

6. Landscape Design

This section of the guidelines, pertaining to landscape design, is written differently from the other sections. In fact, the guidelines included in this by-law generally contain various types of information: an overall context, objectives, criteria, information on applicable norms as well as practical advice for property owners, which makes them excellent outreach and awareness documents. However, the abundance of information and the intertwining of different types of information can sometimes lead to a loss of focus on the objectives and criteria on which projects will be evaluated. For greater clarity, the previous guidelines on landscape design have been stripped of all non-essential information for the application of the by-law on SPAIP, in order to only retain the applicable objectives and criteria.

The objectives convey an ideal design vision. An objective is a target, an ideal that may not be fully achieved. The acceptable level of compliance of a SPAIP with an objective may take into account the context of the project, but also other objectives. These are combined together in a relative complementarity. They are therefore not exclusive and absolute, but relative and complementary.

As for the criteria, they allow for the evaluation and interpretation of the achievement of an objective. Again, not all criteria have to be fully met at the same time, and they must be considered as a whole. Indeed, it is possible, in some cases, that a project may better achieve the applicable objective by complying with one criterion at the expense of another.

The following objectives and criteria are grouped according to the components of landscaping subject to the application of the by-law on SPAIP. Thus, if a project only addresses a few components, only the corresponding and relevant objectives and criteria apply.

6.1 Topography, slope of the land and retaining walls

6.1.1 Objective: The natural topography of the site is preserved and enhanced as much as possible, while taking into account its necessary adjustment to allow the use of the land for relaxation purposes and to promote the sustainability of the landscaping and the durability of the constructions.

Criteria:

- Natural elements that are important to the overall character of the site such as escarpments, rock outcroppings, old retaining walls, stairs, are preserved;
- The project is designed and located in such a way as to reduce the volumes of backfill and excavated material;
- Transitions between the ground level and that of neighbouring ground or traffic lanes allow a minimum impact on the latter;
- The slopes of paths are soft enough to allow easy circulation through the property and efficient drainage of water;
- The slope of the ground allows water to drip away from buildings;
- The slope and drainage of the land prevents water from flowing on neighbouring properties or public sidewalks.

6.1.2 Objective: Preserve the natural character of the topography by limiting front yard retaining walls to those that are essential.

Criteria:

- New front yard retaining walls are limited to those essential to ground stability and their height is to be as low as possible;
- The retaining wall projected in the front yard responds to a particular context implying that it has less an effect on the natural topography than any other solution, or responds to exceptional circumstances that compromise safety;
- When possible, reinforced vegetated soil retaining structures are used in place of retaining walls, if space permits.

6.1.3 Objective: Preserve and enhance the specific characteristics of each building and of the site.

Criteria:

- If retaining walls are required, dry stone or masonry walls are preferred. Roughcast concrete can be used for low walls perpendicular to the street and set back from the street;
- Interventions on the slope, retaining walls, and stairs allow to preserve the homogeneity of the design in relation to the land;
- Changes to the slope of the land of a Category 1* building enhance the original landscaping and are compatible with the heritage characteristics of the area, as supported by historical documents justifying the use and the suggested form of landscaping.

6.2 Vegetation and planting

6.2.1 Objective: Preserve and consolidate natural elements important to the general character of the site such as mature trees.

Criteria:

- The landscaping ensures the preservation of large and healthy trees;
- The projected landscaping maximizes vegetated surfaces and contributes to increasing the urban canopy.

6.2.2 Objective: Design open spaces of an educational institution in such a way as to prevent any heat island while creating and maintaining recreational spaces that are safe and adapted to the needs of the clientele.

Criteria:

- The landscaping meets the needs of student clientele for recreational and relaxation spaces;
- The projected landscaping maximizes vegetated surfaces;
- The projected landscaping maximizes the area covered by the canopy.

6.3 Fences and hedges

6.3.1 Objective: Only allow front yard fencing in exceptional circumstances to preserve the open character of the urban landscape.

Criteria:

- Uneven topography requires the presence of a fence for safety reasons, in which case the fence harmonizes with the style and character of the building and the street;
- A historical document attests that a fence existed in the front yard of a heritage property and that this presence is consistent with the historic landscaping of the site. The projected fence will be rebuilt to its original appearance;
- In the case of a school yard, it is demonstrated that the layout of the playgrounds and the type of fence used ensures that the public character of the front yard is preserved to the maximum.

6.3.2 Objective: Promote hedges and fences that enhance the specific characteristics of each building, site and heritage area, taking into account the privacy or safety needs specific to the intended use.

Criteria:

- The use of hedges reflects the character of the landscaping and takes into account the fact that front yard hedges are inappropriate on certain properties or streets where open lawns or less formal plantings are predominant;
- The choice of the species composing the hedges ensures that the height allowed by the Zoning By-law is respected, without requiring excessive pruning at maturity;
- Hedges and fences located on the land of a Category 1* building are compatible with the heritage characteristics of the building.

6.3.3 Objective: Ensure that fences facing the street contribute to enhancing the special characteristics of each building, site, and heritage area, considering the privacy or safety needs specific to the intended use.

Criteria:

- The use of wrought iron or an equivalent is preferred for fences facing the street;
- Wood fences facing the street have details and are largely openwork, such as traditional picket fences;
- The material used is the same for all fences on the property.

6.4 Parking and driveways

6.4.1 Objective: Reduce the environmental impacts of parking spaces, driveways and other mineralized spaces.

Criteria:

- Parking spaces, driveways and other mineralized spaces are covered with permeable or semi-permeable materials;
- The mineralized spaces are covered with light-coloured, durable, certified ecological or recycled materials (e. g. recycled stone and reused facing bricks), while being compatible with the character of the property;
- If a parking space or a driveway is heated, drainage structures are also heated to prevent the formation of ice.

6.4.2 Objective: Design parking and driveways that preserve and enhance the unique characteristics of each building, site, and heritage area.

Criteria:

- The materials used are compatible with the building's materials and harmonize with those used in the neighbourhood;
- Modifications to the parking and driveways of a Category 1* building enhance the original design and are compatible with the heritage characteristics of the building.

6.5 Swimming Pools

6.5.1 Objective: Preserve the natural topography of the site and the level of the surrounding properties.

Criteria:

- The siting, the shape, the orientation and the size of the pool allow to minimize the impact on the topography;
- The siting plan does not provide for excavation or overfilling in such a way as to create an artificial plateau;
- The transitions between the pool plateau and areas where the natural topography is preserved are soft and well integrated.

6.5.2 Objective: Limit the visual impact of the swimming pool from public space and preserve the enjoyment and privacy of neighbouring properties.

Criteria:

- The swimming pool is installed first and foremost in the rear yard and encroaches on the side yard only due to a lack of space in the rear yard, a restrictive configuration or topography, or to minimize the visibility of the pool from the public road or neighbouring properties;
- The swimming pool is located at a sufficient distance from the property line;
- If the swimming pool faces a public road, such as a transverse lot or a corner lot, or if it faces a park or public stairs, the setback of the swimming pool from the property line is maximized and allows for plantings that will hide the fence;
- Abundant, dense and sufficiently tall plantings, installed between the swimming pool and neighbouring properties over a minimum width of 1.20 m, allow to hide the swimming pool from neighbouring properties and to contribute to sound absorption.

6.6 Garden structures

6.6.1 Objective: Design decks, pergolas, and other separate garden structures in order to integrate them into the character of the building and the site.

Criteria:

- Decks and pergolas and other similar structures have materials, colours and designs that harmonize with each other and are integrated into the character of the building, including the exterior structures attached to it: porches, guardrails and screens;
- Garden structures on the site of a Category 1* building enhance the original design and architecture of the building and are compatible with the heritage characteristics of the area.

6.6.2 Objective: Minimize the impact of a deck or garden structure on the sunlight and privacy of neighbours, as well as on the view of the public domain.

Criteria:

- A patio on the ground is preferred to a raised deck;
- A raised deck above ground is of reduced size unless it is demonstrated that the impact on adjacent properties is minimal;
- Screens on decks or pergolas do not block the view or light for a building or an adjacent property.

6.6.3 Objective: Design porches, balconies, railings, and other exterior elements of the building to integrate with the character of the building and the street.

Criteria:

- Porches, balconies, fences, railings, screens, roof decks, and other similar structures have materials, colours, and designs that integrate with the character of the building;
- Porches, fences, guardrails, screens, pergolas, and other similar structures have materials, colours, and designs that harmonize with each other;
- Screens on balconies or roof decks should not be designed as fences but as elements that are integrated into the design of the building;
- Exterior elements of a Category 1* building enhance the original design and architecture of the building and are compatible with the heritage characteristics of the area and the street, as supported by historical documents justifying the suggested intervention.

6.6.4 Objective: Minimize the impact of an exterior structure attached to a building on the sunlight and privacy of neighbours, as well as on the view of the public domain.

Criteria:

- The higher a balcony or a porch is above ground, the smaller it should be unless it can be demonstrated that the impact on neighbouring properties is minimal;
- Screens on a rooftop balcony, porch, or deck do not block the view or light of an adjacent building or property.