



Skagit County Planning & Development Services

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Landscaping Requirements

Skagit County Code 14.16-830

Landscaping.

Landscaping is essential to provide an aesthetically pleasing balance between the built and natural environment for the residents of Skagit County.

An approved landscape plan is required for any new commercial or industrial building or use applications. There are different requirements depending on the commercial/industrial zoning district. Landscape plans are submitted to the Planning and Development Services. An approved plan is required prior to the issuance of a building permit. Plans shall be drawn to scale showing the location of buildings, above and below ground utilities, and the location, quantities and sizes of proposed plants and other proposed materials in the landscape area.

Types, Amounts, and Locations.

Type I. Type I landscaping is intended to provide screening of areas to reduce the visual impact of incompatible or less desirable characteristics. It is intended to be a very dense sight barrier. Planting strips shall be a minimum of 20 feet wide.

A 20-foot-wide Type I buffer is required on all development within SRT, BR-I, BR-HI, NRI, and RMI zones where it abuts RI, RRv, RVR and R zoned land. Entire property lines need not be landscaped if Applicant can demonstrate the activity (building or use) is adequately screened and agrees to additional Type I landscaping with future applications.

- Type I landscapes may be applied as conditions to discretionary land use applications.
- 2 alternating rows of evergreen trees, with a minimum of 2.5-inch caliper and planted at intervals of no greater than 20 feet on center are required in a planting strip. The trees must be backed by a sight-obscuring fence, a minimum of 5 feet high, that may be removed when the trees reach 10 feet high. Applicant may eliminate the fence by increasing the required width of the planting area by 10 feet.
- Shrubs shall be planted a minimum of 5 feet wide using plants that are 3½ feet in height at the time of planting. A combination of plant materials and landscape materials shall be planted so that the ground surrounding the shrubs will be covered within 3 years. Alternatively, a wall of at least 6 feet high may be used for screening to reduce the planting width 5 feet and shall be constructed of masonry, block, or textured concrete.

Type II. Type II landscaping is intended to provide a visual separation between uses and land use districts.

A 10-foot-wide Type II buffer is required on all development within AVR, AEO, RFS, RVC, RC, CSB, and RB, zones where it abuts RI, RRv, RVR, and R zoned land. Entire property lines need not be landscaped if Applicant can demonstrate the activity (building or use) is adequately screened and agrees to additional Type II landscaping with future applications. A request for a reduction shall be by Administrative Decision pursuant to SCC 14.06.

- Type II landscapes may be applied as conditions to discretionary land use applications.
- Evergreen and deciduous trees, with no more than 50% being deciduous, a minimum of 2.5-inch caliper and planted at intervals of no greater than 20 feet on center are required within the buffer.
- Shrubs shall be a minimum of 3½ feet in height and other plant materials planted so that the ground will be covered within 3 years.

Type III. Description. Type III landscaping is intended to provide aesthetic enhancement, retain the rural character and soften the appearance of streets, parking areas and building elevations of applications subject to this Section. This is the typical landscape requirement that every commercial/industrial application shall meet.

An 8-foot-wide Type III buffer is required on the street frontage of all development within all commercial/industrial zones. Entire property lines need not be landscaped if the Applicant can demonstrate the activity (building or use) is adequately screened and agrees to additional Type II landscaping with future applications. A request for a reduction shall be by Administrative Decision pursuant to SCC 14.06.

Type III landscapes may be applied as conditions to discretionary land use applications.

Standards for AVR, AEO, NRI, BR-I, BR-HI, RFS, SRT, and RMI zones:

- Evergreen and deciduous trees, with no more than 50% being deciduous, a minimum of 6 feet in height, and planted at intervals no greater than 30 feet on center, or maximum spacing of 1 tree for every 30 feet of road frontage may be planted in groupings so as not to visually block a business entrance.
- Shrubs and berms. Minimum of 3½ feet in height, and lawn or ground cover planted so that the ground will be covered within 3 years or earth mounding (berms) an average of 3½ feet in height planted with shrubs, or ground cover so that the ground will be covered within 3 years and produce a landscape at least 3½ feet in height.

Standards for RVC, RC, CSB, and R zones:

- A minimum of 2 groupings 50 square feet each shall be provided.
- A minimum of 1 tree in one group and 2 trees in the second group.
- Shrubs shall be adequate to cover the minimum square footage requirement.

Type IV. Type IV landscaping is intended to provide relief and shade in parking areas.

Applications within RFS, RMI, AVR, AEO, NRI, BR-I, BR-HI and SRT zoning designations shall have a minimum of 16 square feet of landscaping for every parking stall.

- Each area of landscaping must contain at least 100 square feet of area and must be at least 4 feet in any direction. The area must contain at least 1 tree at least 6 feet in height and with minimum size of 1½ inches in caliper measured 6 inches above existing grade if deciduous. Deciduous trees shall have a clear trunk at least 5 feet above the ground. The remaining ground area must be landscaped with a variety of plant materials to include low shrubs, 2 feet at maturity, perennials, annuals and ground cover.

- A landscaped area must be placed at the end of each parking row in a multiple lane parking area. This area must be at least 4 feet wide and must extend the length of the adjacent parking stall
- If less than 6 stalls are required, a minimum of 100 square feet shall be landscaped. The area does not need to meet the dimensional standards of Subsection (iii)(a), above.
- Up to 100% of the trees proposed for the parking area may be deciduous.
- The trees shall be protected from the public, either pedestrian or motor vehicles, by appropriate curbs, tree guards or other protective devices.
- Applications within all other commercial/industrial zoning designations require a minimum of 200 square feet of landscaping shall be provided including at least 3 trees and a mix of shrubs and groundcovers for every 10 stalls.

The following general standards are required in all districts where landscaping is required:

- Preference is to retain as much of the existing mature vegetation (not including invasive non-native species) as possible within planting areas. Existing mature vegetation may be included in the required amount.
- Trees shall be varieties that will not conflict with underground or overhead utilities.
- No artificial lawn or shrubbery will be permitted in landscaped areas.
- Required landscaping or other vegetation within 30 feet of a driveway or street intersection shall not impair the sight vision between 30 inches and 8 feet from the ground. All trees shall have no branches or foliage below 8 feet above the street level.
- Erosion control measures and temporary run-off control may become part of a landscape plan.
- Maintenance for all landscaping and screening areas shall be provided by the owner of the landscaped property. Broken or dead trees or shrubs shall be replaced. All screening and landscaping areas shall be kept free of weeds and trash. Any property owner who fails to maintain landscaping areas will be considered to have committed an offense to this Code pursuant to SCC 14.44 (Enforcement and Penalties).
- Performance assurance bonding shall be in a cash deposit or other assurance acceptable to the County equal to 125% of the estimated installation costs if landscaping improvements have not been completed prior to application for occupancy. Such deposit shall be accompanied by a letter that shall stipulate the completion of the landscaping no later than 9 months from date of occupancy. If the conditions are not met, the County may use the deposit to perform the landscaping.
- Phased projects shall submit a landscape plan for the site as a whole before any issuance of a building permit is granted.
- Alternative landscape plans may be submitted which differ from the requirements contained in this Section. The Administrative Official shall make an administrative decision to approve or deny the landscape plan pursuant to a Level I process. All plans shall demonstrate how they meet the intent as outlined in this Section or that a hardship exists because of lot topography, size, or location.
- Landscape materials shall be provided consistent with the County's list of acceptable landscape materials.