and large trees shall be planted no more than ten (10) feet and twenty (20) feet, respectively, from the buffer yard perimeter, and no less than six (6) feet from a paved surface or wall.
- (b) The installer shall give consideration to site conditions in locating shrubs.
  - (1) Shrubs constituting hedges shall be planted at an on-center spacing not more than their maximum expected spread at maturity or eight feet (8') whichever is less.
  - (2) Shrubs constituting buffer yards shall be planted with on-center spacing no more than eight feet (8') parallel to the lot line to be buffered and no less than sixteen feet (16'). Such shall be planted at least eight feet on-center (8' o.c.), from young trees in buffer yards.
  - (3) Vegetative ground covers shall be spaced to ensure ninety percent (90%) coverage of bare soil within three (3) months of installation.

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## **Section 7.7 Maintenance Requirements**

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### **§ 7.7.1 Responsibility**

Maintenance and replacement of damaged, destroyed, or dead plant materials serving to fulfill the requirements of this Article shall be the responsibility of the property owner.

### **§ 7.7.2 Replacement**

Required screening and buffer areas shall be routinely maintained free of debris and litter and in good condition, with regular mowing of grass, weeding, and pruning of trees and shrubs to present a neat, healthy and orderly appearance.

### **§ 7.7.3 Regular Maintenance**

Dead, diseased, or stolen plants or those irreversibly damaged shall be replaced within thirty (30) days with the species indicated on the approved screening and buffering plan. If expiration of such plants is created by unsuitable conditions for such species, those administering maintenance shall replace such plants with vegetation more suited to the location, provided such maintains the integrity of the original landscape plan and the intent of this Article.