

CHAPTER 6 BUFFERING & LANDSCAPING REQUIREMENTS

Section 1. Purpose.

Buffers provide transition and physical barriers between properties of differing land uses to reduce the effects of sight, sound, and other incompatibilities. The creation of districts in itself does not sufficiently protect adjoining properties from possible detrimental influences.

Section 2. Buffer Requirements.

1. Conditions Requiring a Buffer: Any lot in a commercial or industrial district, with the exception of the CBD and TN districts, abutting any residential district shall be buffered.
2. Burden of Providing Buffers: In all cases, the entire burden of providing the buffer shall be on the owner of the commercial or industrial property. Where lots in two different districts, requiring a buffer between them, are both in an existing improved condition, the requirements of this Chapter are not retroactive. However, in the event that any or all of the commercial or industrial improved property is destroyed or demolished, for the purpose of renewal, redevelopment, or improvement, that portion of said property shall be subject to the requirements of this chapter.
3. General Buffer Requirements:
 - a) No part of any required buffer shall be used for parking, storage, loading, locating refuse containers, or any similar activity which may create a nuisance.
 - b) Buffers shall be properly maintained to satisfy the intended purpose in perpetuity.
 - c) Landscape plantings should be predominately evergreen type trees and shrubs to provide year-round screening. Landscape plantings shall be reasonably dispersed throughout the required buffer.
 - d) Buffers shall be located on the entire common perimeter between the contrasting districts, and extend to the lot lines.
 - e) Where the line between two districts requiring a buffer follows a public street right-of-way, stream or other similar barrier, the requirement for a buffer area may be waived by the Plan & Zoning Commission, provided that such waiver does not permit the exposure of undesirable characteristics of land use to the public view.
4. Buffer Methods: Buffers required in this ordinance shall be accomplished by any one or approved combination of the following options:
 - f) Lots Platted or Combined After the Effective Date of this Chapter.

A buffer yard of 60 feet in width that includes a planting schedule equivalent to one overstory (or evergreen) tree and 3 shrubs per 35 linear feet of buffer; or
A buffer yard of 30 feet in width that includes a planting schedule equivalent to one overstory (or evergreen) tree, two ornamental trees, and six shrubs per 35 linear feet of buffer.
 - g) Existing Lots Platted Prior to the Effective Date of this Chapter.

A buffer yard of 15 feet in width that includes a planting schedule equivalent to a continuous row of overstory, evergreen, and ornamental trees that effectively provides a solid visual barrier.

For existing lots platted prior to the effective date of this Chapter that can provide evidence that the buffer required by this Section would render the property unbuildable, the City Council may grant a waiver of the requirements. In such instances, the City Council may require the installation of a solid fence or wall to meet the intent of this Chapter. The fence or wall shall be six (6) feet in height and shall be constructed of a permanent, low maintenance material such as brick, stone, textured concrete, tile block, cedar, or other similar materials determined appropriate by the Plan & Zoning Commission. The face of the fence or wall should be equally attractive on both sides of the structure. Provisions for landscaping to soften the visual appearance of the structure and to provide additional buffering may be required by the Plan & Zoning Commission and shall be reviewed on an individual case basis.

Section 3. Screening requirements.

1. Conditions Requiring a Buffer: Any lot in a commercial or industrial district, with the exception of the CBD and TN districts, abutting any residential district shall be required to have adequate screening of dumpsters and storage facilities.
2. Mechanical Units: For all new development or redevelopment, all ground mounted mechanical units, including but not limited to air-conditioning condensers, heat pumps, ventilation units, computer cooling equipment, and any other related utility structures and equipment that are visible from any adjacent public thoroughfare shall be visibly screened from public view by the use of a screening wall built of materials compatible and consistent with the materials of the principal building; landscape plantings of predominantly evergreen type trees and shrubs to provide year-round screening; permanent earthberming; or a combination of the above.
3. Trash Dumpsters and Receptacles: Trash receptacles and dumpsters shall be screened on all sides by the use of a permanent enclosure, with gates for disposal truck access. The enclosure shall be constructed to visibly screen the receptacle from public view and from adjoining properties.
4. Outdoor Storage and Loading Areas: Any outdoor storage area or loading area that is visible from any public thoroughfare or any residential use shall be visibly screened from public view and adjoining properties with landscape plantings that are predominantly evergreen type trees and shrubs to provide year-round screening; permanent earthberming; or the use of a screening wall built of materials compatible and consistent with the materials of the principal building.

Section 4. Parking Lot Landscaping Requirements.

1. Purpose. The purpose of parking lot landscaping requirements are as follows:
 - a) Aesthetics and improved design: Improve the aesthetic appearance and overall community design of Marshalltown to enhance the natural and built environments.
 - b) Public Safety: Ensure that pedestrians and vehicles can safely use the parking lot.
2. Applicability. The following requirements shall not apply to parking lots in the CBD zoning district.
 - a) New parking lots.
 - b) Whenever a building or lot existing prior to the effective date of this ordinance changes use or is altered or reconstructed by one or more additions, the sum total which increases the floor area by 20% or more, the uses combined within the building and all enlargements shall thereafter comply with the parking and buffering requirements set forth herein.
 - c) Whenever, by one or more reconstructions, a parking lot of more than 25 spaces is repaved or reconstructed by more than 20%, the lot shall comply with the requirements set forth herein.
 - d) The following are exempt from the requirements of this chapter:

- i. Any off-street parking exclusively used for single-family detaches or single-family attached use; and,
 - ii. Any parking ramp or permanently covered area; and,
 - iii. Any lot designed and built for industrial or manufacturing uses that provide no parking area for the public on a regular basis.
3. Submittal Requirements for all Parking Lots.
 - a) Landscape Plan Required: A landscape plan for all parking lots regardless of size shall be prepared and submitted to the City for review and approval for any landscaping, buffer, or screening required by the City.
 - b) Preparation of Landscape Plan: To encourage landscape plans to be thoughtfully arranged so site elements are artfully and technically organized in a way that conveys meaning, coherence, and spatial organization, a qualified individual or organization, as acceptable to the zoning administrator, shall prepare the landscape plan.
 - c) Landscape Plan Contents: All landscape plans are subject to the requirements of Chapter 5, Site Plan Review Requirements, of this Ordinance.
4. Approval Procedure.
 - a) Prior to the issuance of any building permit, all required landscape plans shall be reviewed and approved by the zoning administrator. No landscaping plan shall be approved unless it conforms to the requirements of this Chapter, except as noted elsewhere in this Chapter.
 - b) All landscaping areas shall be provided and all landscape materials shall be installed consistent with the approved landscaping plan, prior to the issuance of a certificate of occupancy.
5. Parking Area Minimum Landscaping Requirement.
 - a) A landscape area shall be required along the full length of any side of a parking area that abuts any adjoining property (front, rear, side yard lot lines). The landscape area shall be provided between the parking area and the property line, and shall have a minimum width of five (5) feet. The landscaped area shall include grass ground cover, shrubs, trees, and other similar planting or ground cover material acceptable to the City. Landscape plantings shall be reasonably dispersed throughout the required landscape areas. All parking lots shall have curbing of acceptable materials to the City around the perimeter of the parking lot.
 - b) This requirement shall not be necessary for multi-property developments on the side where shared parking will be utilized. Clear plans shall be shown as to how the adjacent property will share parking when it is developed.
 - c) Any new development adjacent to a shared parking setup shall utilize that existing adjoining shared parking area.
6. Additional Parking Area Landscaping Requirements for Larger Parking Lots.

Parking areas consisting, in their entirety, of 25 or more parking spaces shall be required to provide the additional landscaping treatments in this subsection in addition to the five (5) feet minimum landscaping requirement noted in the previous subsection.

 - a) Curbed entrance aisles shall be placed on both sides of all entrance drives and access roadways from the public street system to direct vehicles in and out of the site.

- b) Large parking areas shall be divided into smaller parking fields of no more than 200 parking stalls. The size of these parking fields is dependent upon the overall size of the parking lot, the number of entrance roads, the number of commercial uses, and other site-specific factors. Each parking lot landscaping plan shall include design elements to address how pedestrians will be separated from vehicular traffic, how public sidewalks shall be linked to the development, how traffic will be properly managed and controlled, and how interior landscaping can be included to improve the visual appearance. An effort shall be undertaken to include some overstory and ornamental trees in the parking lot landscaping plan.
- c) The end of every parking aisle shall have a landscaping island. This island shall be landscaped in accordance with this section.
- d) Every parking lot plan shall contain a method acceptable to the City to control diagonal traffic movement through the parking lot at places other than the designed rows. This may be accomplished through planter strips or medians every 3-6 rows. The purpose of this is to protect the public safety of vehicles and pedestrians.
- e) Every parking lot of more than 50 spaces shall have at least one pedestrian walkway.
- f) Parking lots shall be designed to minimize the interaction between incoming/exiting vehicles and pedestrians entering/exiting the structure.
- g) Landscaped areas shall include grass ground cover, shrubs, trees, and other similar plantings or ground cover material acceptable to the City.
- h) Landscape strips, aisles, and medians shall maintain a minimum width of five (5) feet, and landscape areas located parallel to parking stalls shall maintain a minimum width of nine (9) feet to ensure adequate area for the opening of vehicle doors. All landscape areas within the parking lot shall include sufficient area to insure proper growth and protection of the landscaping materials planted therein.