



City of Detroit  
Detroit City Council - District 4

MEMORANDUM

DATE: June 26, 2025

TO: Marcell Todd, Director, City Planning Commission

FROM: Latisha Johnson  
District 4 Councilmember

SUBJECT: Tree Screening Amendment to Chapter 50 of the 2019 Detroit City Code

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Greetings,

I am requesting to amend Chapter 50 of the 2019 Detroit City Code, Zoning to update buffering and screening requirements. I am requesting changes that will clarify and strengthen the amendment's use of vegetative buffering as a pollution mitigation, public health strategy and aesthetic buffer. I'm requesting the following amendments:

**Section 50-12-267(b)(2)(a)** Change from 1 tree every 30 linear feet to 1 tree every 10 linear feet. Each tree should have a minimum planting area of 36 sq. ft., rather than 18 sq. ft. to allow for enough room to grow. I am requesting similar changes to **Sec. 50-14-369** and **Sec. 50-14-370**: For buffering types III, IV, V, and VI: plant 1 tree every 10 linear feet.

**Sec. 50-12-270-2(a) Trees:** change "trees shall be planted not more than 50 feet apart" to "trees shall be planted not more than 25 feet apart. This is due to trees planted in strips not reaching their full size due to root constraints. Per GSD, this change will achieve the intent of the ordinance better.

**Division 2. Landscaping, Screening, and Fencing: Section 50-14-327. Installation, maintenance, and replacement.** Add minimum sizes of trees to 10 feet from the root ball and 2.5 feet in diameter and shrubs no less than 24 inches in height. Add

continuity requirements to ensure that gaps in vegetation do not cause an increase in pollution concentrations. Effective buffers should maintain full coverage from the ground to the top, which may require different sizes of trees and shrubs<sup>1</sup>. Add requirement to consult with the Urban Forester and General Services Department regarding the most effective tree species at mitigating pollution.

**Section 50-14-370 (c)** Change to require evergreen trees at a minimum height of 10 feet every 10 linear feet in Type V buffer. Change minimum buffer depth to 30 feet for Buffer Type V and 45 feet for Buffer Type VI (best practice is 164 feet from problem area).

**Section 50-14-367** to require the uses: “Trucking terminals, transfer buildings, recreational vehicle storage lots, and parking areas for operable trucks” and “Loading docks, service yards, exterior work areas, truck maneuvering areas, and open areas for the parking of trucks, semitrucks, and semi-trailers” to have a Type IV or V buffer adjacent to rights of way and residential districts.

Also, in **Section 50-14-367**, per CPC, note that the Zoning Ordinance regulates concrete batching plants under the specific land use of “high-impact manufacturing or processing” and regulates asphalt manufacture, bituminous concrete manufacture, and concrete crushing under the specific land use of “very high impact manufacturing or processing.” I am requesting that these uses be specifically noted in the amendments to require Type V or VI buffers.

The General Services Department estimates that the current proposed amendments will increase development costs by 3-5% and with a more robust vegetation requirement, we might see development costs increase by 5-6% as with what Chicago saw after implementing their Landscaping Ordinance<sup>2</sup>.

Pending these changes, please know that if CPC and PDD staff find it appropriate to amend the purpose statement and definition to reflect broader pollution mitigation goals per the memo submitted by the Equitable Development Task Force, that my team is more than willing to assist with providing guidance on specific language.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://graham.umich.edu/media/files/dow/Dow-Masters-2018-Vegetative-Buffers-Tree-Canopy.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> City of Chicago:  
[https://www.chicago.gov/city/en/depts/dcd/supp\\_info/landscape\\_ordinance.html#:~:text=The%20City%20of%20Chicago's%20Landscape,buildings%20and%20large%20residential%20buildings.](https://www.chicago.gov/city/en/depts/dcd/supp_info/landscape_ordinance.html#:~:text=The%20City%20of%20Chicago's%20Landscape,buildings%20and%20large%20residential%20buildings.)

If you have any questions, please contact Erin Stanley, Policy Analyst, at 313-224-1533.

Thank you!