



Commercial and Community Facility Parking Lot Text Amendment - **Approved!**

Overview

The proposed city-wide zoning text amendment would apply design regulations for commercial and community facility parking lots in all districts, with design requirements that will visually enhance parking lots and achieve important sustainability goals.

The purpose of the regulations is:

- to help achieve important sustainability goals that are part of the Mayor's PlaNYC 2030 proposal, such as reducing the urban heat island effect, achieving cleaner air quality through the planting of shade trees, and the efficient management of storm water runoff,
- to visually improve the aesthetics of large parking lots, and
- to improve safety for drivers and pedestrians by introducing maneuverability and curb cut standards.



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Street trees will be required for developments with open parking areas of at least 18 spaces or 6,000 square feet. They will be required at a rate of 1 tree for every 25 feet of frontage, and shall comply with NYC Department of Parks and Recreations standards.

For developments with open parking areas of at least 18 spaces or 6,000 square feet, a seven foot wide strip, landscaped with shrubs and ornamental trees would be required along the perimeter of the lot to screen the parking area from the street.

For developments with open parking areas of at least 36 spaces or 12,000 square feet, in addition to perimeter landscaping, one shade tree for every eight parking spaces would be required, placed within planting islands evenly distributed throughout the interior of the lot.

The perimeter and interior landscaped areas would be designed to absorb storm water runoff. The paved areas of the parking lot around the landscaped areas would be graded so that storm water flows into the landscaped areas (bioswales). This accomplishes two important goals. The first goal is to ensure that the landscaped areas receive sufficient water so that the plants have excellent chances of survival and remain lush and attractive. The second goal is to maximize storm water runoff retention on site, rather than having it drain into the city sewer. Only in severe storms would the bioswales not be able to absorb all the runoff, in which case the overflow would be diverted to the city sewer system.

All open parking lots would have to comply with minimum standards for parking stalls, aisle widths and curb cuts, to better ensure the safety and maneuverability of pedestrians and vehicles. In addition, trash storage areas will be required to be screened.

Bicycle parking will be required at a rate of one bicycle parking for every ten vehicle parking spaces, up to 200 vehicle parking spaces. Thereafter, one bicycle parking space will be required for every 100 vehicle parking spaces. Plans would be required to be submitted to the Department of Buildings showing the location of all parking spaces and compliance with the proposed maneuverability standards.

For commercial and community facility developments that contain residences, the regulations would apply only where at least 70% of the floor area on the zoning lot is used for commercial or community facility uses.

If an existing commercial or community facility use with an open parking area is enlarged, the proposed regulations would apply only if the existing use enlarges its floor area by at least 20%, or the enlargement results in an increase of parking spaces of at least 20%, in which case the entire open parking lot would have to be upgraded.

Parking garages, roof parking, and automotive uses such as gas stations and car washes would be exempt.

Public Review

On June 18, 2007, the application was referred to all community boards and borough presidents for a 60 day review period. On October 31, 2007 the City Planning Commission adopted the text amendment with modifications*. [Read the CPC report.](#)

*In response to concerns raised during the public review, the Commission approved the zoning text changes with the following modifications:

1. The proposed maneuverability and landscaping regulations would apply to enlargements that result in at any time, a 20% increase over the amount of parking spaces or floor area existing on the effective date of this text amendment. This will discourage piecemeal enlargements to avoid the new regulations.
2. A City Planning Commission authorization was created to allow enlargements to modify any or all of the maneuverability or landscaping standards.
3. Enlargements in C4-1 Districts that are utilizing the parking reduction authorization of Section 36-023 may have difficulty bringing their entire parking lot into full compliance with the maneuverability and landscaping regulations. The Commission has modified the proposed text to allow by authorization, modification or waiver of the requirements.
4. Where developments provide a perimeter landscape area greater than seven feet in width, the first seven feet closest to the parking lot must be landscaped according to the new regulations and designed as a bioswale. The remaining perimeter area may be designed as a bioswale but must always be landscaped.
5. The minimum size of ornamental trees required in the perimeter landscape area has been modified from three-inch caliper to two inches at the suggestion of the departments of Environmental Protection and Parks and Recreation. In addition, the depth of the soil/gravel proportions of the bioswale planting islands has been modified to two and a half feet of soil and one foot of gravel beneath.
6. The plant lists for bioswale planting islands was expanded.
7. The Commission modified the text to allow plantings in non-bioswale planting islands to be chosen by a registered landscape architect.
8. The Commission modified the text to allow pedestrian walkways to traverse required planting islands and access ADA parking spaces.
9. The text was modified to allow, by City Planning Commission authorization in the Special Natural Area, Special South Richmond and Special Hillside Preservation districts, modifications to the proposed maneuverability and landscaping requirements if these modifications help preserve natural features.

On November 28, 2007, the City Council adopted the zoning text amendment related to landscaping and maneuverability requirements for Commercial and Community Facility Parking Lots, as modified by the City Planning Commission. Zoning text changes are now in effect. [View the adopted text amendment.](#)

For more information on the proposal contact the Department of City Planning's Zoning Desk at (212) 720-3291.

Related Notes

-  Items accompanied by this symbol require the [free Adobe Acrobat Reader](#).