Memorandum

Meeting Details:	November 18th, 2026 – Board of Commissioners Regular Meeting
Prepared For:	Honorable Mayor Brooks and Board of Commissioners
Staff Contact:	Community Development Department – Joseph Petraglia, CFM, Planner II
Subject:	ORD 2026-10 - Chapter 106, Vegetation, second reading and public hearing

Background:

The City's landscaping regulations have remained largely unchanged since their adoption in the early 1980s. Staff have identified several provisions that are outdated, conflict with other sections of the City Code, have been subject to varying interpretations over time, or have proven difficult to administer and enforce consistently. In addition, evolving landscaping practices and changing site conditions have highlighted areas where the current code may no longer reflect industry standards or the City's desired development outcomes.

This ordinance was presented at the June 24th workshop meeting, as well as the July, August, and September Planning Commission meetings. At the last of the three Planning Commission meetings, the commission identified two areas for further review as outlined in the recommendation section of this memo.

Discussion:

Staff have identified the following key areas for consideration:

1. General Landscaping Requirements and Permit Closeout Delays

Current ground cover requirements have created challenges for homeowners attempting to obtain final inspections, close permits, or receive Certificates of Occupancy after rebuilding. Based on direction provided at the June 24th Board of Commissioners workshop meeting and public comment submitted to the city, the proposed ordinance has been revised to significantly reduce the requirement for living ground cover to satisfy minimum landscape area requirements while preserving the living ground cover requirements in landscape buffers and attempting to preserve the chapter's objectives related to aesthetics, tree canopy, and stormwater management. The proposed wording essentially expands the landscape materials already permitted west of Gulf Boulevard to satisfy landscape requirements throughout the city, representing the least restrictive approach staff can recommend for approval. Many other municipalities regulate pervious pavement separately from their landscape codes, and the City currently has no standards governing such surfaces; therefore, staff plans to evaluate and establish appropriate pervious pavement standards as part of a future code update.

2. Right-of-Way Landscaping Materials

The City's code currently does not clearly limit the types of materials that may be installed within public rights-

of-way. As a result, a variety of decorative materials have been placed in these areas, creating maintenance and operational challenges for Public Works staff. Language is proposed to establish standards that limit right-of-way landscaping to approved vegetation and groundcover materials while prohibiting materials that may create maintenance, safety, or infrastructure concerns.

3. Artificial Turf and New Landscaping Materials

The current code provides limited guidance regarding the use of artificial turf and other modern landscaping materials, and provides a potential conflict with recent Florida Legislature regarding artificial turf on single-family parcels. Other municipalities, such as the city of Clearwater, have begun adopting ordinances regulating artificial turf and similar materials. Recent legislature adopted by the state has been attached.

4. Intersection Visibility

City code currently has multiple intersection visibility codes that conflict with each other, creating uncertainty for developers and staff. Existing code provisions have been reviewed, and amendments proposed to ensure landscaping requirements are consistent with sight triangles and do not create safety concerns at street intersections to preserve visibility and public safety.

5. Outdated and Conflicting Tree Regulations

Certain tree preservation, replacement, and planting requirements may be inconsistent with current landscaping standards, overlap with other sections of the City Code, or conflict with state law.

Fiscal Impact:

Any proposed amendments can be implemented using existing departmental resources. Staff anticipate that clarifying and modernizing landscaping requirements may result in minor administrative cost savings by reducing permit review issues, failed landscaping inspections, repeat inspections, and delays associated with permit closeout and certificate of occupancy issuance. No significant fiscal impact is anticipated.

Recommendation(s):

Planning Commission recommended approval with two conditions:

1. Rewording of Sec. 106-36 to require the city to provide notice when removing right-of-way material from the city right-of-way except in emergencies, consistent with current practice.

2. Revisiting or removing the 50% maximum Palm tree credit for multifamily and nonresidential landscape buffers (see underlined portion of Sec. 106-35(1) for proposed and struck portion of Sec. 106-35(3) for existing requirement).

City staff recommends approval, concurring with the Planning Commission's first condition but recommending retention of the proposed 50% maximum palm tree credit. The Planning Commission expressed concern that the limitation may be inconsistent with existing development patterns and cited the Publix site as an example; however, staff's subsequent review found that the approved Publix landscape plan complied with the proposed limitation, and staff did not identify any apparent inconsistency with the existing landscaping. The limitation

applies only to trees required within landscape buffers—not to all trees on the site or even all required trees—and is intended to maintain a portion of non-palm trees consistent with the landscaping objectives of Sec. 106-31(b). Staff also notes that the proposed code already provides palms greater credit toward required tree counts than is commonly provided by other municipalities.

Attachments/Corresponding Documents:

- ORD 2026-10, Chapter 106, Vegetation
- ORD 2026-10, Business Impact
- Forward Pinellas Consistency Letter
- Chapter 125 Section 572 - Florida Statutes
- DEP Standards for Artificial Turf Effective 5.19.26
- Chapter 163 Section 045 - Florida Statutes