

A monarch butterfly with orange and black wings is perched on the brown, spiky center of a pink flower. The background is a soft-focus green field with other similar flowers.

MANAGED NATURAL LANDSCAPE PROPOSED DRAFT ORDINANCE

WEST WINDSOR TOWNSHIP

What is a Managed Natural Landscape?

Planted spaces that include indigenous/native plant species that are well adapted to local climate and soils, and which offer food and habitat to pollinating insects and birds. Typically include flowering herbaceous perennial plants and grasses.

ALSO CALLED:

- Pollinator Garden
- Natural Lawn
- Managed Meadow
- Mini Meadow
- Pocket Prairie
- Rain Garden



Ordinance Purpose

- Establish standards to define, regulate, and ensure proper maintenance of managed natural landscapes within the Township
- Promote the use of indigenous/native plant material over those “disruptive introduced” plants within the Township
- Establish standards that promote responsible and sustainable landscape practices
- Ensure properties are maintained to protect the safety, well-being and neighborhood harmony through road safety, walk/bike-ability of public spaces, and public health provisions



Native/Indigenous and Keystone Plant Species

- **Native/Indigenous Plant:** Species of plants naturally occurring within the northeast and mid-Atlantic regions of the United States before Euro-American settlement, according to best scientific and historical documentation
- **Keystone Species:** Indigenous/native plant species that are crucial for supporting a large portion of local animal and insect life, particularly caterpillars and native bees, within an ecosystem. These plants are vital to the food web, and their removal can significantly impact the overall health and stability of the ecosystem.

Native/Indigenous and Keystone Plant Species:



Large Flower Tickseed

Coreopsis grandiflora



White Yarrow

Achillea millefolium

Disruptive Introduced (Invasive) & Introduced Plant Species

- **Disruptive Introduced (a.k.a. Invasive) Plant Species:** A plant species reproducing outside its native range and outside cultivation that causes harm or disrupts naturally occurring indigenous/native plant communities by altering the composition, natural processes, or quality of a habitat.
- **Introduced Plant:** A plant introduced with human help (intentionally or accidentally) to a different eco-region habitat where it was not previously found.

**Disruptive Introduced
(Invasive) Plant:**



Japanese Barberry
Berberis thunbergii

Introduced Plant:



Bigleaf hydrangea
Hydrangea macrophylla

Noxious Weeds

- **Noxious Weeds:** Any plant designated by a federal, state, or county government as injurious to public health, agriculture, recreation, wildlife or property. A noxious weed may be native or nonnative, invasive or noninvasive and may also be commonly defined as a plant that grows out of place and is competitive, persistent, and pernicious.
- Regulated under “Nuisance” Code, Chapter 115 and enforced by Health Department

Noxious Weed:



Poison Ivy

Toxicodendron radicans

(Native/Indigenous Plants!)

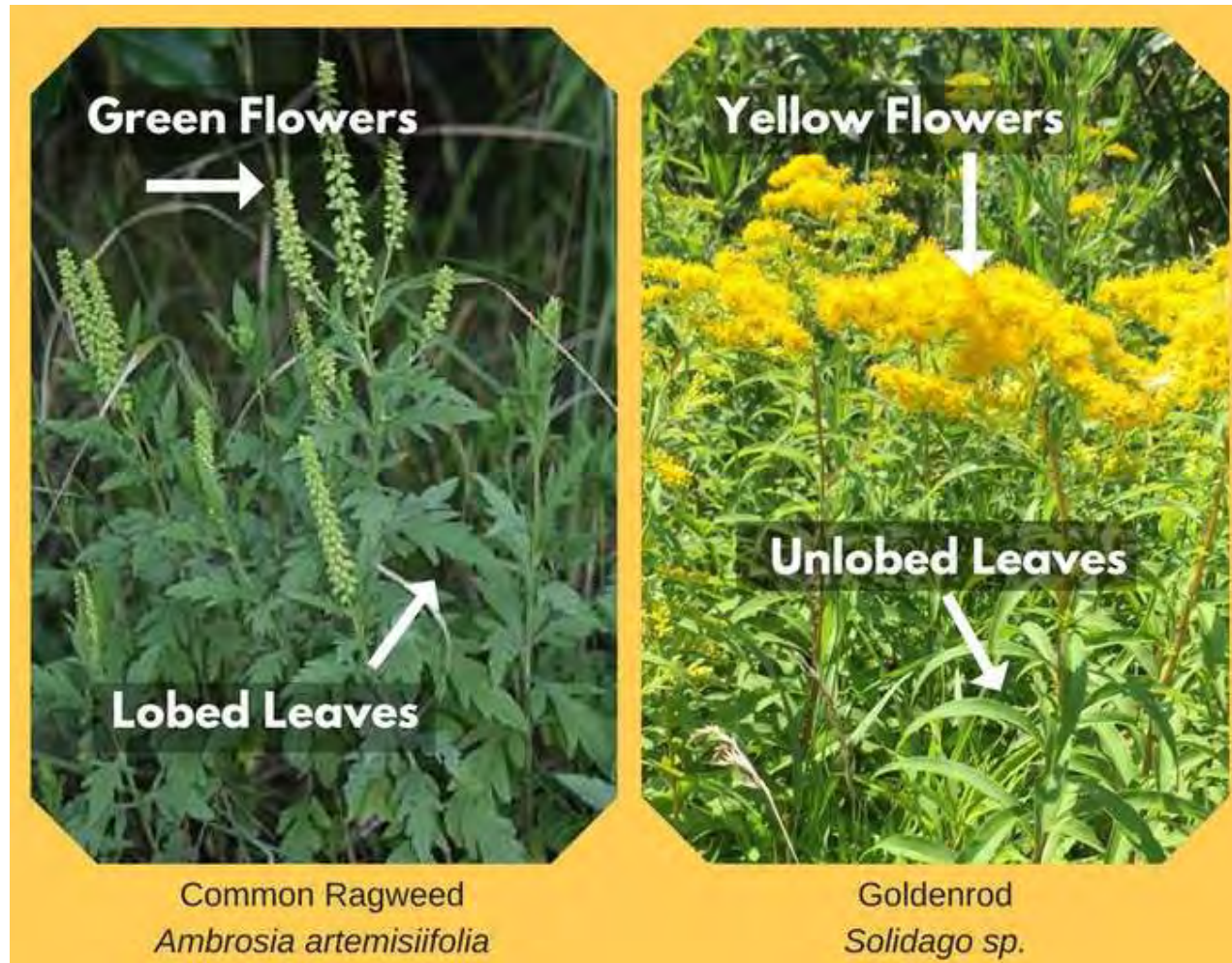
Noxious Weed:



Ragweed

Ambrosia Psilostachya

Ragweed vs. Goldenrod (example of public education required to avoid nuisances)



Public Perception

- May appear to be 'messy' and 'neglected' but require high maintenance for success
- Take approximately 3 years to 'grow in' and look more aesthetically pleasing
- 'Cues to Care' can help with perception through signage, mowed buffers, defined edges of plant beds, etc.
- Public education is beneficial to garner increased acceptance



Benefits of a Managed Natural Landscape

- Provides Habitat for Pollinators and Birds
- Absorbs more stormwater than turfgrass due to their deeper roots; both by uptake and penetration depth into soils
- Requires less watering
- Saves energy typically used for mowing and leaf blowing
- Can be aesthetically pleasant with beautiful flowers and seasonal interest, combined with pollinator activity
- Decrease in pesticide and herbicide use which are harmful for humans, wildlife, and to water quality

Standards and Requirements

- Does not include noxious weeds
- May not encroach in a right-of-way, public way or a walk
- Consistently maintain a reduced plant height in required clear sight areas
- Shall not include plants that are a hazard to the public (ex. Poison ivy, etc.)
- Can't harbor pests of detrimental public health significance
- Kept free of stagnant water supportive of mosquito breeding



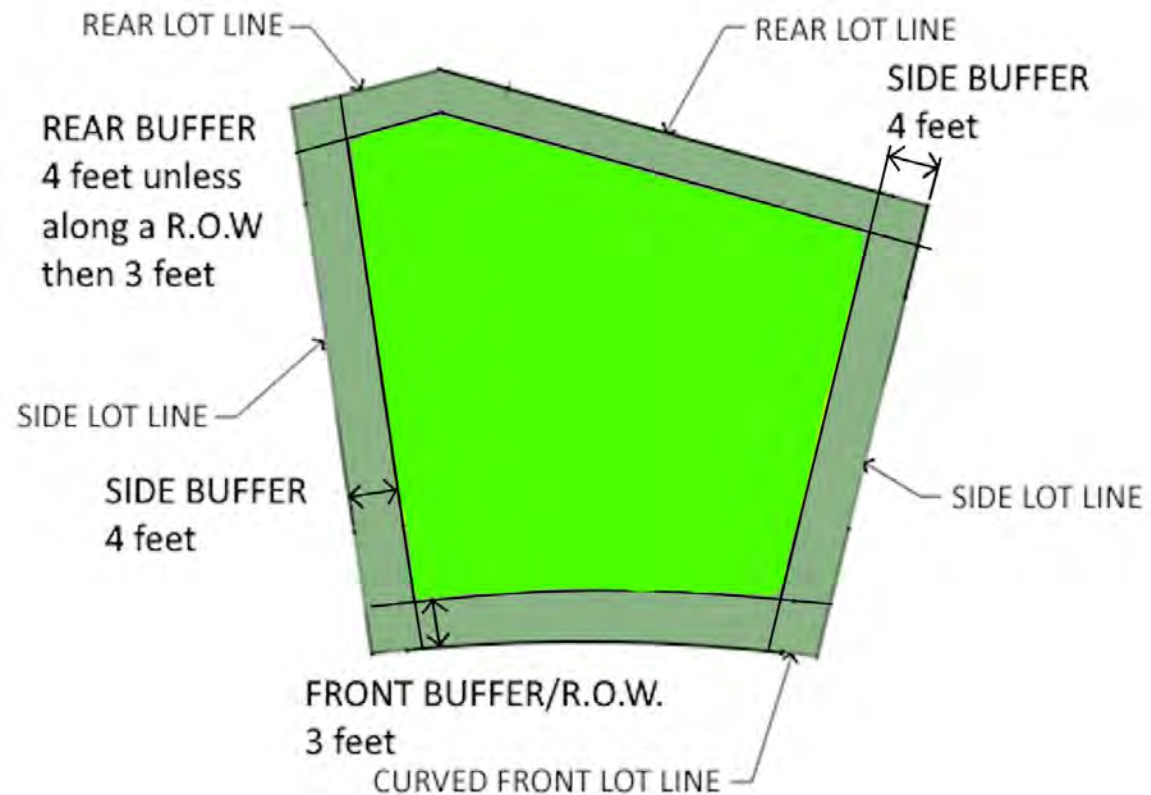
Plant Types

- Includes herbaceous plants, which can be a mixture of indigenous native grasses and plants
- Plants shall provide habitat for pollinators and wildlife
- Lots of available references for the northeast re: plant mixes based on soil types, moisture levels, sun exposures, and desired goals of the landscape, e.g. rain garden, pollinator garden, meadow, etc.



Buffer Area Requirements

- Managed natural landscape may be located within the front, side, or back yard, provided they include buffer areas along their edges.
- Buffer ground cover to be maintained turf grass, very low growing plantings and/or a natural mulch.
- A minimum of three feet (3') in depth along and abutting all public road rights-of-way, public sidewalks and other public ways (paths, trails, access roads, etc.).
- A minimum of four feet (4') in depth bordering neighboring properties. An exception may be allowed when the adjacent owner has consented, in writing, to waive the buffer area and provides a copy of their consent to the Township. A change in ownership will require compliance with the buffer requirements unless the new owner has similarly consented.
- *Note: buffer widths are exaggerated in the diagram for visibility purposes*



Buffer Area Requirements

- All vegetation in buffer areas shall be maintained at a height no greater than four to six inches around each side of the managed natural landscape
- The buffer area shall be maintained free from vegetation extending from the managed natural landscape due to “drooping,” or any other form of encroachment, regardless of the reason
- Trees and Shrubs are exempt from this buffer, UNLESS within a clear sight triangle. (Note however that neighbors should always be considered when planting close to a property line)

Photos for discussion purposes – adequate buffer or not?



Buffer Area Example

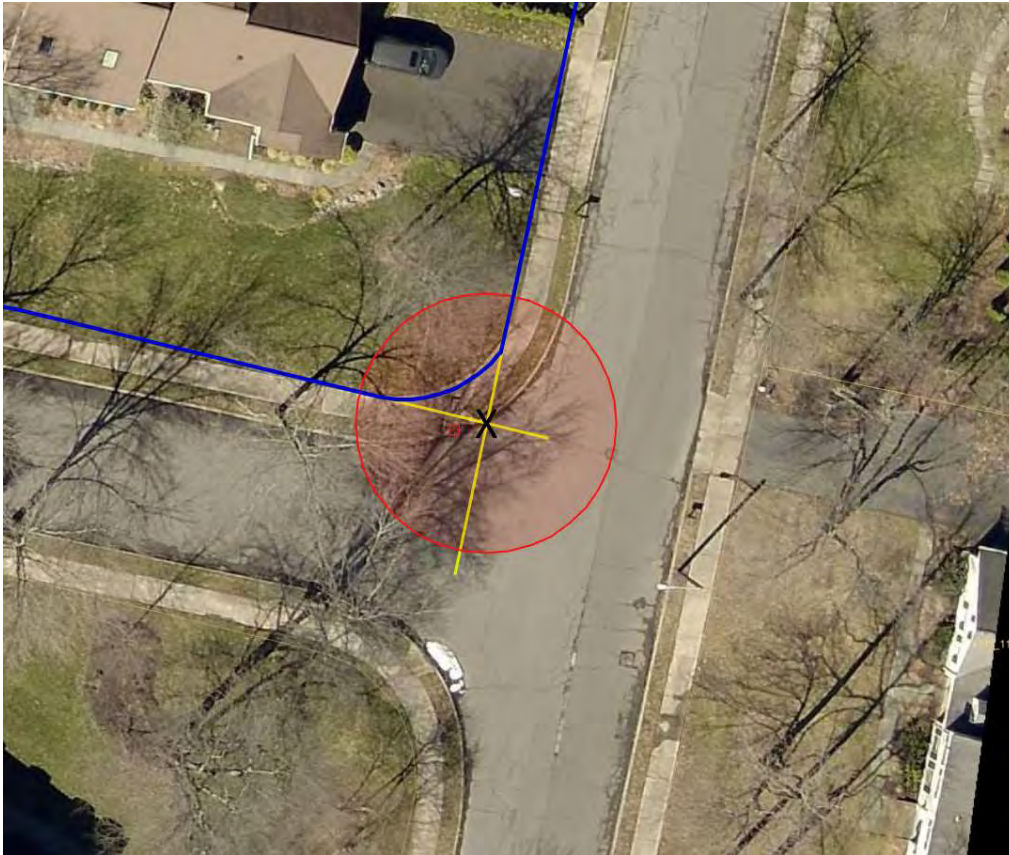


Sight Distance for Traveling Public

Clear sight distance for vision at intersections shall be maintained. The owner of any lands shall keep all brush, hedges and other plant life within this area, including managed natural landscapes, maintained at a height not exceeding thirty (30) inches:

- within 25 feet of the point of intersection of two street rights-of-way;
- within 20 feet of the point of intersection of either side of a driveway with a street right-of-way.
- Street trees located between the curb and the sidewalk are excluded from the above provisions.
- The Township Landscape Architect or other enforcing official may waive this requirement for established woody plants, such as trees or hedges, when in their opinion, the vegetation does not present a safety hazard.
- Lands subject to a sight triangle easement shall also comply with the terms of said easement and with Code section §200-57.E.

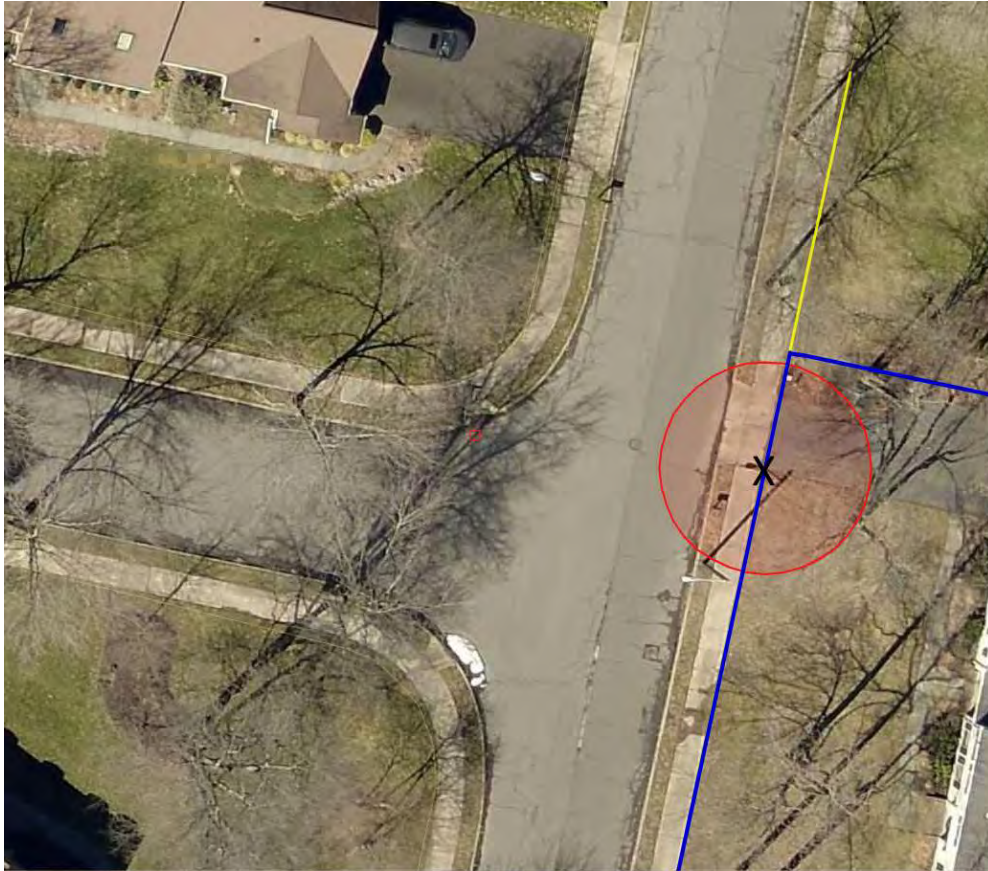
Sight Distance for Intersection of Two Street Rights-of-Way



- Within 25 feet of the point of intersection of two street rights-of-way, the owner of any lands shall keep all brush, hedges and other plant life within this area, including managed natural landscapes, consistently maintained at a height not exceeding thirty (30) inches;
- Right-of-way boundary line is the property line along a public or private road or street.

Aerial image demonstrating application of requirements to the property in upper left

Sight Distance for Intersection of Driveway with Street Right-of-Way



- Within 20 feet of the point of intersection of either side of a driveway with a street right-of-way, the owner of any lands shall keep all brush, hedges and other plant life within this area, including managed natural landscapes, consistently maintained at a height not exceeding thirty (30) inches;

Aerial image demonstrating application of requirements to the property in lower right

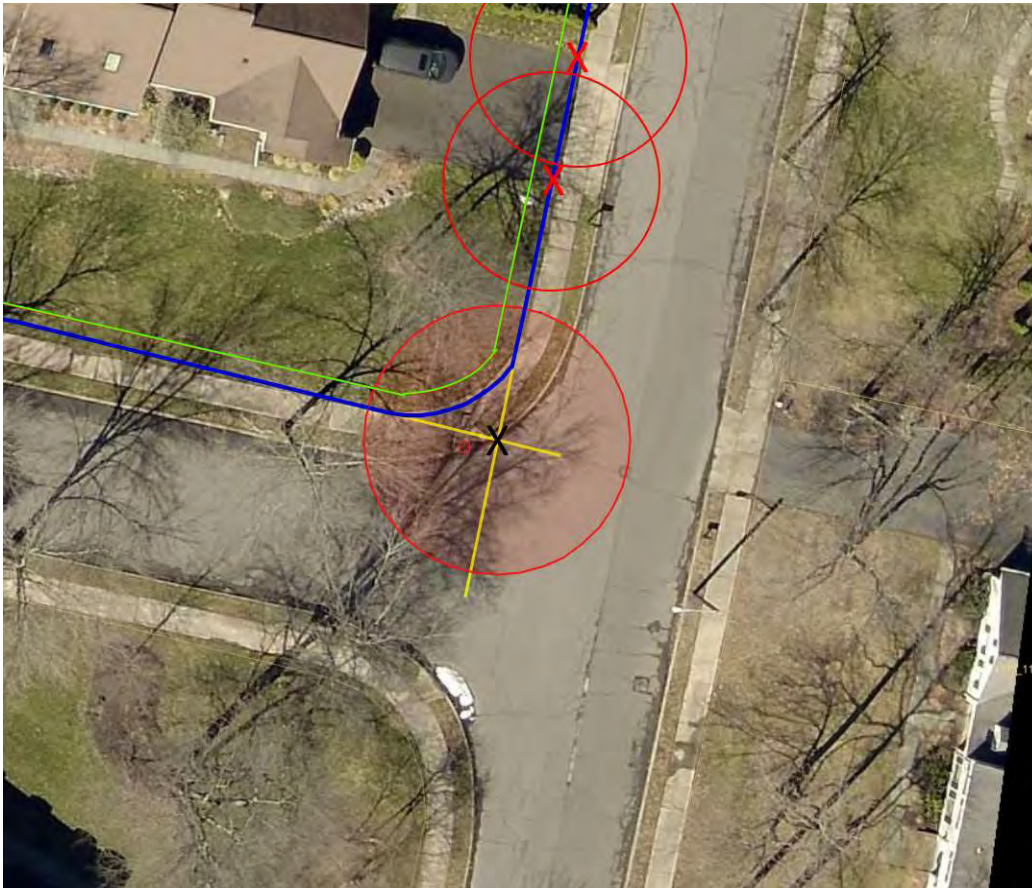
Sight Distance for Intersection of Driveway with Street Right-of-Way



- Within 20 feet of the point of intersection of two street rights-of-way, also means considering driveways on the adjoining properties!
- Street trees located between the curb and the sidewalk are excluded from the above provisions.

Aerial image demonstrating application of requirements to the property in upper right

Buffers Applied to Prior Examples



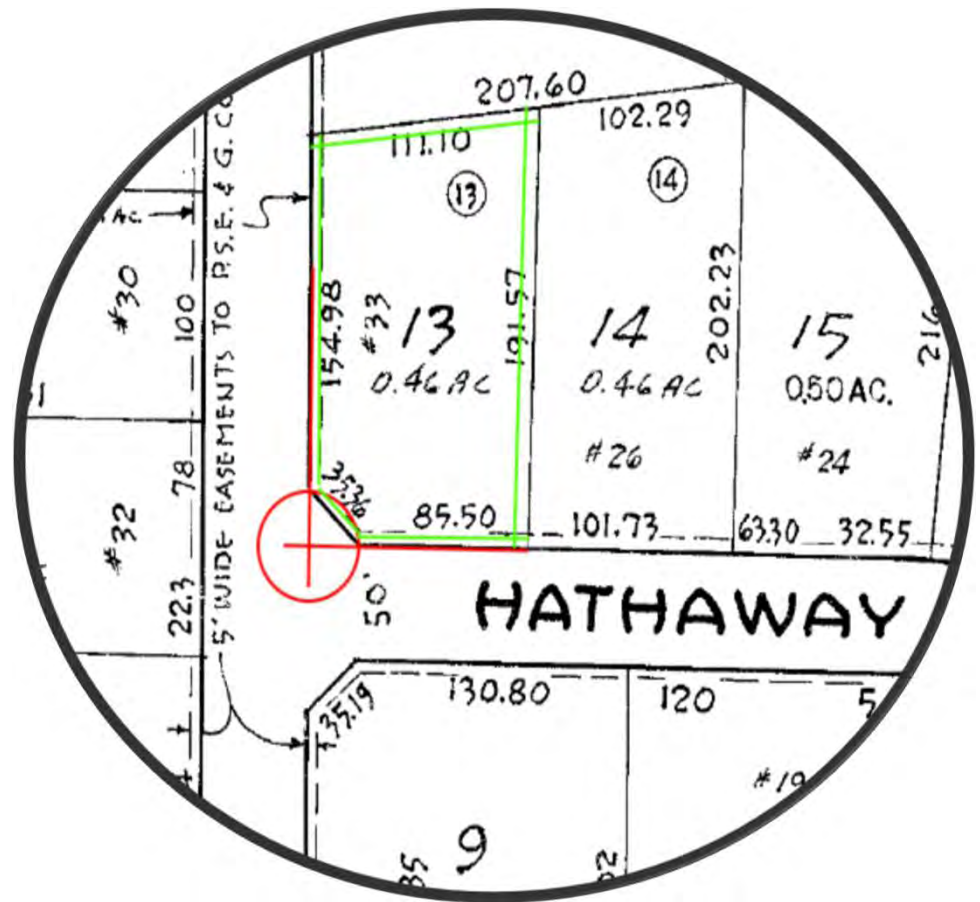
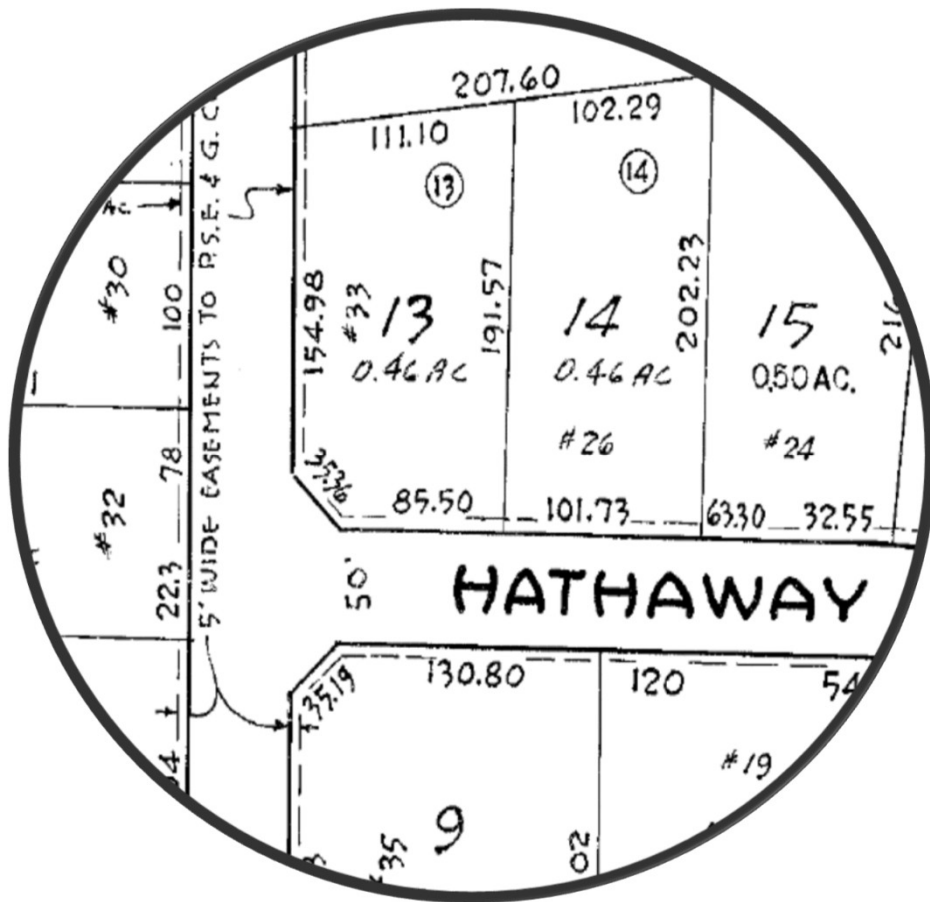
- 25' R.O.W. intersection clear sight distance area
- Two 20' driveway clear sight distance area
- Buffer of 3' along ROW line. Continues to apply within the clear sight areas.

Aerial image demonstrating application of requirements to the property in upper left

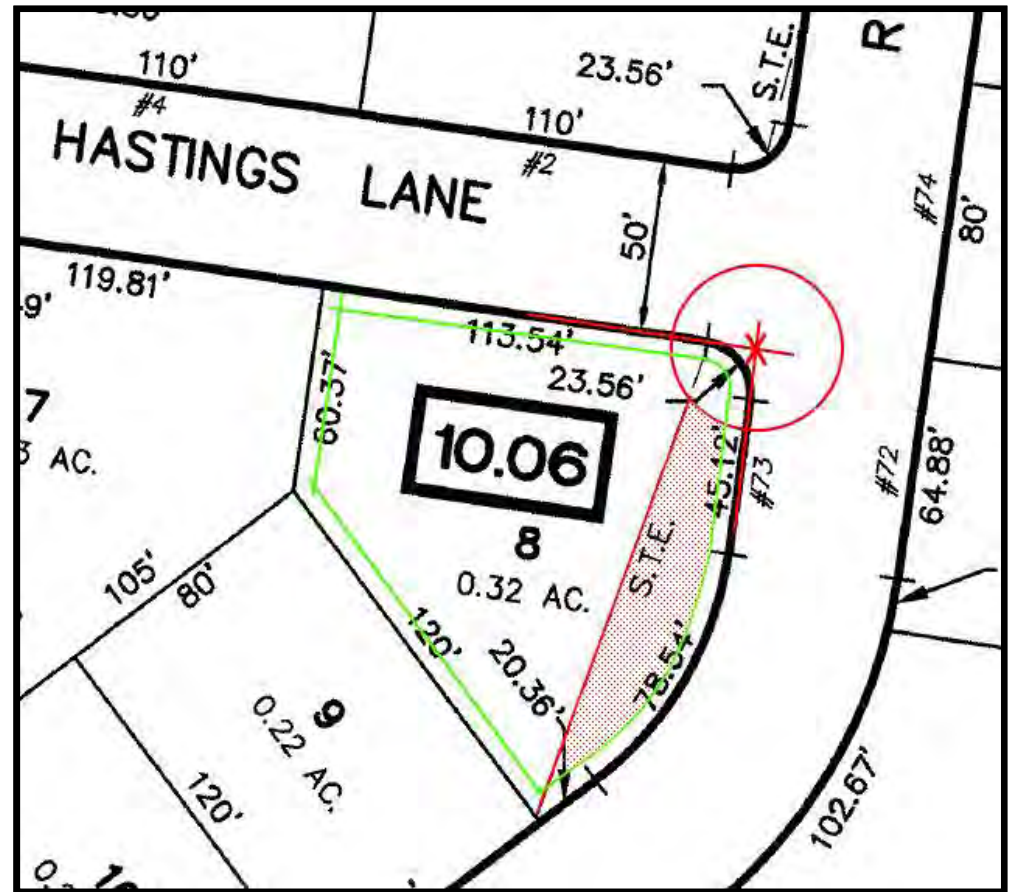
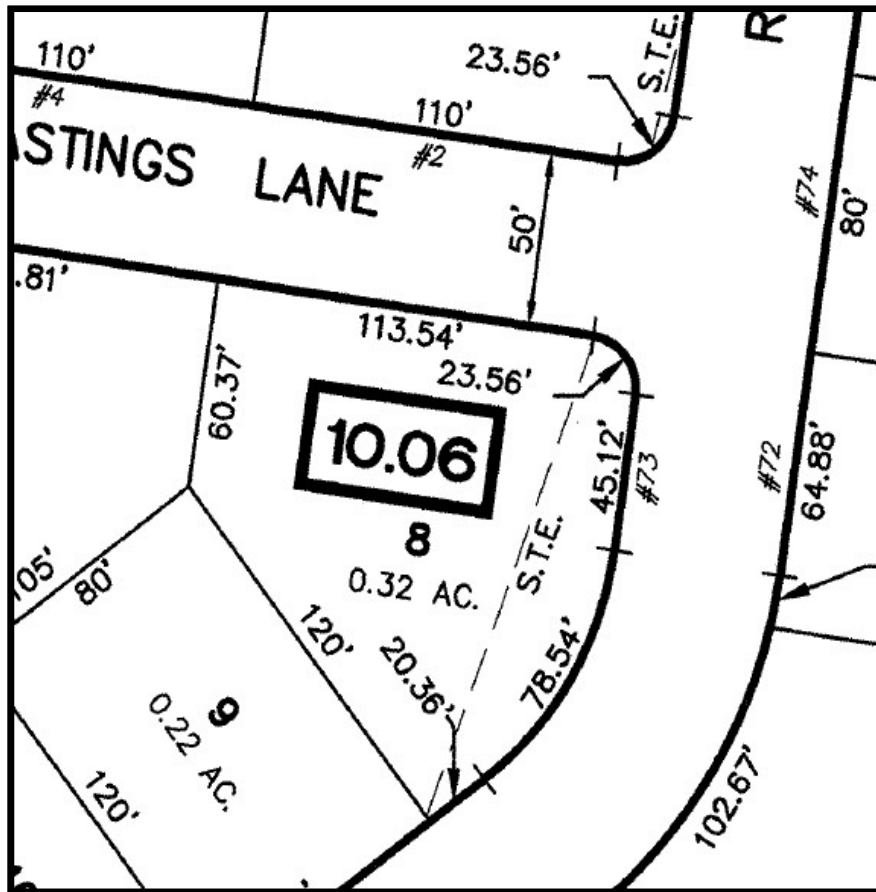
Buffers Applied to Prior Examples



Other Examples from Tax Maps (driveway sight area not depicted)



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Violations

(Enforcement by the Township Landscape Architect or other official designated by the Business Administrator)

Violations are to be enforced under Section 1-3 of the Code. Reasons can include:

1. Noxious weeds are present
2. Areas of unmown lawn found. These are not a managed natural landscape
3. Vegetation obstructing a clear sight area or interfering with traveling public in or along any right-of-way or walk
4. Property owner fails to maintain landscape with the Code and Chapter 115, "Nuisances"
5. Health or public safety concerns found: fire hazard, rodents, poison ivy, stagnant water, etc.



Abatement Notice

1. Written notice issued outlining violations found at time of inspection. Dangerous growth/accumulations are to be abated within ten (10) calendar days.
2. Service of notice by mail. If no response, then left at residence with occupant to be abated.

Violations cited under separate Code section(s) are subject to the measures outlined in those separate section(s) and responsible enforcement personnel.



Community Education

- Programs will be offered by the Township about the importance of indigenous/native plants to the West Windsor Township landscape
- The Township will promote indigenous/native plants by creating education info on their website
- The Township will further encourage responsible landscape practices which respect the safety, general well being and public health of the community



Existing Ordinances Cited

- Sight triangle for intersections, Chapter 200 “Land Use”, section §200-57.E
- Nuisances, Chapter 115 “Nuisances”
- Right-of-Way, Chapter 152 “Streets and Sidewalks”, section §152-6
- Penalties, Chapter 1 “General Provisions”, Article II Penalty
- Rain gardens are a green stormwater management technique also covered in Chapter 200 “Land Use”, Article XXI “Stormwater Control”. Any major development use of rain gardens must comply with that chapter’s requirements.



Questions / Comments

Should you wish to submit written comments, please send an email to Engineering@westwindsortwp.gov