



## REPORT TO PLANNING COMMISSION CITY OF COLLINSVILLE

<b>APPLICATION NUMBER(S)</b>	TA 25-06
<b>APPLICATION NAME:</b>	Native Planting Areas (Text Amendment)
<b>APPLICANT NAME:</b>	City of Collinsville 125 South Center Street Collinsville, IL 62234
<b>APPLICANT'S REQUEST:</b>	A City-initiated request for approval of amendments to Title 17 (Zoning) as it relates to maintenance requirements and standards for native planting areas.
<b>COMMISSION MEETING DATE:</b>	July 10, 2025
<b>CASE MANAGER:</b>	Caitlin Rice, AICP, Senior Planner
<b>RECOMMENDATION:</b>	<b>APPROVAL</b>

### REQUEST

The City of Collinsville has initiated a request to amend Section 17.080.—Landscaping, Screening and Buffering *Title 17—Zoning of the City's Code of Ordinances* as it relates to maintenance standards for native planting areas. The intent of this amendment is to create a section that identifies planting and maintenance standards for native planting areas. The following section is proposed to be added:

➤ *Section 17.080.095. Native planting areas*

### BACKGROUND

The City is seeking to adopt a Text Amendment that will revise the Zoning ordinance to establish maintenance standards and requirements for native planting areas on private and public property.

Native plants are localized, well adapted to the local soils and climate, typically more insect and disease resistant, and require less watering and fertilizing than non-native plants. Native plants have historically been removed and lost in our landscapes due to development and interest in exotic and more 'traditionally' ornamental plants. Over the past several decades, knowledge of the importance of native plants has been spreading, as native plants are extremely hardy, have lower maintenance, support wildlife and insects and help manage our urban landscapes through erosion control, storm water mitigation, and soil health. Native plants have a long history of stigma as being unkempt, messy, weed-like, and just generally seen as undesirable. Times are changing, and people are becoming increasingly connected to nature, and restoring ecological systems we have lost on their urban and suburban properties.

While native plantings are important, critical even, mismanagement of native planting areas in urban areas furthers stigmas and can create a nuisance. The goal of this ordinance is to provide basic guidelines on how to properly manage an urban native landscape. There are also conflicts between code enforcement and the public on education about native plants and what a native planting area should look like. Many people are unable to identify different plants, and it can make enforcement between seedlings of natives and weeds challenging.

The goal of this amendment is to provide a simple set of guidelines to ensure native planting areas are intentional, planned and maintained and reduce conflicts or confusion for code enforcement staff.

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### ZONING ANALYSIS

**Sec. 17.150.090. - Amendments to text.**

*When a proposed amendment would result in a change in the text of these regulations, but would not result in a change of zoning classification of any specific property, the recommendation of the Planning Commission shall contain a statement as to the nature and effect of such proposed amendment and determination as to the following items:*

**A. Whether such change is consistent with the intent and purpose of these regulations.**

**The proposed text amendment furthers the intent and purpose of the City's Zoning Ordinance ([Section 17.010—Title and Intent](#)), specifically:**

- *To promote the health, safety, quality of life, comfort and general welfare of the City and its planning area, which includes the area within the City corporate limits and unincorporated territory lying outside the City forming the total community of which Collinsville is a part;*
- *To preserve and protect property values throughout the City and its planning area;*

*Staff finds that based on the above criteria, the proposed amendments to Title 17 Zoning will further the intent of the City's Zoning Ordinance.*

**B. The areas which are most likely to be directly affected by such change and in what way they will be affected.**

The proposed text amendment to Title 17 impacts native landscape standards for properties throughout the city. The proposed amendment adds a new section to Section 17.080. specific for native planting areas and applies to all private and public land in Collinsville. Below is the proposed amendment:

#### **Section 17.080.95. – Native planting areas**

**Native planting areas are a planned, intentional, and maintained planting of native grasses, wildflowers, forbs, ferns, shrubs, or trees, including but not limited to pollinator gardens, rain gardens, meadow vegetation, and ornamental plantings. Native planting areas on any private or public land shall be subject to the following standards:**

- A. All turfgrass, noxious weeds, or invasive species shall be entirely removed prior to seeding or planting a native planting area.**
- B. Native planting areas may include native plants and native grasses of any height, and which have gone to seed. Native planting areas shall not include plants that, due to location and/or manner of growth, constitute a hazard to the public.**
- C. Native planting areas shall not encroach upon neighboring property lines, public sidewalks or streets.**
- D. Native planting areas shall have a well-defined and maintained border. This border may include a regularly mowed line, landscaping edging, rock, or mulch that is regularly weeded and maintained.**
- E. The native planting area shall be maintenance according to current industry standards for type of vegetation grown, including seasonal cutting or ecological burning as appropriate. A burn permit is required prior to ecological burning.**
- F. No regulation shall be enacted by the Municipality or any person or entity which prohibits or discourages the planting, maintenance, or protection of native plants or requires or incentivizes the removal or reduction of native vegetation, except when deemed necessary for public safety.**



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### ZONING ANALYSIS

The proposed language will clarify what a native planting area is and preserve the right of property owners to utilize native gardens, provided they are properly maintained.

#### Aesthetics:

The maintenance standards established include, complete removal of turfgrass, weeds, or invasive species prior to planting or seeding. There have been several instances in the City of seed bombing a lawn area or not properly removing the turfgrass, leaving the lawn or weeds to grow over 8 inches in between the plants, making proper maintenance impossible without damaging the native plants. Native planting areas will also be required to have a well-defined and maintained border, through traditional landscape edging, mulch or rock. Requiring such border enforces the aesthetic of an intentional and planned landscaping area and reduce appearances of merely an unmanaged lawn. This will also deter seed bombing lawns, and create a more traditional landscaped area suitable for urban areas. This ordinance also requires that seasonal maintenance as appropriate will be required. For example, herbaceous perennials, such as blue stem, hydrangeas, coreopsis, die back in fall, leaving stems, leaves and flower structures over winter. These structures themselves, can be an aesthetic preference for gardeners, however, leaving these brown and crunchy structures are incredibly ecologically important. These structures can provide food and shelter for wildlife, most critically, overwintering habitat for insects. By no manner should the City's ordinance require removal of these structures prior to spring, however, this addition acknowledges that different types of plants and habitats require different types of maintenance and leaves that option available.

#### Safety & Nuisance:

The amendment also states that the native planting area, either due to the type, location, or manner of growth cannot cause a hazard. The potential for a hazard will vary depending on the property and planting itself. This language will provide a general guideline that enforcement staff may utilize to call for the pruning or removal of a plant that creates a hazard. For example, a mature big bluestem grass planting near the intersection of a corner lot, may cause a sight issue for pedestrians and vehicles. Plants are also not permitted to impede adjacent property lines, sidewalks or roadways. If they are overgrown, flop from their weight, etc., they will be required to be pruned or removed.

#### **Native Garden Examples:**



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***C. Whether the proposed amendment is made necessary because of changed or changing conditions in the areas and zoning districts affected, or in the area of jurisdiction of such changed or changing conditions.***

Staff is pursuing the proposed text amendment to amend the City's Code of Ordinance to encourage intentional and managed native plantings in the City. Native planting areas and "re-wilding" urban landscapes is becoming increasingly popular year after year as native plants provide important ecological functions, are beautiful, hardy to our climate and require very minimal maintenance. This ordinance will help bridge the gap by providing minimum standards to ensure that the planting areas are properly established, clearly designated and maintained, while not infringing on the rights of property owners to enjoy and explore native plants. This ordinance will also give code enforcement officers clear maintenance standards to enforce unruly gardens without having to know all types of plant species.

Sustainability Plan Goals Achieved by the Proposed Text Amendment:

***Achieve Objective# 5 of Environmental Awareness***

By encouraging well maintained native landscapes, negative perceptions of natives will start to fade and more and more people will become aware of native plants as an option, that can be aesthetically pleasing as well as function. Even without placement of signs, a well designed and managed native garden can attract and educate folks in an urban setting.

***Achieve Object #1 of Environmental Management—Stormwater***

Native plants to the Midwest tend to have very deep roots, sometimes up to 15 feet deep on a mature plant. Native Midwest plants are suitable for our soils and our ecosystems, such as river edges, marshlands, prairies and woodlands. These deep roots help absorb water and prevent soil erosion. Encourage planting of these species in urban areas helps rebuild a more functional landscape other than just for ornament.

***Achieve Object #2 of Environmental Management—Water Quality & Conservation***

By planting native plants, water usage for landscaping will reduce and we conserve our water resources. Once established, many native plants will never need to be watered. Their deep roots help collect water deeper in the soil, unobtainable by many other plants. Depending on the species you plant, they are also drought tolerant, and can withstand harsh summers.

Comprehensive Plan (2020) Goals Achieved by the Proposed Text Amendment:

***Achieve Strategic Plan Goal #7: Support excellent municipal services***

The proposed amendment will achieve this Strategic Plan goal by updating the zoning ordinance to make more contemporary, effective, and efficient.

### RECOMMENDATION

Staff finds that the proposed text amendments meets or exceeds the review criteria for zoning text amendments. Further, staff finds that the proposed text amendment advances the intent of the City's Zoning Ordinance. Based on these findings, staff recommends 'Approval' of Text Amendment Application TA 25-06—Native Planting Areas.



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# EXHIBITS

## A.DRAFT ORDINANCE

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**EXHIBIT A: DRAFT ORDINANCE**

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**ORDINANCE NO. \_\_\_\_\_**

**AN ORDINANCE AMENDING  
TITLE 17 (ZONING) OF THE CODE OF ORDINANCES  
OF THE CITY OF COLLINSVILLE, ILLINOIS AS IT RELATES TO NATIVE  
LANDSCAPING STANDARDS**

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**WHEREAS**, the City of Collinsville, Illinois, a home rule municipality (hereinafter the "City"), has enacted Municipal Code regulations for the purpose of improving and protecting the public health, safety, comfort, convenience, and general welfare of the people.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT ORDAINED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF COLLINSVILLE** as follows:

**Section 1.** **Section 17.080. – Landscaping, Screening and Buffering of Title 17 (Zoning)** of the Code of Ordinances of the City of Collinsville, Illinois, shall be amended as follows:

**"Section 17.080.95. – Native planting areas**

Native planting areas are a planned, intentional, and maintained planting of native grasses, wildflowers, forbs, ferns, shrubs, or trees, including but not limited to pollinator gardens, rain gardens, meadow vegetation, and ornamental plantings. Native planting areas on any private or public land shall be subject to the following standards:

- A. All turfgrass, noxious weeds, or invasive species shall be entirely removed prior to seeding or planting a native planting area.
- B. Native planting areas may include native plants and native grasses of any height, and which have gone to seed. Native planting areas shall not include plants that, due to location and/or manner of growth, constitute a hazard to the public.
- C. Native planting areas shall not encroach upon neighboring property lines, public sidewalks or streets.
- D. Native planting areas shall have a well-defined and maintained border. This border may include landscaping edging, rock, or mulch that is regularly weeded and maintained.
- E. The native planting area shall be maintenance according to current industry standards for type of vegetation grown, including seasonal cutting or ecological burning as appropriate. A burn permit is required prior to ecological burning.





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### EXHIBIT A: DRAFT ORDINANCE

F. No regulation shall be enacted by the Municipality or any person or entity which prohibits or discourages the planting, maintenance, or protection of native plants or requires or incentivizes the removal or reduction of native vegetation, except when deemed necessary for public safety.”

**Section 4.** In the event any section or provision of this Ordinance shall be held unconstitutional or invalid by any Court, in whole or in part, such holding shall not affect the validity of this Ordinance or any remaining part of this Ordinance, other than the part held unconstitutional or invalid.

**Section 5.** All ordinances, or parts thereof, which are inconsistent with the provisions of this Ordinance, are hereby repealed to the extent of their inconsistencies.

**Section 6.** Nothing contained herein shall in any manner be deemed or construed to alter, modify, supersede, supplant, or otherwise nullify any other ordinance of the City or the requirements thereof whether or not relating to or in any manner connected with the subject matter hereof, unless expressly set forth herein.

**Section 7.** This Ordinance is effective upon its passage by the City Council, approval by the Mayor, and publication according to law.

**PASSED** by the City Council and Approved by the Mayor this \_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_ 2025.

Ayes: \_\_\_\_\_

Nays: \_\_\_\_\_

Absent: \_\_\_\_\_

Approved: \_\_\_\_\_

APPROVED: \_\_\_\_\_

**JEFF STEHMAN, MAYOR**