



ENVIRONMENTAL COMMITTEE MEETING

Municipal Center Council Chambers
1616 Humboldt Ave, West St. Paul, MN 55118

January 7, 2026

6:00 P.M.

1. Call To Order

2. Roll Call

3. Community Comments

4. New Business

4.A. Approve October 1, 2025 Minutes

Documents:

[ENVIRONMENTAL COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES OCTOBER 2025.PDF](#)

4.B. Code Language Review- Landscaping Requirements

Documents:

[LANDSCAPING MEMO - 01.07.2026.PDF](#)

5. Old Business

6. Updates

6.A. Staff

6.B. Subcommittee

6.C. City Council

6.D. Park & Recreation Committee

6.E. Planning Commission

6.F. Other

7. Adjourn

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651-552-4108 or email ADA@wspmn.gov at least 5 business days prior to the meeting
www.wspmn.gov EOE/AA*

West St. Paul Environmental Committee
Meeting Minutes
6:00 pm, October 1, 2025
West St. Paul Municipal Center- City Council Chambers

1. Call to Order

2. Roll Call: Committee members in attendance: Chair Joshua Przybylski, Kelly Gibson, Ashley Khondakar, Julie Lyford, Stephanie Moline

Non-voting members in attendance: Liz Gillen, Jess Hall, Eric Weiss

3. Citizen Comments:

The following person came forward to speak:

Savannah Barry

Weiss talked about having [student] youth representation on the committee. Membership would require council support and a by-law change. He will follow up on this endeavor.

4. New Business

- a. **Approve July 2, 2025 Minutes-** The minutes from the July 2, 2025 meeting, were corrected: Stephanie Moline was present at the July 2 meeting. With this correction, the July 2 minutes were approved.
- b. **Review City Tree List** – Weiss introduced Jess Hall. Hall was hired as the city’s first Natural Resources Specialist. Hall will help with a variety of projects: pollinator spaces, developing policy, community education and engagement on environmental matters including water, soil, plants, air and transportation. She works interdepartmentally with Parks, Public Works and Planning Departments. She is also the new staff liaison to the committee.

Hall discussed the city tree list project. The Americorp member started work on the list, and Hall is building this work. The previous tree list had only 30 species. Limited species can make communities more vulnerable to disease. The new tree list was developed with guidance from other Twin City municipalities, the University of MN and the Department of Natural Resources. It lists 114 species, (both native and climate adaptive). The goal is to develop specialized lists for different location scenarios.

Committee members requested that the tree list worksheet be a more guided resource for different location needs and for the tree species to be prioritized. Hall said that she would share the tree list file with committee members so that they could comment on it.

5. Old Business: NA

6. Updates

a. Staff Updates

i. Jess Hall

1. **Met Council Tree Grant-** Hall is working with street and park maintenance on the plan for tree removals. Next spring the city will plant 250 trees through the tree grant. The city is working also on a grant

application for education and outreach for tree planting on private property.

2. **City Hall Pollinator Project-** Two weeks ago, 47 volunteers worked on the hillside outside city hall and planted 1,320 native plug plants and 80 pounds of native bee lawn seed. Great River Greening led the event; Hall is now watering the plantings to keep them alive.
3. **Tree Sale-**The sale is still live online until October 3. Tree Trust is facilitating the sale. Pick up for the trees is on October 18. The tree species follow our tree guidelines. Mississippi Park Connection reached out to the city to give out free bare root tree giveaways as part of the tree sale. The free trees for higher need areas.
4. **Kennedy Park Tree Planting** The tree planting is scheduled with Tree Trust on October 11.

ii. **Eric Weiss**

1. **Kennedy Park Reconstruction-** Twenty-five trees are being planted at the park. There will be 14 tree varieties. The park reconstruction is going well, and the city is planning a grand reopening on Sat, Nov 1. It will be the Day of the Dead, and the city will try to find ways to celebrate the holiday.
2. **Smith-Dodd Concept Plans-** The plans were adopted by Council at its last meeting. The project is now moving forward into further design.
3. **150 Thompson Concept Plans-** The plans will be reviewed by the Parks and Recreation Committee next week for approval. The 3-D renderings of the plans will be available for viewing soon.
4. **Holiday Décor Swap-** The swap will take place this Saturday at the Harmon Park Neighborhood Center.
5. **City Cleanup Day-** The fall cleanup will be on October 11. The cleanup is city-wide. The supply and donut pick-up will be at Harmon Park at 9:30 am. The 150 Thompson area is of especial concern. A group of volunteers will kayak in the lake picking up garbage.
6. **Volunteer Appreciation Dinner-** There is an appreciation dinner for Environmental and Park's Committee members on Tuesday, November 18. Please let Eric or Jess know if you plan to attend.

- b. **Landscaping Subcommittee-** Khondakar reported that the subcommittee met on August 15 and discussed putting together pamphlets, bookmarks and yard signs as possible deliverables. The focus is education on invasive species. The yard signs would feature humorous themes like "Most Wanted," or "Outlawed," and identifiable images of the invasive species plant. The subcommittee also talked about having a QR code that would lead to the tree planting list and pamphlets on each park describing its amenities and attractions.

The subcommittee discussed the plantings in traffic roundabouts and the need to plant more native plants in the roundabouts for the city to lead by example. Another topic of

discussion was the problem of garden maintenance in city parks. They talked about the possibility of community gardens, and partnerships with master gardeners and neighborhood residents to maintain the park gardens.

- c. **Parks and Recreation Committee-** Weiss reported that the Parks Committee recommended for approval the Albert Park and Plaza and Officer memorial plans. The plans were approved unanimously in September. The Parks system plan was also approved unanimously. It is ninety-eight percent done and Weiss is working on the final details. City Council will review it at the October 27 meeting.
 - d. **Planning Commission-** Gillen said there was no new news to report.
 - e. **City Council-** NA.
7. **Other** -NA
8. **Adjournment**
- The meeting was adjourned at 7:20 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Sharon G. Hatfield

Meeting Date: Wednesday, January 7, 2026

Prepared By: Melissa Houtsma, Community Development

Subject: Review of Current Landscaping Requirements

Request

Read and review the existing landscaping requirements outlined in the zoning code (attached) and provide staff with recommendations and options for refinement.

Background

As projects come through for review, staff works to uphold the regulations established in the city code. One piece of this includes a more broad evaluation to determine if the existing language continues to serve the city's goals and priorities effectively. While the current regulations have been in place for a number of years and provide a solid foundation, there are a number of areas where the language could be updated or clarified to better support the work that staff does and the community as a whole.

Opportunity Areas

The following points include a few areas for review and are intended to set the stage for additional discussion on how the current standards could be further refined.

1. Detailed, but limited list of allowable plantings

The current code includes a specific, limited list of "quality" trees (such as maple, ash, and spruce) directly within the ordinance. While this makes for a clear and clean-cut approach, it also decreases the likelihood of a diverse stock of trees. Additionally, embedding these details in the code does require staff time and likely legal review for hearings whenever an update is needed. Transitioning to an administrative list, that would be available upon request, could streamline the process while still preserving clarity and transparency.

2. Clarification of Priorities

A possible opportunity to harmonize the language includes clarifying the general property landscaping and tree replacement requirements. Currently, the code asks for a specific number of buffer trees depending on the length of the perimeter around the property, while also requiring a 30% replacement of the total caliper inches removed. A clearer policy would help to better understand whether the primary goal is the preservation of existing canopy or the successful establishment of new replacement trees, while also ideally communicating that these two things are not mutually exclusive.

3. Incorporating an Option for Alternative Compliance

While codes are often written with the best of intentions, the reality is that something so permanent likely cannot universally apply to each and every scenario. While staff acknowledges that benefits and importance of preserving and planting trees, each site or project will come with its own unique set of limitations. Incorporating the option for a fee in lieu of plantings may serve as an alternative for projects that have clearly demonstrated a commitment to compliance, but simply are unable to meet the requirements due to various unique constraints.

4. Various Minor Options

Broader Vegetation Options: Recognizing the value of ornamental trees, shrubs, and grasses in addition to the listed standard of deciduous and evergreen trees.

Planting Health: Ensuring new trees have adequate ground area and an anticipated area for the species necessary canopy spread to better ensure longevity.

Definitive Expectations: Providing more detailed clarity and guidance on expectations around maintenance and preservation of existing mature trees during and after the development process.

Contextual Scaling: Reviewing the minimum size requirements for trees in residential, commercial, and industrial districts to ensure a strategic vision that is calibrated with practical constraints.

Next Steps

Review existing landscaping code requirements and provide feedback. Staff has also provided a more structured opportunity for feedback. In the attached survey, please rate the importance of or select your preference of the options listed. While staff recognizes that all these items are important and work to create a benefit, this survey will help to narrow in on the more finite details and priority areas.

Example:

	Very important ↔ Not important				
	1	2	3	4	5
Creating a healthy, fun, and sustainable environment for West St. Paul residents	X				

	A	B
Best St. Paul city: A. West St. Paul B. Other (e.g. South St. Paul, North St. Paul)	X	

Landscaping Requirements Survey

Very important ↔ Not important

	1	2	3	4	5
Initial Selection					
Maintaining an updated preferred plantings list					
Diversity of tree species					
Diversity of planting types (<i>e.g. trees, shrubs, grasses</i>)					
Preservation of existing trees					
Ensuring sufficient replacement of trees removed					
Planting native and/or climate appropriate species					
Multi-purpose plantings (<i>e.g. fruit trees, pollinator friendly</i>)					
Placement					
Perimeter plantings or screening					
Distribution throughout the property					
Minimum planting area or spacing					
Maintenance					
Plantings be fully irrigated					
Ground treatment/root collar (<i>e.g. turf, wood mulch, rock mulch</i>)					
Neonicotinoid-free practices					

	A	B
Minimum planting requirements by: C. Property (e.g. perimeter, lot area) D. Use (e.g. residential = 1 tree per unit, commercial = 1 tree per 1,000 sq. ft.)		
Minimum requirements: A. Minimum amount of green space B. Minimum number of trees		
Preservation: A. Value by type and species B. Value by size (tiered approach)		
Accepting payment in lieu of plantings A. Yes B. No		

§ 153.031 SITE PLAN APPROVAL PROCEDURE AND DESIGN REQUIREMENTS IN RESIDENTIAL DISTRICTS.

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(4) *Landscape standards.*

- (a) The off-street parking setback area shall be utilized as a protective buffer. The protective buffer shall not be used for parking, drive aisles, off-street loading or storage and shall be landscaped.
- (b) Minimum landscape requirements in the protective buffer shall include the following “quality type trees,” one two and one-half inch diameter at four feet above grade caliper deciduous tree, which shall be, hardwood type trees such as, maple, seedless green ash, locust or basswood, or six-foot conifer type trees, such as Colorado blue spruce, white pine, red pine or pyramidal arborvitae, or other approved types. The number of trees required is the equivalent of one for every 40 feet lineal of property line on the subject site or as approved through the site plan process. The protective buffer shall also contain grass, ground cover or shrubs and shall be irrigated to facilitate maintenance of landscaped areas. No impervious surfaces such as concrete or asphalt shall be placed in the protective buffer.
- (c) Minimum landscape requirements for each curbed island shall include one one and one-half inch diameter at four feet above grade caliper deciduous tree, all of which must be of “quality” types as listed in division (D)(4)(b) above. The curbed island shall also contain grass, ground cover or shrubs and shall be irrigated to facilitate maintenance of landscaped areas. No impervious surfaces such as concrete or asphalt shall be placed in the curbed island.
- (d) When tree removal occurs, replacement trees shall constitute at least 30% of the total amount of the caliper inches of “quality trees” removed.
- (e) All trees shall be placed around the site to promote the most efficient and effective use of the different types of trees installed.
- (f) When located adjacent to a single family or two-family use, the provisions of § [153.381](#) shall apply, except that for the portion adjacent to the residential properties, screening from the front building line to the rear property line and along the rear property line shall be six feet in height.

§ 153.032 SITE PLAN APPROVAL PROCEDURE AND DESIGN REQUIREMENTS IN COMMERCIAL AND INDUSTRIAL DISTRICTS.

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- (F) *Landscape, lighting and sign standards.* Unless modified as part of a site and building plan approval process, the following requirements apply.
- (1) The setback area shall be utilized as a protective buffer. The protective buffer shall not be used for parking, drive aisles, off-street loading or storage and shall be landscaped up to the building.
 - (2) Minimum landscape requirements in the protective buffer shall include the following “quality type trees,” one two and one-half inch diameter at four feet above grade caliper deciduous tree, which shall be hardwood type trees such as maple, seedless green ash, locust or basswood, or six-foot conifer type trees, such as Colorado blue spruce, white pine, red pine or pyramidal arborvitae, or other approve types. The number of trees required is the equivalent of one for every 20 feet of lineal property line on the subject site or as approved through the site plan process. The protective buffer shall also contain grass, ground cover or shrubs and shall be irrigated to facilitate maintenance of landscaped areas. No impervious surfaces such as concrete or asphalt shall be placed in the protective buffer.
 - (3) Minimum landscape requirements for each curbed island shall include one two and one-half inch diameter at four feet above grade caliper deciduous tree all of which must be of “quality” types as listed in division (F)(2) above. The curbed island shall also contain grass, ground cover, mulch or shrubs and shall be irrigated by an underground irrigation system to facilitate maintenance of landscaped areas. No impervious surfaces such as concrete or asphalt shall be placed in the curbed island.
 - (4) When a commercial or industrial development is located adjacent to or across from any “R” use, screening must comply with § [153.381](#), except that for the portion adjacent to the residential properties, screening from the front building line to the rear property line and along the rear property line shall be six feet in height. Required screening will be at least 95% opaque throughout the year. One or a combination of the following will satisfy the required screening:
 - (a) A decorative fence;
 - (b) A masonry wall; and/or
 - (c) Landscaping.
 - (5) Lighting levels must not exceed zero foot-candles at the abutting property line. No direct glare may extend onto the public street, public open space or neighboring properties.
 - (6) Regardless of the scope of the proposed construction, all signs must comply with the provisions of §§ [153.430](#) through [153.438](#) and §§ [150.105](#) through [150.110](#).
 - (7) When tree removal occurs, replacement trees shall constitute at least 30% of the total amount of the caliper inches of “quality trees” removed.
 - (8) All trees shall be placed around the site to promote the most efficient and effective use of the different types of trees installed.