

**SECTION 208**

**LANDSCAPING, SCREENING AND BUFFER YARD REQUIREMENTS  
(As amended by Ordinance Nos. O02-05-09, O03-10-20, O06-12-28, O07-06-13 and  
O11-09-18)**

**SECTION 208.1 PURPOSE AND INTENT**

The purpose of this Section is to provide minimum standards for the provision of landscaping, screening and buffer yards within the City of Cookeville.

**SECTION 208.2 APPLICABILITY**

The standards of this Section shall apply as follows:

**208.2A NEW DEVELOPMENT**

All new development, excluding individual single-family and two-family development, shall comply with the standards of this Section.

**208.2B EXPANSION OF EXISTING DEVELOPMENT**

For expansions of existing development (development in existence prior to the adoption of this Zoning Code) the following shall apply:

1. Cumulative expansions of existing development not exceeding twenty-five (25) percent of the existing gross floor area and not requiring or involving additional parking areas shall be exempt from the provisions of this Section.
2. Cumulative expansions of existing development exceeding twenty-five (25) percent of the existing gross floor area shall be required to provide landscaping at a percentage equal to or exceeding the percentage of the expansion.
3. Any parking lot constructed as a result of the expansion or change in use of an existing development shall comply with the provisions of Section 208.5B of this Zoning Code.

**208.2C CHANGE OF USE**

Any change of use that results in the property becoming a higher impact use as described in Section 208.6B of this Zoning Code shall comply with the Screening and Buffer Yard Requirements of Section 208.6 of this Zoning Code.

**SECTION 208.3 PLAN REQUIRED**

For all uses or structures requiring landscaping and/or screening and buffer yards, a plan or plans shall be submitted to the Building Official with the required site plan. In reviewing the Landscape and or Screening and Buffer Yard plans the Building Official shall seek the advice of the Cookeville Tree Board. Plans shall be drawn to scale with a North arrow and any interpretative legends and shall include the following:

- 208.3A Location and size of landscape yards, landscape strips within parking areas, screening areas and buffer yards
- 208.3B Plant Schedule containing the following:
  - 1. Quantity of each plant material
  - 2. Common and botanical names of plant material
  - 3. Size and spacing of all proposed landscape material at time of planting
- 208.3C Planting standards to ensure conformance with landscape industry standards
- 208.3D Existing landscaping materials on site that were previously required by the Zoning Code
- 208.3E Existing plant materials and areas to be left undisturbed
- 208.3F Methods and details for protecting existing plants
- 208.3G Location and description of other landscape improvements, such as earth berms, walls, fences, screens, fountains, street furniture, lights, or similar items
- 208.3H Location of existing and proposed buildings
- 208.3I Parking layout and traffic patterns
- 208.3J Location of all overhead and underground utilities
- 208.3K Landscaping plans for new and existing construction of buildings over 5,000 square feet or greater than two (2) stories shall be prepared in compliance with the provisions of Section 62-2-102 of the Tennessee Code.

**SECTION 208.4 MAINTENANCE AND REPLACEMENT**

Trees, shrubs, fences, walls and other landscape and/or screening and buffer yard features installed to meet the requirements of this Section and depicted on plans approved by the Building Official shall be considered as elements of the project in the same manner as parking, building materials and other details are elements of the plan. The landowner, or successors in interest, or agent, if any, shall be jointly and severally responsible for the following:

- 208.4A Regular maintenance shall be provided so that all landscaping and/or screening and buffer yards remain in good condition and present a healthy, neat and orderly appearance. All landscaping shall be maintained so that it is free from disease, pests, weeds and litter. This maintenance shall include weeding, watering, fertilizing, pruning, mowing, edging, mulching or other maintenance, as needed and in accordance with acceptable horticultural practices. It is recommended that an irrigation system be installed.
- 208.4B Required landscaping and/or screening structures, such as walls and fences, shall be repaired or replaced so that they remain in a structurally sound condition.
- 208.4C Failure to maintain required landscaping and/or screening and buffer yards shall be a violation of this Zoning Code and subject to penalties as specified.

**SECTION 208.5 LANDSCAPING REQUIREMENTS**

The provision of trees, shrubs and vegetation contributes to a desirable quality of life for residents and visitors by producing an aesthetically pleasant and healthy environment. The following requirements shall be considered as the minimum standards for the protection of natural plant communities and features and for the planning and continued maintenance of installed landscaping within the City of Cookeville.

**208.5A LANDSCAPE YARDS**

Landscape yards shall be provided in all districts except the Central Business District and for all uses and structures except those specifically exempted in Section 208.2. The requirements for landscape yards shall be in addition to any requirements of parking area landscaping as specified in Section 208.5B of this Zoning Code. Said landscape yards shall meet the following requirements:

1. Landscape yards shall be established along all abutting streets within required front, side and/or rear yard setback areas.
2. Minimum Width of Landscape Yards  
The minimum width of the landscape yard shall be ten (10) feet, exclusive of curbing. See Illustration 16, "Landscape Yards" in Section 234 of this Zoning Code.

3. Number of Trees Required

One (1) shade tree, or two (2) ornamental trees shall be planted per every fifty (50) linear feet, or any fraction there of, of street frontage.

4. Standards for Trees in Landscape Yards

Trees for landscape yards shall meet the requirements of Section 208.5C of this Zoning Code.

5. Location of Trees in Landscape Yards

Unless specified by the Building Official, trees may be spaced or grouped at the discretion of the developer. Trees shall not be located so as to impair visibility at any street intersection or at the intersection of any driveway with a street.

6. Trees Located Underneath Utility Lines

When the landscape yard occurs underneath utility lines, ornamental trees whose mature height does not exceed twenty (20) feet shall be planted at a rate of one (1) tree for each fifty (50) feet of frontage occurring under utility lines.

7. Exception for Width of Landscape Yards (As amended by Ordinance No. O03-10-20)

When a property has frontage on a public street with five (5) or more traffic lanes and has right-of-way unused for traffic flow the Building Official may reduce the width of the landscape yard provided the following conditions are met:

- a. A total minimum landscape yard width of ten (10) feet, including any portion of unused right-of-way shall be maintained.
- b. The Director of Public Works shall determine that the utilization of the unused right-of-way as a landscape yard will not create a traffic hazard nor restrict or prohibit any anticipated street improvements, including the construction of sidewalks.

208.5B PARKING AREA LANDSCAPING

The following standards for landscaping of parking lots shall apply to the interior of all off-street parking areas. They shall not apply to vehicle and equipment sales lots, multi-level parking structures, areas devoted to drive-through lanes, or to vehicle and equipment storage areas. The requirements for parking area landscaping shall be in addition to the requirements for landscape yards as specified in Section 208.5A of this Zoning Code. Illustration 17 in Section 235 of this Zoning Code depicts examples of acceptable interior parking area landscaping.

1. Minimum Width of Interior Landscaped Strips

Interior landscaped strips shall be a minimum of five (5) feet in width, exclusive of curbing, and shall be planted with acceptable indigenous landscaping materials. If trees are located in interior landscaped strips said strips shall be a minimum of eight (8) feet in width, exclusive of curbing.

2. Curbing Required (As amended by Ordinance No. O06-12-28)  
Interior landscaped strips shall be surrounded with a concrete raised curb six (6) inches in height. Curb openings that allow storm water to enter landscape strips used for storm water quality bioretention areas are allowed.
3. Number of Trees Required  
One (1) shade tree shall be provided per twenty (20) parking spaces, or any fraction thereof. A maximum of fifty (50) percent of the required shade trees may be replaced by ornamental trees at a ratio of two (2) ornamental trees for each shade tree replaced.
4. Standards for Terminal Islands  
The use of terminal islands for rows of parking spaces is encouraged for the location of trees required for interior parking areas. Parking area terminal islands containing trees shall be a minimum of eight (8) feet in width and shall be the length of the two (2) adjacent parking spaces. Landscape terminal islands shall be surrounded with a concrete raised curb six (6) inches in height.
5. In landscape strips or islands the planting of trees in alignment with parking space lines is encouraged to reduce the potential for damage from vehicles.
6. Standards for Trees in Parking Area Landscaping  
Trees required for interior parking areas shall meet the requirements of Section 208.5C of this Zoning Code.

#### 208.5C GENERAL TREE PLANTING STANDARDS

The following general standards for tree planting shall apply:

1. Tree Sizes
  - a. Shade trees shall be a minimum of two (2) inches in caliper.
  - b. Ornamental trees shall be a minimum of one and a half (1½) inches in caliper.
  - c. Evergreen trees shall be a minimum height of six (6) feet at the time of planting.
2. Location
  - a. No tree shall be planted closer than five (5) feet from any street right-of-way, driveway, sidewalk or curb.
  - b. No tree shall be planted closer than ten (10) feet from any fire hydrant, utility pole or streetlight.
  - c. No tree shall be planted so as to block visibility at any street intersection.

3. Tree Preservation

Preservation of healthy trees, six (6) inches in caliper or greater, shall be credited toward the required number of trees per the following ratio: for every six (6) inches of caliper preserved, a credit of one tree shall be granted, provided credit is limited to twenty-five (25) percent of required trees. The City Forester for the City of Cookeville shall approve any preserved tree for which credit is to be given. Curbing placed around preserved trees shall be located no closer to the tree than the halfway point between the drip line and the trunk of the tree.

4. Tree Protection During Construction

In order to receive credit for an existing tree or grove of trees, an area shall be established at the drip line and the trunk of the tree, which shall not be disturbed by construction activity, excluding mulching. The determination of the drip line shall be as depicted in Illustration 18 in Section 235 of this Zoning Code. This area shall be barricaded and marked with signage during construction. The City Forester shall approve all protection measures. Damage to trees, including injuries resulting from chemical poisoning, concrete wash water, construction equipment, soil compaction, grading, paving and/or other mechanical injuries to the roots, trunk, or branches of the tree that will result in their death within one (1) year of construction shall negate any credit for preservation.

5. Mixture of Trees

Sites with required new trees of ten (10) or more, excluding trees used for required screening, shall provide the following variety of trees:

<u>Number of Required Trees</u>	<u>Minimum Required Variety of Trees</u>	<u>Maximum Percent of Any Variety</u>
10-19	2	65%
20-29	3	50%
30-39	4	40%
40+	5	35%

208.5D LANDSCAPE MATERIAL STANDARDS

The following standards shall apply for all landscape materials:

1. Landscape and plant materials installed to satisfy the requirements of this Section shall conform to or exceed the plant quality standards of the most recent edition of American Standard for Nursery Stock, published by the American Association of Nurserymen.
2. All shade trees shall have a single leader.

3. Use of Riprap or Shot Rock

The use of riprap, shot rock or similar materials is strongly discouraged and shall only be used to stabilize soil around culverts and drains or where engineering requirements deem necessary for erosion control. Riprap, shot rock or similar materials shall not be used to landscape where erosion can be controlled by vegetation.

208.5E INSTALLATION

1. Timing

The Building Official, in conjunction with the City Forester, shall be consulted to determine the proper time to move and install plant materials so that stress to the plants is minimized. A Temporary Certificate of Occupancy may be issued when extremes in weather or soil conditions are not favorable to landscaping. All planting materials shall be completed by the next planting season not to exceed six (6) months time after the issuance of a Temporary Certificate of Occupancy.

2. Staking

Staking materials shall not be used unless absolutely necessary. If staking is necessary, then the owner shall remove staking materials after one growing season.

3. Planting

The owner shall ensure that all planting areas including tree pits, hedge trenches and shrub beds are excavated appropriately. All pits shall be a minimum of two (2) feet deep with a width at least twice the diameter of the root ball. The tree shall be deep enough to allow one (1) inch from the crown of the root ball to be above finished grade. Soil within the planting areas shall be free of rock, debris, inorganic compositions and chemical residues detrimental to plant life. Soil shall be compatible with the composition of the existing sub-soil and sufficiently blended to ensure adequate exchange of air and water between the planting area and the adjacent soil strata. Plants shall rest on a well-compacted surface.

4. Planting pits will take into account surface run off and soil conditions. The owner shall be responsible for proper drainage and the resulting survival of the plants contained within the pit thereof.

5. All planting areas shall be mulched with a three (3) to four (4) inch layer of bark, pine needles, or other suitable material, to cover the complete planting area. Mulch within six (6) inches of the tree trunks shall be no deeper than one-half (½) inch.

**SECTION 208.6 SCREENING AND BUFFER YARD REQUIREMENTS**

Screening and buffer yards are intended to reduce or exclude visual contact between uses and to create impressions of special separation. The following requirements shall apply for all uses or structures requiring screening and buffer yards.

**208.6A APPLICABILITY**

Screening and buffer yards are required where the development of a higher impact use abuts a lower impact use as classified in Section 208.6B.

**208.6B IMPACT CLASSIFICATION (As amended by Ordinance No. 007-06-13)****1. No Impact (N)**

Permitted uses in the RS-20, RS-15, RS-10, RS-5, and RD districts are generally considered to have no impact unless a specific use is classified elsewhere. The following uses shall be considered to have no impact regardless of zoning classification: single family and two-family residential, parks, and golf courses.

**2. Low Impact (L)**

Permitted uses in the RM-8, RM-14, and PRD districts are generally considered to have a low impact unless a specific use is classified elsewhere.

**3. Moderate Impact (M)**

Permitted uses in the RMHP, CL, CG, CR, CBD, PCD, MS, and UNV districts of less than 5,000 square feet and involving less than 1 (one) acre in land area are generally considered to have a moderate impact unless a specific use is classified elsewhere. Non-residential uses in the CN District of less than 5,000 square feet and involving less than 1 (one) acre in land area are also considered to have a moderate impact.

**4. High Impact (H)**

Permitted uses in the CI, LM and HM districts and any nonresidential development consisting of 5,000 square feet or more and/or involving 1 (acre) or more are considered to have a high impact unless a specific use is classified elsewhere. The following uses shall be considered to have a high impact regardless of zoning classification: parking lots of 50 or more spaces or expansions of existing parking lots to 50 or more spaces, junk/salvage yards, and outdoor storage yards.

208.6C LOCATION REQUIREMENTS FOR SCREENING AND BUFFER YARDS

The location and type of screening required shall be as follows:

1. Side and Rear Property Lines

Where the side or rear property lines of a proposed higher impact use abut a use or district of a lesser impact, whether or not there is an intervening street or alley, screening and buffer yards shall be provided by the higher impact use along abutting side and/or rear property lines according to the following chart:

REQUIRED SCREEN/BUFFER YARD TYPE FOR SIDE AND REAR PROPERTY LINES

Proposed Use Classification

	<b>N</b>	<b>L</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>H</b>
<b>N</b>	None	1	2	3
<b>L</b>	None	None	1	2
<b>M</b>	None	None	None	1
<b>H</b>	None	None	None	None

2. Front Property Lines

Where the front property line of a proposed higher impact use abuts a use or district of a lesser impact, whether or not there is an intervening street or alley, screening and buffer yards shall be provided by the higher impact use along its front property line according to the following chart:

REQUIRED SCREEN/BUFFER YARD TYPE FOR FRONT PROPERTY LINES

Proposed Use Classification

	<b>N</b>	<b>L</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>H</b>
<b>N</b>	None	None	1	2
<b>L</b>	None	None	None	1
<b>M</b>	None	None	None	None
<b>H</b>	None	None	None	None

208.6D DESCRIPTION OF SCREENS AND BUFFER YARDS BY TYPE  
(As amended by Ordinance No. 007-06-13)

1. Type 1 Screen/Buffer Yard

A Type 1 Screen/Buffer Yard is intended to create the impression of a separation of spaces without necessarily eliminating visual contact between the uses. The buffer yard shall be a minimum of ten (10) feet in width. The screening shall consist of intermittent visual obstruction to a height of at least ten (10) feet. Screening may be composed of a wall, solid fence (wood, brick, or masonry), landscaped earth berm, planted vegetation, or existing vegetation. Compliance of planted vegetative screens or natural vegetation will be judged on the basis of the average mature height and density of foliage of the subject species, or field observations of existing vegetation. The screen may contain deciduous plants. Suggested planting standards that will achieve the requirements for Type 1 Screen/Buffer Yard are depicted on Illustration 19 in Section 235 of this Zoning Code. The adequacy of the required screening shall be determined from the elevation of the adjacent residential property or property of a lower classification. A greater height, more opaque screening, or wider buffer yard may be required by the Building Official if it is determined that, due to topographic reasons or scale of development, the screening will not adequately block visual contact or create the impression of separation between uses.

2. Type 2 Screen/Buffer Yard

A Type 2 Screen/Buffer Yard is intended to partially block visual contact between uses and to create an impression of the separation of spaces. The buffer yard shall be a minimum of twenty (20) feet in width. The screening shall be completely opaque from the ground to height of three (3) feet, with intermittent visual obstruction above the opaque portion to a height of at least ten (10) feet. Screening may be composed of a wall, solid fence (wood, brick, or masonry), landscaped earth berm, planted vegetation, or existing vegetation. Compliance of planted vegetative screens or natural vegetation will be judged on the basis of the average mature height and density of foliage of the subject species, or field observations of existing vegetation. The opaque portion of the screen must be opaque in all seasons of the year. Deciduous plants may be used to meet the intermittent screening portion of the semi-opaque screen. Suggested planting standards that will achieve the requirements for Type 2 Screen/Buffer Yard are depicted on Illustration 20 in Section 235 of this Zoning Code. The adequacy of the required screening shall be determined from the elevation of the adjacent residential property or property of a lower classification. A greater height, more opaque screening, or wider buffer yard may be required by the Building Official if it is determined that, due to topographic reasons or scale of development, the screening will not adequately block visual contact or create the impression of separation between uses.

### 3. Type 3 Screen/Buffer Yard

A Type 3 Screen/Buffer Yard is intended to exclude all visual contact between uses. The buffer yard shall be a minimum of thirty (30) feet in width. The screening shall be completely opaque from the ground to a height of at least eight (8) feet. Screening may be composed of a wall, solid fence (wood, brick, or masonry), landscaped earth berm, planted vegetation, or existing vegetation. Compliance of planted vegetative screens or natural vegetation will be judged on the basis of the average mature height and density of foliage of the subject species, or field observations of existing vegetation. The opaque portion of the screen must be opaque in all seasons of the year. Suggested planting standards that will achieve the requirements for Type 3 Screen/Buffer Yard are depicted on Illustration 21 in Section 235 of this Zoning Code. The adequacy of the required screening shall be determined from the elevation of the adjacent residential property or property of a lower classification. A greater height, more opaque screening, or wider buffer yard may be required by the Building Official if it is determined that, due to topographic reasons or scale of development, the screening will not adequately block visual contact or create the impression of separation between uses.

## 208.6E STANDARDS FOR SCREENING MATERIALS

1. When earthen berms are utilized in screening they shall meet the following requirements:
  - a. Shall have a minimum height of three (3) feet
  - b. Shall have a minimum crown width of two (2) feet
  - c. Shall have a minimum side slope of 2:1
  - d. Shall be planted in grass or other suitable ground cover
2. When fences or walls are utilized in screening, they shall meet the following requirements:
  - a. Shall be constructed of materials compatible with the principal building
  - b. Wire fencing and unfinished cinder block walls shall not be permitted to meet the screening requirements
  - c. The finished side of all fences and walls utilized to meet the requirements of this Section shall face the street or adjoining properties
3. Trees and shrubbery shall be of a species common to the Cookeville area, shall be hardy, and proper care shall be taken in planting.

208.6F MODIFICATION OF SCREENING AND BUFFER YARD REQUIREMENTS  
(As amended by Ordinance No. O11-09-18)

With the written and notarized approval of the owner(s) of adjacent residential property or property of a lower classification, the Building Official may approve a reduction in the width of the buffer yard subject to the following:

1. Any reduction in the width of the buffer yard shall not serve to reduce any required building setbacks.
2. Where a Type 1 Screen/Buffer Yard is required the screening requirements of the Type 2 Screen/Buffer Yard shall be met for a buffer yard width reduction of up to five (5) feet and the screening requirements of the Type 3 Screen/Buffer Yard shall be met for a buffer yard width reduction of greater than five (5) feet.
3. Where a Type 2 Screen/Buffer Yard is required the screening requirements of the Type 3 Screen/Buffer Yard shall be met for any reduction in the width of the buffer yard.
4. The buffer yard width shall not be reduced to less than one (1) foot from the shared property line.