
CHAPTER 10

LANDSCAPE DESIGN GUIDELINES

10.1 INTRODUCTION

The following landscape design guidelines are intended to encourage property owners to preserve and complement historic landscaping. They are also intended to encourage designs that respect the architecture and placement of structures on the site and in the neighborhood.

These guidelines address landscape improvements which are most likely to occur within areas that are visible from the street, that is, streetscape/public right-of-way, the front yard, and side yard areas which are openly exposed to the street. Back yard and enclosed side yard areas should also receive consideration and planning with regard to proposed landscape improvements, but are not a focus of these guidelines. A singular exception is as follows: historic trees in all areas of a district, whether public or privately owned, are considered character-defining features of a Historic District and should be preserved.

10.2 DEFINING THE LOT

Prior to considering any landscape improvements, the property owner should have a firm understanding of where his or her responsibility begins on the lot. These guidelines recognize the front yard area as any front or side yard visually exposed to any public thoroughfare, beginning at the public right-of-way line and ending at the exterior surface of the house, including any wall/fence that is visible from any public thoroughfare, excluding alleys. The public streetscape area is recognized as any area between the public right-of-way line and the edge of pavement or face of street curb. Property owners are responsible for all landscaping and irrigation within both these areas, with the exception of street tree planting and trimming which are City responsibilities. Street trees are normally located within a parkway area between the sidewalk and the curb.

10.3 LANDSCAPE DESIGN PRINCIPALS

Through the observance of a few basic design principles, property owners can contribute positively to the existing landscape of a Historic District. Property owners are encouraged to seek the assistance of a landscape architect or other qualified professional when considering the design and planning of landscaping. The following basic design principles should be used to guide landscape projects in districts:

Scale

Scale involves the organization of elements in the landscape so that they are in proportion with one another, the house, the lot, and the neighborhood. Consider the mature size of all

plant materials before committing them to your yard. Large trees and shrubs may look attractive when first planted, however, with time, they can overwhelm and block the views to your house.

Unity

A landscape layout should reflect an overall concept of unity in relation to the property, neighborhood, and buildings. Consider how your landscape concept will look both as a part of your property and in relation to the other properties in the neighborhood.

Balance

A balanced landscape can either have a formal or an informal appearance. The type of landscape chosen should reflect the nature of the home's architecture. For example, Victorian or Classic Revival style homes have a more upright, formal appearance and are best complemented with formal, symmetrical landscape designs. Craftsman or Mission Revival style homes tend to be more integrated with nature and are best complemented with more informal, natural landscape layouts. An informal landscape is still balanced, but forms, colors, materials, and locations are often offset from one another. When balance is carefully considered, a visually appealing landscape becomes the result.

Hierarchy

Hierarchy is the organization of landscape forms, colors, patterns, and materials into levels of importance. The size of a landscape element, its shape, its texture and finish, or its location in the landscape will establish its level of importance. Focal features such as water fountains, sculpture, or flowering specimen trees often play important roles in a well ordered landscape. Hierarchy helps give a sense of arrival and a flow of circulation through the landscape. When laying out plant materials, consider how they will relate to each other in terms of size, shape, and texture. Usually a landscape should "build" from lower materials to higher materials.

Orientation

It is important to take into consideration a plant's need or tolerance for sun or shade. A plant that needs full sun will grow spindly and sparse in the shade, while one that needs shade will tend to burn in a sunny location. Group plants with similar needs for light.

Water Needs

Some plants need greater amounts of water than others. Plants with low water needs will often rot in an area that is too wet. Plants with higher water needs will wilt in an area that is too dry. Group plants with like water needs and design the irrigation system so these plants on separate irrigation valves.

10.4 HISTORIC LANDSCAPE FEATURES

Historic features within the Historic Districts include both plants and man-made features, such as walls, walkways, and shade structures. Property owners are encouraged to preserve historic landscape features and ensure that any new construction or rehabilitation efforts comply with and complement these resources. See Section 8.1 for a discussion of site features relating to landscape design.

10.5 APPROPRIATE PLANT MATERIALS

Many mature plants and groupings of plants exist throughout Riverside's Historic Districts and are an important part of what makes them significant. These plantings occur both in the public right-of-way and the private yards of the district. Careful attention should be paid to the functional role plantings can have on the property as well as the aesthetic role. For example, "foundation plantings" at property line fences and house walls help soften hard edges. Plantings can also assist in the screening of unsightly electrical and mechanical equipment, and provide privacy along property edges. On the other hand, the wrong plant materials can invade sewer lines, grow into overhead utility lines, break paved areas, or cause other problems. The choice and placement of landscape materials must take into account a multitude of considerations. Appendix B includes a list of planting materials appropriate for Historic Districts. Included within the section for each Historic District is a Designated Street Tree List, compiled by the City's Department of Parks and Recreation.

Guidelines

- 1) If historic plantings do exist, they should be preserved in their original locations. If these features cannot be preserved, they should be relocated or replaced in kind.
- 2) The traditional character of residential front and side yards should be preserved. These areas should be reserved for planting materials and lawn. Paving and nonporous ground coverings should be minimized.
- 3) Mature trees and hedges should be preserved whenever possible. Street trees cannot be removed without City Park and Recreation Department approval.
- 4) Historic topographic features should be preserved whenever possible. For instance, leveling or terracing a lot that was traditionally characterized by a natural hillside is not appropriate. All grading must be approved by the City and done with a grading permit.
- 5) Graffiti can occasionally become an undesirable element within the front yard area. All graffiti should be reported to the Police Department and removed immediately after it is photographed by a Police Officer.
- 6) Landscape fixtures and furnishing should be complementary to the district in terms of materials, patterns, colors, sizes, forms, textures, and finishes. For example, iron

benches would be appropriate in relation to a Victorian house, while a Craftsman home would be better complemented with traditional wooden benches. If low garden structures (for example, a water fountain or sign base) are being installed, select and use materials that reflect the material palette of the house.

- 7) Pathways, pergolas and trellises that are in character with the architectural style of house are encouraged.
- 8) Satellite dishes should be hidden from the street and other prominent views.