

Revegetating along the road? Know the rules!

NOTE: *This is a corrected version from the message sent March 6. The county will trim **twice** a year.*

Dear Captiva Property Owners along Captiva Drive:

The Captiva Community Panel is acutely aware of the damage, hardship and heartache that Hurricane Ian has inflicted upon our homes and community. The hurricane also wreaked havoc with our island's vegetation – with both water and wind taking a severe toll on our lush landscape.

As Captiva property owners look to replace lost vegetation, there are important rules that we must keep in mind if we live on Captiva Drive. Panel representatives have met with the Lee County Department of Transportation and we want to make sure that we're all aware of the landscaping requirements and can replant in compliance with the Land Development Code.

The rule is straightforward. **All landscaping along Captiva Drive cannot encroach onto the paved shoulder or roadway. Any vegetation and plantings must be kept at least two feet away from the edge of the pavement (not the road striping, but the actual pavement). And no branches below the height of eight feet can hang over the pavement.**

This existing provision of our Land Development Code keeps a clear area for pedestrians and cyclists to use the paved shoulder without being forced to walk or ride in the traffic lanes due to encroaching vegetation. This Code provision is sound policy for both motorists and the users of the shoulder – allowing both groups to travel on our island's narrow roadways safely.

The county right-of-way on most of Captiva Drive is 50 feet. However, our actual paved roadway and shoulder has been reduced to about 28 feet on most of Captiva Drive – with vegetation and trees encroaching on the right-of-way over long periods of time. In discussions with the county, there will be no effort to clear cut the full right-of-way, and the Captiva Community Panel will not to recommend a larger bicycle or pedestrian path along Captiva Drive.

However, we must comply with the existing Code, which protects the existing shoulder from encroachment by maintaining the two-foot setback. Two times a year, the county will use its equipment to maintain the two-foot setback and will trim or cut vegetation that encroaches in violation of the Code. The length of Captiva Drive has been examined and the hurricane has cleared virtually all the encroaching vegetation. The county has agreed that existing trees in the two-foot setback area can remain and will not be cut so long as they don't harm the paved roadway. Also, the county will permit well-maintained sod or grass to be kept in the two-foot setback.

The pertinent provision of the Lee County Land Development Code is Section 33-1630(b):

(b) Landscaping adjacent to Captiva Drive. No vegetation shall encroach into, onto or over Captiva Drive or its paved shoulder below the height of eight (8) feet, and a setback of at least two feet from the edge of the pavement shall be maintained at all times for all vegetation below the height of eight (8) feet.

The Panel thanks our community for complying with our Code's safety requirements and we look forward to a green and lush future for Captiva.