



## CITY COUNCIL AGENDA ITEM STAFF REPORT

|                         |   |
|-------------------------|---|
| MEETING DATE:           | APRIL 22 <sup>ND</sup> , 2025   |
| TITLE:                  | AN ORDINANCE AMENDING TITLE 17 (ZONING) OF THE CODE OF ORDINANCES OF THE CITY OF COLLINSVILLE AS IT RELATES TO LANDSCAPING, SCREENING AND BUFFERING REQUIREMENTS. |
| DEPARTMENT:             | COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT   |
| PROJECT MANAGER:        | CAITLIN RICE, AICP, SENIOR PLANNER  |
| REQUESTED ACTION:       | APPROVAL  |
| STRATEGIC PLAN GOAL(S): | #7: SUPPORT EXCELLENT MUNICIPAL SERVICES  |
| ATTACHMENTS:            | STAFF REPORT TO PLANNING COMMISSION, DRAFT PC MINUTES, DRAFT ORDINANCE  |

### SUMMARY RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends approval of the *Ordinance Amending Title 17 (Zoning) of the Code of Ordinances of the City of Collinsville as it relates to landscaping, screening and buffering requirements*. The proposed amendment will provide an exception from irrigation requirements for full native and drought tolerant landscaping.

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The city is seeking an amendment that will provide an exception from irrigation requirements for full native and drought tolerant landscaping as follows:

#### ***Sec. 17.080.120.***

***G. Irrigation.*** All lawn, vegetative cover, and plant material are to be automatically irrigated by an underground system providing one hundred (100) percent coverage to ensure the maintenance and vigor of landscaping. The entire irrigation system shall be designed and constructed in accordance with all local building code requirements. The Planning Commission may waive irrigation requirements contingent on the developer's ability to provide alternative irrigation methods with the following exception(s):

- 1. Landscaped areas consisting solely of native plantings shall not require traditional underground irrigation systems. Irrigation plans shall be tailored to the needs of the native species. Lawn seed or sod shall be proven to be drought tolerant once established.*

Currently, the City code requires an underground irrigation system for 100% coverage of all lawn, vegetative cover and plant material. In 2020, the City adopted an amendment to landscaping, screening and buffering requirements that encouraged native landscaping materials by providing double the points given for native plants. In recent years, staff has seen a variety of different landscape plans with most including native plants in some fashion. However, there has been an increase in full native plant landscape plans coupled with requests for variances from traditional irrigation systems. With proper landscaping techniques and choosing the right plant for the right place, irrigation systems can be useless, or even detrimental to native, drought tolerant plants. A recent request by CAVC was approved by the Planning

April 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2025

TA 25-01 Native Landscaping Irrigation

Commission and City Council to waive irrigation requirements on the basis of a landscape designed entirely with native plants.

The primary concern when requiring irrigation systems is to ensure that the landscaping material thrives and remains aesthetically pleasing throughout the seasons. This is usually more critical for plant species that are non-native and require more maintenance and accommodations to thrive in a different environment. Native plants have evolved to survive and thrive in their native range and can handle the spring floods, summer droughts and winter extremes. Native plants have also been researched and cultivated by horticulturists and botanists for years to develop cultivars that enhance certain attributes such as clumping habits (reducing spread), dwarf types, larger or brighter flowers and foliage, neater appearance etc., and are growing in the formal landscaping scene. Most turf grass are not native to North America, except buffalo grass, which can be difficult in bulk for large commercial projects. The proposed amendment will allow native lawn types or lawn seed/sod that are proven to be a drought tolerant species.

Staff finds the proposed amendment will provide more incentives for native landscapes, provide more flexibility for developers and landscape architects to be creative with plant material and water management (such as rain gardens, rain barrels, combinations with stormwater, etc.) and support businesses by reducing development costs.

#### **PLANNING COMMISSION REVIEW**

The Planning Commission heard the city-initiated request for recommendation of approval for proposed amendments during a public hearing on April 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2025. The Planning Commission voted 8-0 to recommend approval, finding the proposed text amendment meets or exceeds the established review criteria for zoning text amendments, and advances the intent of the Zoning Ordinance and City Plans.

Based on this finding, the Planning Commission requests favorable consideration of the Text Amendment Application *TA 25-01 Amending Title 17 (Zoning) as it relates to landscaping, screening and buffering standards*.

#### **RECOMMENDATION**

Staff recommends approval of text amendment application TA 25-01 Native Landscaping Irrigation.