



# CITY OF LAUREL, MARYLAND

## ORDINANCE NO. 2054

**AN ORDINANCE OF THE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL OF LAUREL, MARYLAND, AMENDING CHAPTER 18, ARTICLE XI DIVISION 2 “ACCUMULATIONS AND OBNOXIOUS CONDITIONS, ETC.” RENUMBERING AND RENAMING OF SECTIONS 18-181.1 THROUGH SECTION 18-181.3, AND SUBSEQUENT ADDITION OF NEW SECTIONS NUMBRS 18-181.4 AND SECTION 18-181.5 OF THE LAUREL CITY CODE TO PERMIT INTENTIONAL NATIVE PLANTINGS, POLLINATOR GARDENS, AND OTHER MANAGED LANDSCAPES AS AN EXEMPTION FROM THE WEED HEIGHT REQUIREMENT, AND TO UPDATE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE TRIMMING AND MAINTENANCE OF HEDGES, SHRUBS, AND TREES ALONG STREETS AND SIDEWALKS TO ENSURE PEDESTRIAN ACCESS, VISIBILITY, AND PUBLIC SAFETY.**

*Sponsored by Councilmember James Kole*

**WHEREAS**, the Mayor and City Council of Laurel recognize the importance of maintaining property in a manner that supports public health, safety, and neighborhood quality of life; and

**WHEREAS**, the City’s current property maintenance code establishes maximum grass and weed height standards and trimming requirements for vegetation along streets and sidewalks, in order to prevent nuisances, maintain accessibility, and protect community aesthetics; and

**WHEREAS**, native plant gardens, pollinator habitats, and similar intentional landscapes provide significant environmental benefits, including stormwater management, erosion control, improved biodiversity, and increased support for pollinators and wildlife; and

**WHEREAS**, untrimmed hedges, shrubs, and trees along public rights-of-way can obstruct sidewalks, limit visibility for motorists and pedestrians, and interfere with streetlights and other public infrastructure, thereby creating safety hazards; and

**WHEREAS**, the Mayor and City Council desire to amend Sections 18-181 and 18-181.3 and subsequent addition of new Sections 18-181.4 and Section 181.5 of the Laurel City Code to allow residents to establish and maintain intentional plantings as an alternative to turf lawns, while also updating vegetation trimming standards along streets and sidewalks to ensure safety, accessibility, and compatibility with surrounding properties; as set forth herein; and

**WHEREAS**, the Mayor and City Council find that it is in the best interest of the City of Laurel and its residents to promote sustainable landscaping practices while preserving public safety, pedestrian access, and property maintenance standards; and

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT ENACTED AND ORDAINED**, by the Mayor and City Council of Laurel, Maryland, that Sections 18-181 through 18-181.3 of the Laurel City Code be and are hereby amended as follows:

**CHAPTER 18  
BUILDINGS AND BUILDING REGULATIONS**

**Article XI – PROPERTY STANDARDS**

**DIVISION 2. – ACCUMULATIONS AND OBNOXIOUS CONDITIONS, ETC**

**Sec. 18-181. Height of ~~w~~Weeds.**

It shall be the duty of every person as owner, occupant, lessee or agent in charge of land lying within the city to keep all weeds and grass cut to a height of ~~not over eight (8) inches~~ not to exceed eight (8) inches, except as provided in this section.

**Sec. 18-181-1.1. Definitions.**

For the purposes of this chapter, the following words and phrases shall have the meanings respectively ascribed to them by this section:

*Intentional Planting* means an area deliberately established and actively maintained according to a plan for the purposes identified in Sec. 18-181-1.2

*Managed Edge* means a clearly defined and maintained boundary separating an intentional planting from adjacent areas, which demonstrates active maintenance and limits the spread or encroachment of vegetation beyond the designated planting area.

*Native Plant* means a species identified by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for Maryland's Piedmont or Coastal Plain regions or recognized by the Maryland Department of Agriculture

**Sec. 18-181-1.2 Intentional Plantings Exemption.**

Occupied residential properties that are intentionally cultivated and actively maintained for a purpose other than a traditional turf lawn, including wildflower gardens, meadows, pollinator or native plant gardens, wildlife habitat gardens, and vegetable or herb gardens, are not in violation of this section, provided the conditions in subsection (a) are met.

(a) Conditions - The exemption in Sec. 18-181-1.2 applies only if:

- (1) The planting does not create a health or safety hazard or fire risk, including but not limited to providing harborage for rats or other vermin, creating standing water conditions for mosquito breeding, or allowing accumulations of dead vegetation that increase fire risk.
- (2) The planting does not obstruct public rights-of-way, sidewalks, or visibility at intersections; does not conceal any building street number required by Section 18-29 from visibility from the street; and does not extend beyond the property line. Compliance with Section 18-181-1.2 is required.
- (3) The planting is kept free of noxious and invasive plants and weeds in accordance with the Annotated Code of Maryland- Article – Agriculture Section 9.5–101 and that are prohibited by the State as shown on the Consolidated List of Maryland Invasive Plant Species published by the State of Maryland Department of Agriculture, and amended from time to time, and any invasive species prohibited by City law.
- (4) The planting shows evidence of active maintenance and stewardship.
- (5) A clearly defined border or managed edge is maintained along sidewalks, driveways, alleys, and adjacent properties so the intentional planting is readily distinguishable from unmanaged weed growth.

(b) Managed edge. Where an intentional planting abuts a sidewalk, improved right of way, driveway, or an adjacent property, the owner shall maintain a managed edge at least twelve (12) inches in width, consisting of a mowed strip, mulched border, herbaceous perennial less than twelve (12) inches, path, hedge, fence or other clearly defined boundary that distinguishes the intentional planting from unmanaged vegetation and demonstrates active maintenance. Any hedge used as a managed edge must be kept trimmed in accordance with Section 18-181-1.2.

(c) Registration Required. To claim the exemption in Sec. 18-181-1.2, the owner or occupant shall provide written or electronic notice of intent to maintain an intentional planting to the Department of the Fire Marshal and Permit Services or its designee. Notice shall be submitted prior to installation of the planting or after the planting has been established. The City shall provide a standard form to facilitate submission of the registration. Submission of registration under this

subsection does not require payment of a fee and does not constitute a permit application.

(d) Evaluation Criteria. In administering this section, the City shall consider the presence of native plant species, wildflowers, vegetables, or herbs; whether the planting provides wildlife essentials such as food, water, and cover; the observed presence of pollinators or beneficial wildlife; the clarity of borders or managed edges; and evidence of ongoing maintenance. Recognition or certification by a gardening, conservation, or habitat organization may be considered but is not required.

(e) Relationship to Other Law. Nothing in this section authorizes vegetation to encroach upon or obstruct sidewalks or public rights-of-way, to impair visibility at intersections, or to conflict with Sec. 18-181 or any other applicable provision of the City Code.

**Sec. 18-181.1.43 Trimming of hedges, shrubs and trees.**

All hedges composed of ~~Hawthorne, Buckthorn, Osage orange, or other shrubs,~~ or trees, or similar vegetation planted along the line of any street in the ~~e~~City shall be trimmed, so that the branches thereof shall not extend to or over the inside portion of the sidewalk on any street, nor shall they obstruct pedestrian passage, streetlights, or visibility for vehicular traffic at intersections and driveways. Vegetation shall be maintained to provide a clear vertical space of not less than seven (7) feet above any sidewalk and not less than fourteen (14) feet above any street or roadway open to vehicular traffic.

**Sec. 18-181.24. - Snow and ice removal**

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**Sec. 18-181.35. - Prohibited disposal of refuse on property of another without consent.**

\* \* \*

*\_\_\_ Underlining indicates new language added.*

*Strikethroughs indicate language deleted.*

*\* \* \* Asterisks indicate intervening language and section unchanged.*

**BE IT FURTHER ENACTED AND ORDAINED**, that this Ordinance shall become effective upon its passage.

**PASSED** this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 2026.

**ATTEST:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**SARA A. GREEN, CPM, MMC**  
City Clerk

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**BRENCIS D. SMITH**  
President of the City Council

**APPROVED** this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 2026.

\_\_\_\_\_  
**KEITH R. SYDNOR**  
Mayor