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GREEN STANDARDS FOR PARKING LOTS BEGIN PUBLIC REVIEW

***New Rules Would Use Plantings to Reduce Pollution,
Conform to Mayor Bloomberg's PlaNYC***

June 18 – City Planning Director Amanda M. Burden today announced the beginning of public review on new regulations for commercial and community facility parking lots that impose new regulations for landscaping, perimeter screening of the lots as well as requirements for canopy trees in planting islands within the lots. In keeping with the Bloomberg administration's PlaNYC sustainability goals, the proposal will promote the greening of new parking lots and those which are enlarged, and put New York at the forefront of innovative self-sustainable planting methods. The plantings that the plan calls for would be designed to act as a natural water filter and absorb storm water runoff. Vehicular circulation within the lots would be improved by new maneuverability standards.

'Instead of imposing heat-trapping oceans of asphalt, these proposed parking lot standards will beautify our streets, cool the air, and absorb pollutants and storm water runoff, said Director Burden, 'And they will make these parking areas throughout the five boroughs more pleasant. This small change can contribute immeasurably to the environment and our quality of life.'

The requirements would apply to new or enlarged open parking lots of at least 18 spaces or 6,000 square feet serving retail and office buildings and institutions such as hospitals and schools. Parking garages, roof parking, gas stations and residential parking lots would be exempt from the requirements. The proposed amendment to the zoning would prescribe perimeter screening comprised of evergreen shrubbery and trees at the edges of parking lots to screen them from the streets. Evergreen bushes no more than 3 feet tall as well as ornamental trees every 25 feet would provide an attractive buffer. In addition, street trees at the curbs would also be required around the lots.

Larger lots containing at least 36 spaces or covering 12,000 square feet would also be required to provide interior landscaping comprised of one canopy tree for every 8 parking spaces on planting islands landscaped with groundcover and evergreen shrubs. Planting beds with trees would frame the ends of each row of interior parking spaces. Very large lots (those greater than 150,000 square feet) would include an 8-foot wide planting strip between every other row of parked cars. New parking lots will also promote emission-free, low-cost travel by requiring bicycle parking.

The specific design and tree planting islands will enable the planting areas to absorb stormwater, reducing strain on the city sewer system as well as minimizing neighborhood flooding. Storm water flows would be captured and filtered in required perimeter and interior landscaped areas designed as bioswales. A common landscape element in parking lots, through their design, placement and composition, bioswales act as a natural filter for oil, heavy metals and other pollutants commonly associated with storm water runoff from automotive pollution. Bioswales also minimize plant material replacement costs by acting as natural irrigation, ensuring that the landscaping remains lush and healthy. If approved, New York would be the first major city in the US to require private parking lots to install bioswale landscaping.

Currently, there are no zoning regulations for maneuverability standards, or limitations on curb cut widths for commercial and community facility developments. The new regulations would institute minimum standards for aisle widths and turning radii within the lots, as well as set maximum curb cut widths and spacing requirements to prevent continuous curb cuts along city streets. These rules will improve vehicular circulation within the lots and reduce pedestrian/vehicular conflicts. The benefits of the greener parking lots include more visually attractive areas instead of expanses of pavement while more effectively managing storm water runoff and helping to cool the air.

Diagrams of the new requirements, illustration of exemplary parking lots and an in-depth description of the proposal can be found on the DCP web site, along with a description of the public review process. Community boards and the five Borough Presidents and Borough Boards now have 60 days to review the proposed zoning text amendment, after which it will go to the City Planning Commission and the City Council as part of the City's public review. For specifics of the [zoning proposal](#), please visit the DCP website.

Department of City Planning

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