

40.320.010 Landscaping and Screening on Private Property**A. Applicability.**

The following standards apply to landscaping and screening on private property. Landscaping and screening within public rights-of-way shall comply with the applicable provisions in Section 40.320.020.

B. Landscaping and Screening Design Standards.**1. L1, General Landscaping.**

a. **Intent.** The L1 standard is for open areas. It is intended to be used where distance is the principal means of separating uses or development, and landscaping enhances the area between them. The L1 standard consists principally of groundcover plants, trees, and shrubs.

b. **Required Materials.** There are two (2) ways to provide trees and shrubs to comply with an L1 standard. Shrubs and trees may be grouped. Groundcover plants, grass lawn or approved flowers must fully cover the landscaped area not in shrubs and trees. See Figure 40.320.010-1 for conventional and LID cross-sections that comply with the L1 standard.

(1) Where the area to be landscaped is less than ten (10) feet deep, one (1) tree shall be provided per thirty (30) linear feet of landscaped area.

(2) Where the area is ten (10) feet deep or greater, one (1) tree shall be provided per eight hundred (800) square feet and either two (2) high shrubs or three (3) low shrubs shall be provided per four hundred (400) square feet of landscaped area.

c. Within the commercial districts where a building is to be placed at the buffer line for a front setback, permeable pavement may be used in place of the required groundcover for the length of the building for the front setback only; provided, the required trees are still supplied, the paved area is connected to the public sidewalk, and pedestrian amenities are provided such as benches or pedestrian plazas. The building need not be placed at the required buffer line to utilize this section if the area between the buffer line and the building is devoted entirely to pedestrian only areas.

2. L2, Low Screen.

a. **Intent.** The L2 standard uses a combination of distance and low-level screening to separate uses or development. The standard is applied where a low level of screening sufficiently reduces the impact of a use or development, or where visibility between areas is more important than a greater visual screen.

b. **Required Materials.** The L2 standard requires enough low shrubs to form a continuous screen three (3) feet high and ninety-five percent (95%) opaque year-round. In addition, one (1) tree is required per thirty (30) lineal feet of landscaped area or as appropriate to provide a tree canopy over the landscaped area. Groundcover plants must fully cover the remainder of the landscaped area with the exception of energy dissipation points at the locations of stormwater inlets. LID bioretention facility plantings may be used in combination with perimeter shrubs, provided a continuous screen three (3) feet high and ninety-five percent (95%) opaque year-round can be achieved within two (2) years of planting. A three (3) foot high masonry wall or fence at an F2 standard or a berm may be substituted for shrubs, but the trees and groundcover plants are still required. When applied along street lot lines, the screen or wall is to be placed along the interior side of the landscaped area. See Figure 40.320.010-2.

3. L3, High Screen.

a. **Intent.** The L3 standard provides physical and visual separation between uses or development principally using screening. It is used where such separation is warranted by a proposed development, notwithstanding loss of direct views.

b. **Required Materials.** The L3 standard requires enough high shrubs to form a screen six (6) feet high and ninety-five percent (95%) opaque year-round. In addition, one (1) tree is required per thirty (30) lineal

feet of landscaped area or as appropriate to provide a tree canopy over the landscaped area. Groundcover plants must fully cover the remainder of the landscaped area with the exception of energy dissipation points at the locations of stormwater inlets. LID bioretention facility plantings may be used in combination with perimeter shrubs, provided a continuous screen six (6) feet high and ninety-five percent (95%) opaque year-round can be achieved within two (2) years of planting. A six (6) foot high wall or fence that complies with the F2 standard (Figure 40.320.010-7) with or without a berm may be substituted for shrubs, but the trees and groundcover plants are still required. When applied along street lot lines, the screen or wall is to be placed along the interior side of the landscaped area. See Figure 40.320.010-3.

4. L4, High Wall.

a. Intent. The L4 standard is used where extensive screening of visual and noise impacts is needed to protect abutting sensitive uses and/or there is little space for separation between uses.

b. Required Materials. The L4 standard requires a six (6) foot high wall that complies with the F2 standard (Figure 40.320.010-7). When abutting another property, the wall shall abut the property line. When abutting a street or road right-of-way, the wall shall be on the interior side of the landscaped area. One (1) tree is required per thirty (30) lineal feet of wall or as appropriate to provide a tree canopy over the landscaped area with the exception of energy dissipation points at the locations of stormwater inlets. LID bioretention facility plantings may be used, and are encouraged, to satisfy plant requirements. In addition, four (4) high shrubs are required per thirty (30) lineal feet of wall. Groundcover plants must fully cover the remainder of the landscaped area. See Figure 40.320.010-4.

5. L5, High Berm.

a. Intent. The L5 standard can be used instead of the L4 standard where extensive screening is warranted and more space is available for separation between uses.

b. Required Materials. The L5 standard requires a berm four (4) to six (6) feet high. If the berm is less than six (6) feet high, low shrubs that comply with the L2 standard must be planted on top of the berm so that the overall screen height is six (6) feet. In addition, one (1) tree is required per thirty (30) lineal feet of berm or as appropriate to provide a tree canopy over the landscaped area. Groundcover plants must fully cover the remainder of the landscaped area. See Figure 40.320.010-5.

6. F1, Partially Sight-Obscuring Fence.

a. Intent. The F1 fence standard provides partial visual separation. The standard is applied where a proposed use or development has little impact, or where visibility between areas is more important than a total visual screen and the installation of fencing will not interfere with the implementation of LID stormwater management on the site.

b. Required Materials. A fence or wall that complies with the F1 standard shall be six (6) feet high and at least fifty percent (50%) sight-obscuring. Fences may be made of wood, metal, chain link with slats, bricks, masonry or other permanent materials. See Figure 40.320.010-6.

7. F2, Fully Sight-Obscuring Fence.

a. Intent. The F2 fence standard provides visual separation where complete screening is needed to protect abutting uses, and landscaping alone cannot provide that separation.

b. Required Materials. A fence or wall that complies with the F2 standard shall be six (6) feet high and one hundred percent (100%) sight-obscuring. Fences may be made of wood, metal, bricks, masonry or other permanent materials. This shall not include chain link fences with slats or similar construction. See Figure 40.320.010-7.

(Amended: Ord. 2008-06-02; Ord. 2015-11-24)

C. Landscaping and Screening Approval Standards – General.

1. A landscape plan shall contain landscaping and screening consistent with the applicable design standards, based on Table 40.320.010-1 and other applicable provisions of this section.
2. The applicant may provide landscaping and screening that exceeds the standards in this section; provided:
 - a. A fence or wall (or a combination of a berm and fence or wall) may not exceed a height of six (6) feet above the finished grade at the base of the fence or wall (or at the base of a berm, if combined with one) unless the review authority finds additional height is necessary to mitigate potential adverse effects of the proposed use or other uses in the vicinity; and
 - b. Landscaping and screening shall not obstruct sight distance at intersections as provided in Section 40.350.030 of the UDC.
3. The responsible official may approve use of existing vegetation to fulfill landscaping and screening requirements of this section if that existing landscaping provides at least an equivalent level of screening as the standard required for the development in question.
4. As a condition of approval of a conditional use or the expansion or alteration of an existing conditional use or planned unit development, the county may require an applicant to provide landscaping and screening that differs from the standards in Table 40.320.010-1 and Section 40.320.010(C)(2) where necessary to comply with the other applicable approval standards for the use or development.
5. Landscaped areas required for stormwater management purposes may be used to satisfy the landscaping area requirements of this section even though those areas may be inundated by surface water. All stormwater facility designs shall meet the standards as defined in Chapter 40.386.
6. Required landscaping and screening shall be located on the perimeter of a lot or parcel. Required landscaping and screening shall not be located on a public right-of-way or private street easement, unless authorized under Section 40.320.020.
7. The responsible official may approve and condition an alternative landscape design and buffer standard that is compatible with existing, abutting landscaping that still meets the intent of the required buffer type, such as shared buffers between users.
8. Required landscaping buffers shall not apply between buildings in common wall construction situations.
9. The exception to setback allowances under Section 40.200.070 shall not apply to landscape buffers except as follows:
 - a. Eaves that are sixteen (16) feet or more above grade may project twenty percent (20%) of the width of the buffer, up to a maximum of two (2) feet.
 - b. Eaves seven (7) feet or more above grade may project ten percent (10%) of the width of the buffer, up to a maximum of two (2) feet.

Figure 40.320.010-1
L1 – General Landscaping

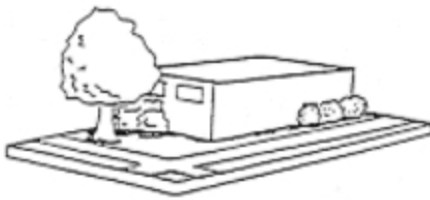


Figure 40.320.010-2
L2 – Low Screen Landscaping

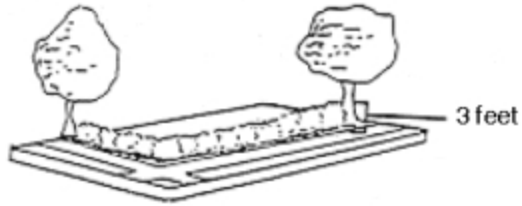


Figure 40.320.010-3
L3 – High Screen Landscaping



Figure 40.320.010-4
L4 – High Wall Landscaping

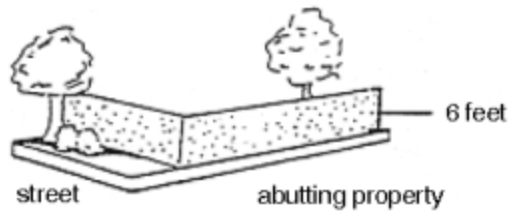


Figure 40.320.010-5
L5 – High Berm Landscaping



Figure 40.320.010-6
F1 – Partially Sight-Obscuring Fence

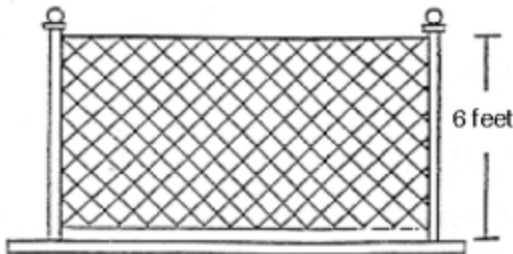
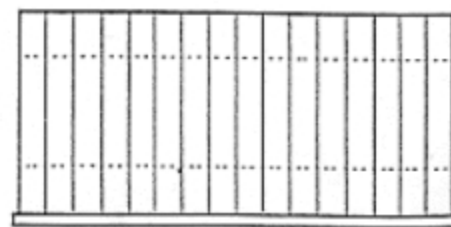


Figure 40.320.010-7
F2 – Totally Sight-Obscuring Fence



(Amended: Ord. 2007-06-05; Ord. 2010-08-06; Ord. 2015-11-24)

D. Landscape and Screening Standards for Storage and Equipment Areas.

1. Storage and equipment areas shall be screened from property used or zoned for residential purposes or a public road right-of-way to at least an F2 or L3 standard if within one hundred (100) feet of the property or right-of-way and to at least an F1 standard if equal to or more than one hundred (100) feet from the property or right-of-way. Storage areas include storage of solid waste and recyclables from the site and, where permitted, storage of goods, materials or equipment.

2. Rooftop and ground-level exterior equipment shall be screened from abutting property used or zoned for residential purposes or from an abutting public road right-of-way to at least an F2 or L3 standard if visible at grade from the property or right-of-way.

E. Landscaping and Screening Standards for Parking, Loading, and Drive-Through Areas.

1. A minimum five (5) foot wide strip landscaped to at least an L2 standard shall be provided where vehicle parking, loading, or drive-through facilities abut a public road right-of-way.

2. Where a vehicle parking or loading area abuts a property with zoning or land uses other than the proposed land use, the area shall be landscaped and screened as provided in Table 40.320.010-1 abutting the other property.

3. Parking areas that contain at least seven (7) spaces shall contain landscape islands equally distributed at a ratio of one (1) island for every seven (7) parking spaces. A landscape island shall contain at least twenty-five (25) square feet, shall be at least four (4) feet wide, and shall prevent vehicles from damaging trees, such as by using a wheel stop or curb. Islands may include stormwater facility design components, such as bioretention features.

4. At least one (1) tree shall be planted in each landscape island. Trees in landscape islands shall reach a mature height of thirty (30) feet or more, cast moderate to dense shade in the summer, live at least sixty (60) years, require little maintenance (such as by being insect-, disease- and drought-resistant and not producing fruit), and be suited for use in the proposed location (such as by being tolerant of pollution and direct and reflected heat).

(Amended: Ord. 2009-12-01; Ord. 2010-12-12; Ord. 2015-11-24)

F. Establishing Setback Standards for Retaining Walls and Fences.

1. This section regulates the height of retaining walls and fences along the perimeter of sites. Building codes specify the circumstances under which retaining walls and fences require building and grading permits. Changes to stormwater runoff resulting from construction of retaining walls are subject to Chapter 40.386.

2. Construction of private retaining walls or fences within public rights-of-way is prohibited. Exceptions to this prohibition require approval of the Public Works Director.

3. The construction of retaining walls four (4) feet or less in height and fences seven (7) feet or less in height may be constructed within easements. This subsection does not exempt retaining walls or fences from otherwise applicable easement provisions.

4. The construction of retaining walls in excess of four (4) feet in height and fences in excess of seven (7) feet in height shall meet the setback requirements of the underlying zone, except as authorized below. The height of a fence on top of retaining walls shall be measured to the grade at the bottom of the wall. Each of the following is an exception to the height and setback requirements of Section 40.320.010(F)(4):

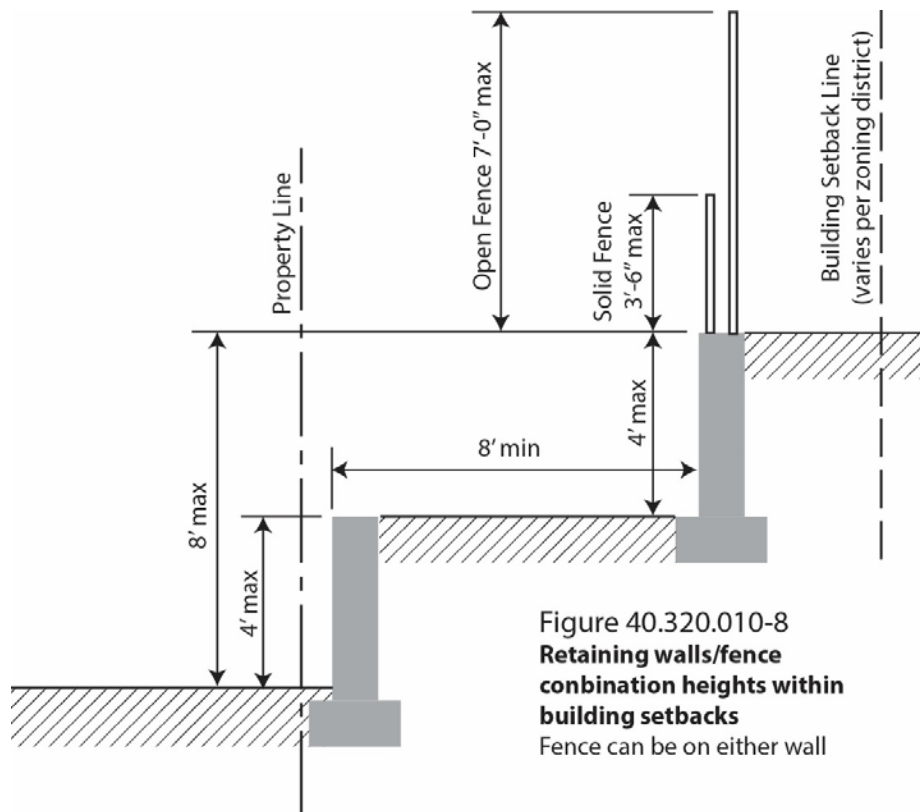
a. Retaining walls taller than four (4) feet may be placed within setbacks by using a series of retaining walls four (4) feet high or less that are separated a minimum of eight (8) feet, provided the area between walls is maintained in ground cover or shrubs. The total height of a series of walls within the building setback shall not exceed eight (8) feet. Landscaping shall be maintained consistent with Section 40.320.010(G)(6). Fences are allowed on top of such walls consistent with Section 40.320.010(F)(4)(h) and Figure 40.320.010-8;

b. The exposed faces of retaining walls over four (4) feet in height must be directed toward the interior of the lot;

c. The retaining walls and/or fences are constructed as part of the site improvements prior to a final plat, and located between lots within the development. Retaining walls on the perimeter of the plat may not use this exception, except as allowed under subsection (F)(4)(d) of this section;

d. Retaining walls and/or fences abutting a road right-of-way or road easement; subject to the following:

- (1) The wall or fence does not block required sight distance;
 - (2) Walls and/or fences over twelve (12) feet in height will be reviewed for potential shading and visual impacts beyond the right-of-way or easement. The Community Development Director may impose conditions on the design and setbacks of such walls if needed to mitigate impacts;
 - e. The retaining wall and/or fence is constructed between lots under the same ownership;
 - f. Permission to exceed the height limits within the setback is granted in writing from the abutting property owner;
 - g. The retaining wall and/or fence is abutting commercial or industrial zoned property or legally permitted nonresidential uses;
 - h. Non-sight-obscuring fences such as chain link or wrought iron seven (7) feet high or less and sight-obscuring fences forty-two (42) inches high on top of retaining walls no greater than four (4) feet tall are allowed within setbacks per Figure 40.320.010-8.
5. Building codes for retaining walls may require setbacks that are greater than those required by Section 40.320.010(F)(4).
6. These height and setback limitations do not apply to fences required by state law to enclose public utilities, or to chain link fences enclosing school grounds or public recreation areas.



(Amended: Ord. 2014-01-08; Ord. 2016-12-09)

G. Timing, Selection, Installation, and Maintenance Standards.

1. Timing. That applicant shall install landscaping and screening required by this section consistent with the approved site plan or an approved modification thereto before the county issues an occupancy permit or final inspection for the development in question; provided, the responsible official may defer installation of plant materials for up to six (6) months after the county issues an occupancy permit or final inspection for the development in question if the responsible official finds doing so increases the likely survival of plants.
2. Shrubs and Groundcover Selection. All required groundcover plants and shrubs must be of sufficient size and number to meet the required standards within three (3) years of planting. Mulch (as a groundcover) must be confined to areas underneath plants and is not a substitute for living groundcover plants, lawn or approved flowers.
 - a. Shrubs shall be supplied in a minimum of three (3) gallon containers or equivalent burlap balls, with a minimum spread of eighteen (18) inches to meet the L2 buffer requirement, and minimum of five (5) gallon containers or equivalent burlap balls with a minimum spread of thirty (30) inches to meet the L3 buffer requirements. Reduction in the minimum size may be permitted if certified by a registered landscape architect that the reduction shall not diminish the intended effect or the likelihood the plants will survive.
 - b. Groundcover plants shall be placed not more than thirty (30) inches on center and thirty (30) inches between rows. Rows of plants shall be staggered for a more effective covering. Groundcover shall be supplied in a minimum four (4) inch size container or a two and one-quarter (2 1/4) inch container or equivalent if planted eighteen (18) inches on center. Reduction in the minimum size may be permitted if certified by a registered landscape architect that the reduction shall not diminish the intended effect or the likelihood the plants will survive. A lawn or flower bed of flowers approved by the responsible official may be substituted for groundcover plants.
3. Tree Selection. Trees may be deciduous or evergreen. The required tree height shall be measured from the ground level at final planting to the top of the tree.
 - a. Required trees for parking and loading areas shall be a minimum caliper of two (2) inches and a minimum height of ten (10) feet at the time of planting.
 - b. Required deciduous trees (other than street trees) shall be fully branched, have a minimum caliper of one and one-half (1 1/2) inches, and a minimum height of eight (8) feet at the time of planting.
 - c. Required evergreen trees (other than street trees) shall be fully branched and a minimum of six (6) feet high at the time of planting.
 - d. If the responsible official decides reducing the minimum size of trees will not detract from the desired effect of the trees, the minimum size of trees (other than street trees) may be reduced if the applicant submits a written statement by a landscape architect registered in Washington or expert in the growing of the tree(s) in question certifying that the reduction in size at planting will not decrease the likelihood the trees will survive.
 - e. See Section 40.320.010(E)(4) regarding trees in landscape islands in parking lots.
 - f. See Section 40.320.020 regarding street trees and vegetation in the right-of-way. Such required trees and vegetation may be determined by the responsible official to meet aspects of the landscape buffer requirements of this section.
4. Selection Generally. Landscape materials should be selected and sited to produce a hardy and drought-resistant landscape area. Selection should include consideration of soil type and depth, the amount of maintenance required, spacing, exposure to sun and wind, the slope and contours of the site, compatibility with existing native vegetation preserved on the site, water conservation where needed, and the impact of landscaping on visibility of the site for purposes of public safety and surveillance. Landscaping materials shall be selected in accordance with a list of plant materials found in the Standard Details Manual.

(Amended: Ord. 2012-12-23)

5. Installation Standards. The applicant shall show and comply with the following:
 - a. Plant materials will be installed to current nursery industry standards.
 - b. Plant materials shall be properly supported to ensure survival. Support devices such as guy wires or stakes shall not interfere with vehicular or pedestrian movement.
 - c. Existing trees and plant materials to be retained shall be protected during construction, such as by use of chain link or other sturdy fence placed at the dripline of trees to be retained. Grading, topsoil storage, construction material storage, vehicles and equipment shall not be allowed within the dripline of trees to be retained.
6. Maintenance. Maintenance of landscaped areas is the ongoing responsibility of the property owner. Required landscaping must be continuously maintained in a healthy manner. Plants that die must be replaced with in-kind materials unless otherwise authorized by the responsible official. Vegetation shall be controlled by pruning, trimming or otherwise so that it will not interfere with the maintenance or repair of any public utility, restrict pedestrian or vehicular access, or obstruct sight distance at intersections as provided in Section 40.320.020.

H. Plant List.

The county shall maintain a plant list to assist in administration of this chapter (see the Standard Details Manual).

I. Verification of the Installation of Required Landscape.

Prior to the issuance of an approval of occupancy for a site plan, the applicant shall provide verification in accordance with Section 40.320.030(B) that the required landscape has been installed in accordance with the approved landscape plan(s).

Table 40.320.010-1 Landscaping Standards													
Zoning of Proposed Development													
Single-family ^{3,4}		Multifamily ⁴		Office Residential ⁴ , Employment and University		Commercial and Mixed Use		Industrial and Airport					
R1, R, RC, UH and UR zones		R-12 through R-43		OR, BP and U zones		All C zones, MX		IL, A, FRDU ¹²		IH/IR			
Zoning of land abutting development site		Separated from site by a street	Not separated by a street	Separated from site by a street	Not separated by a street	Separated from site by a street	Not separated by a street	Separated from site by a street	Not separated by a street	Separated from site by a street	Not separated by a street	Separated from site by a street	Not separated by a street
Single-Family	All R1, R-5, R-10, R-20, UH-10 ⁵ , and RC zones	None	None	L2 10-ft	L3 5-ft	L2 10-ft	L3 10-ft ¹¹	L2 10-ft	L4 in 10-ft L5 in 15-ft	L2 10-ft	L3 10-ft ^{8,9,11}	L3 ¹⁰ 10-ft	L3 10-ft ^{8,9,11}
Multifamily	R-12 – R-43	None	L1 5-ft	L1 5-ft	L1 5-ft	L2 10-ft	L3 10-ft	L2 ¹ 10-ft	L4 in 10-ft L5 in 15-ft	L2 10-ft	L3 10-ft ^{8,9,11}	L3 ¹⁰ 10-ft	L3 10-ft ^{8,9,11}
Office Residential, Employment and University	OR, BP and U zones	L1 5-ft	L1 ⁷ 5-ft	L1 5-ft	L1 5-ft	L2 10-ft	None	L2 ¹ 10-ft	L3 5-ft	L2 10-ft	L3 5-ft ^{8,11}	L3 ¹⁰ 10-ft	L3 10-ft ^{8,9,11}
Commercial and Mixed Use	All C zones, MX, UR-10	L1 5-ft	L3 10-ft	L2 5-ft	L3 10-ft	L2 5-ft	L3 10-ft	L2 ¹ 10-ft	L1 ² 0 – 5-ft	L2 10-ft	L3 5-ft	L2 10-ft	L3 10-ft
Industrial and Airport	IL, A, UR-20, UH-20	L3 ⁶ 10-ft	L1 ⁷ 10-ft	L3 ⁶ 5-ft	L1 ⁷ 10-ft	L2 10-ft	L2 5-ft	L2 10-ft	L2 5-ft	L2 10-ft	None	L2 10-ft	None
	IH/IR	L3 ⁶ 10-ft	L1 ⁷ 10-ft	L3 ⁶ 10-ft	L1 ⁷ 10-ft	L2 10-ft	L3 10-ft	L2 10-ft	L3 10-ft	L2 10-ft	L1 5-ft	L2 10-ft	None
Resource	FR-80, FR-40, AG-20, AG-WL			L2 5-ft	L3 50-ft	L2 5-ft	L3 10-ft	L2 10-ft	L2 5-ft	L2 10-ft	L1 5-ft	L2 10-ft	L3 10-ft

¹ If building wall is to be built within ten (10) feet of a public right-of-way the required buffer shall be L1 five (5) feet for that portion of the site. The front setback for a commercial building may be reduced to zero (0) feet if the Storefront Design Standards in Section 3.3 of Appendix F are implemented, subject to obtaining any necessary overhead easements or licenses as required.

² If building is to be built on the property line there is no required buffer for that portion of the site.

³ Applies to land division applications and not single-family building permits on existing parcels.

⁴ See special setback requirements required by Section 40.260.070, Community Buildings, Social Halls, Lodges, Fraternal Organizations, Clubs, Public and Private Schools, Private Recreational Facilities and Churches.

⁵ Some urban holding is an overlay over an underlying base zoning designation. In these cases, landscaping buffers shall be based on the underlying base zone rather than the UH designation.

⁶ L1 if residential parcel has driveway access to the separating street.

⁷ L4-10 if abutting parcel is already developed and has no L4 wall.

⁸ Increase setback to equal building height, up to a maximum of 50 feet.

⁹ L4 without requirement for shrubs.

¹⁰ L2-10 where an office/commercial-type building fronts the street.

¹¹ Responsible official will determine the appropriate landscaping/screening (L4) proposed developments that exceed the maximum permissible environmental noise levels identified in WAC 173-60-040.

¹²L3 10-ft. standard for all zones

(Amended: Ord. 2004-06-11; Ord. 2005-04-12; Ord. 2006-05-01; Ord. 2007-06-05; Ord. 2010-08-06; Ord. 2012-07-03; Ord. 2012-12-14; Ord. 2016-06-12; Ord. 2017-07-04)