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To: City of Hartford Planning & Zoning Commission
From: Aimee Chambers, AICP, Director of Planning *AC*
On behalf of the City of Hartford Tree Advisory Commission
Date: January 11, 2022

Below please find minor amendments to the zoning regulations for the City of Hartford, as put forward by the Tree Advisory Commission. In January 2016, the Commission adopted a comprehensive revision to the zoning regulations, followed by several previous rounds of minor amendments. The proposed amendments below aim to improve upon the current zoning regulations and promote health, safety, and general welfare specifically by amending our Sitework and Landscape regulations to better align with landscape design best practices.

The existing text is below and the proposed changes are italicized. If available, a staff recommendation for each of the changes follows in plain text.

1.3.3.B(6) Site Plan Review – Application Submittal Requirements, Existing Natural Conditions Plan

Existing topography, vegetation, wetlands (or documentation of lack thereof), drainageways, floodplain/way, or other unique features either on an aerial photograph or site survey.

NEW Add second and third sentences to read - Plans shall include mapping location of existing trees, tree type, caliper, and critical root zones. Critical root zones must be shown on all exterior improvement plan sheets.

Staff Recommendation: (Approval as follows) Plans shall include mapping location of existing trees, tree type, and caliper.

1.3.3.B(7) – Site plan – **A site plan delineating all proposed structures and surfaces, including buildings, parking, pavement, accessory structures per 4.20, lighting, landscape, and retaining walls.**

Edit to read -- A site plan delineating all proposed structures and surfaces, including buildings, parking, pavement, accessory structures per 4.20, lighting, landscape (including critical root zones), and retaining walls.

Staff Recommendation: Denial

6.1.1.D. – Intent – **To protect and preserve trees and landscaping that clean the air, calm traffic, reduce the urban heat island effect, provide shade that reduces energy costs, increase property values, reduce stormwater runoff, and otherwise enhance quality of life.**

Change to – *To plant, protect and preserve trees and landscaping that clean the air, calm traffic, reduce the urban heat island effect, provide shade that reduces energy costs, increase property values, reduce stormwater runoff, and otherwise enhance quality of life.*

Staff Recommendation: Approval

NEW SECTION to 6.1.1. – Intent – Section 6.1.1.F. - To meet the citywide tree canopy goal of 35% by 2070.

Staff Recommendation: Approval

6.2.3.A. – General Installation Requirements, National Standards – **All landscaping and trees shall be installed in conformance with the practices and procedures established by the most recent edition of the American Standard for Nursery Stock (ANSI Z60.1) as published by the American Association of Nurseries.**

Change second sentence of 6.2.3.A to – *All landscaping and trees shall be installed in conformance with the practices and procedures established by the most recent edition of the ANSI A300 (available from the Tree Care Industry Association).*

Staff Recommendation: Approval

6.2.3.B. – General Installation Requirements, Installation – **Landscaping shall be fully installed prior to a certificate of completeness.**

Replace to read – *All landscaping shall be installed according to sound nursery practices in a manner designed to encourage vigorous growth. All landscape material, living and non-living, shall be healthy and in place prior to issuance of final certificate of completeness.*

Staff Recommendation: Approval

6.2.3.G. – Establishment – **All installed plant material shall be fully maintained until established, including watering, fertilization, and replacement as necessary.**

Expand to read – *All installed plant material shall be fully maintained until established, including watering, fertilizing, and replacement as necessary. Establishment is defined as survival in healthy and undamaged condition for a minimum of three years.*

Maintenance and Replacement – The landowner, or successors in interest, or agent, if any, shall be jointly and severally responsible for the following:

1. *Regular maintenance of all landscaping in good condition and in a way that presents a healthy, neat, and orderly appearance.*
2. *All landscaping shall be maintained 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;*
3. *The regular maintenance, repair, or replacement, where necessary, of any landscaping required by this Chapter; and*
4. *Continuous maintenance of the site.*

Staff Recommendation: Section 28-163(d) of the Tree Ordinance says “all tree planting permitted by a zoning permit of City Forester permit must be maintained for five years from the conclusions of the permitted work.” Refer to this section.

Figure 6.2-B – **Recommended Soil Volumes & Permeable Area**

Change to read – *Required Soil Volumes & Permeable Area per Tree*

Staff Recommendation: Approval

Figure 6.2-B – Column heading **Soil Surface Area** – Update soil depth to 3'.

Staff Recommendation: Approval

6.2.3.H. – Requirements, Permeable Surface – **For each tree preserved or planted, a minimum amount of permeable surface area is recommended, unless otherwise stated in these regulations. Refer to Figure 6.2-B Recommended Soil Volumes & Permeable Area per Tree.**

Revise to read - *For each tree preserved or planted, a minimum amount of permeable surface area is required unless otherwise stated in these regulations. Refer to Figure 6.2-B, Required Soil Volumes & Permeable Area per Tree.” Review 6.2.3.H (1) and (2) for feasibility.*

Staff Recommendation: Approval

NEW SECTION to 6.2.3. – Requirements – 6.2.3.J. Required Soil Volume – When the required soil volume as outlined in Figure 6.2-B cannot be achieved, the following minimum requirements are to be met:

- 1. Minimum of 5x10x3 (150 cu ft) of soil is to be provided.*
- 2. Required volume can be achieved by the use of structural soils or another method approved by the City Forester.*

Staff Recommendation: Approval

6.4.1.D. Required Quantity of Trees, Alternative Compliance –

NEW Add the following sentence – Off-site planting requirement may be met by contribution to the Hartford Tree Fund as determined by the City Forester.

Staff Recommendation: Approval

6.4.3 – Tree Spacing – **Trees shall be planted no closer than 25, 15, and 5 feet apart for large, medium, and small trees, respectively...**

Trees shall be planted no closer than 40, 30, and 20 feet apart for large, medium, and small trees, respectively...

Staff Recommendation: Approval

6.5.1.B. – Landscape Maintenance, Replacing Unhealthy Landscaping – **...This includes all plant material that shows dead branches over a minimum of 25 percent of the normal branching pattern.**

Modify – *...This includes all plant material that shows dead branches over more than 25% of the normal branch pattern.*

Staff Recommendation: Approval

6.5.1.F – First word should be “All”

Staff Recommendation: Approval. This is a small typo which is immaterial and should be added/fixed.

6.5.1.G – First word should be “All”

Staff Recommendation: Approval. This is a small typo which is immaterial and should be added/fixd.

6.6.1.B.(3)(a) – Required Findings for Approval – **(a) The planting of a tree or trees with the cumulative equivalent diameter at breast height as the removed tree, or...**

Modify to read – *The planting of replacement tree or trees. In no case shall the quantity of replacement trees equal less than one caliper inch of replacement tree for each caliper inch at breast height of trees removed.*

Staff Recommendation: Approval, with a reference to the Tree Ordinance of the City of Hartford.

6.6.2.A. – Tree Protection During Development Activity – **During development, all precautions shall be undertaken to prevent construction damage to existing trees, in accordance with ANSI guidelines.**

Should read - *During development, all precautions shall be undertaken to prevent construction damage to existing trees, in accordance with guidelines in ANSI 300 Part 5.*

Staff Recommendation: Denial. Reference is too specific and may become outdated. A reference to the Tree Ordinance of the City of Hartford may be warranted.

6.6.3. – Penalties –

NEW Insert a final sentence to read – *Specific fines and fees are outlined in the Hartford Tree Ordinance (Hartford Municipal Code Chapter 28, Article VI).*

Staff Recommendation: Approval

6.7.3.B. – Minimum Street Tree Requirements, Clear Branch Height –

NEW Insert second sentence to read – *At planting, minimum clear branch height of 5’ is required with 6’ preferred for all trees planted adjacent to a sidewalk or street.*

Staff Recommendation: Approval

6.7.3.D(4) – Minimum Street Tree Requirements, Street Tree Spacing, Tree wells – **for trees installed within the public right-of-way which are not within a continuous, landscaped buffer strip a tree well shall be used. Such tree well shall be a minimum of 24 square feet. The opening of such tree well must include one of the following:**

Modify – *For trees installed within the public right of way, which are not within a continuous landscaped buffer strip, a tree well shall be used. Such tree wells shall be a minimum of 25 square feet.*

Staff Recommendation: Approval. It should be noted that the list that follows indicates treatment surrounding tree wells where DPW has moved away from enclosures such as those listed. Additionally green infrastructure and bioswales should be considered and encouraged. Section 6.7.3.D(4)(b) is counter to the concepts of green infrastructure.

At some point in the regulations, there should be indication that any project that involves new or existing trees must be approved by the City Forester before consideration by the Planning and Zoning Commission.

Staff Recommendation: Denial. Section 6.6.1 references Section 28-160 of the municipal code, which indicates that no tree shall be removed without review and approval by the City Forester...28-158 requires that members of the public are encouraged to plant trees in public places provided they follow permits and obtain permits from the City Forester...1.3.3.C(5) of the Zoning Regulations allows the Planning & Zoning Commission to allow for deviations in tree planting with consultation from the City Forester...no section of the Tree Ordinance requires a permit to plant a tree on private property.

