



City Council

Final Deliberation and Recommendation on Proposed Landscaping and Screening Code Amendment Related to Screening of Solid Waste Receptacles (Containers)

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Title

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Recommended Action

Staff Recommendation:

Staff recommends the Planning Commission recommend to City Council to amend the OMC 18.36.060 Landscaping and Screening, sub-sections (I) and (L), with or without additional amendments.

Report

Issue:

The Planning Commission will deliberate and vote on a recommendation regarding a proposed amendment to Olympia Municipal Code 18.36.060 (I) and (L) Landscaping and Screening for solid waste containers.

Staff Contact:

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Presenter(s):

None.

Background and Analysis:

On May 5, 2013, staff briefed the Olympia Planning Commission (Commission) on a proposed amendment to OMC 18.36.060, sub-sections (I) and (L).

The purpose of the proposed amendment is to improve solid waste container access, worker and employee safety and operational efficiency, while not losing sight of community aesthetics and developer needs. The proposed amendment removes the requirement for a Type I Solid Screen and inserts the requirement for a Type II Visual Screen, or if a Type II is not possible that a Type III Visual Buffer shall be used.

Following the May briefing, the Commission held a Public Hearing on June 17, 2013, and a deliberation on

July 15, 2013. No public comments were received at the hearing or during the 5-day open period that followed.

At the July deliberation, the Commission raised additional questions about screening waste containers. The Commission's main concern was over code language and whether screening could be fences, structures or plants. As a result, the Commission postponed their recommendation and asked staff to return later with language that clarifies that issue. The Commission provided guidance and submitted proposed language to staff. Below is a summary of the substantive changes staff made to the proposed code, based on Commission guidance, along with responses to the Commission's other questions and input.

Summary of changes and responses to the Commission's questions and input:

- Staff revised the code to include language that clarifies the use of vegetation versus hard materials for screening. These changes occur in Section 2 (L).

2. Visual Screen (Type II). Purpose: The word "landscaping" is removed and the words "vegetation or landscape structure, or both" are inserted. The reference to "electrical equipment" is also put back in; it was inadvertently dropped in the previous draft.

Materials: The word "Vegetative" and "or other landscape structure can be used" has been added. Staff removed the reference to the Design Review Board (DRB). In researching the issue, staff learned that in practice, the DRB already reviews screening for projects that are not exempt from design review by the board. Some projects are not subject to review by the DRB, and can undergo staff-level design review or are exceptions to requiring review. If the Olympia Planning Commission wanted to extend design review for solid waste screening to the DRB, it would occur in Chapters 18.100 through 18.180 where the DRB has "jurisdiction" to administer. Staff believes that removing the DRB reference from Chapter 18.36.060 provides a simpler, more straightforward approach in the text and intent of the section.

3. Visual Buffer (Type III). Purpose: The following sentence was added at the end: "Waste containers may be buffered from view using vegetation or a landscape structure or both."

Materials: The word "vegetative" was added.

- There were questions about the design review process (triggers that require retrofit of dumpsters) and a suggestion to include detailed screening designs into the code. The triggers that would require review of solid waste screening include change of use/land-use permits, building permits, or requests from property owners to change their dumpster location.
- The screening code establishes the requirement for screening and general types of materials. The actual design and access requirements are covered in the City's Engineering Development and Design Standards (EDDS). Staff has noticed that some cities choose to have these detailed standards for enclosures and screening in their code, whereas others, such as the City of Olympia, keep the engineering standards separate from the Municipal Code. Details of screening structures are addressed in the design review process.
- The Commission asked about the possibility for having stricter standards for the Downtown core and high-traffic areas due to odorous dumpsters. In staff's research on this matter, most of the dumpsters and containers in question are associated with businesses that have been around for quite a long time. As discussed at the last meeting, the Waste ReSources Utility is able to work directly with existing customers on dumpster locations to facilitate safer, more efficient and aesthetic placement. Any project that triggers a review would fall under the screening code, and staff would have the opportunity to work

on a more suitable location or screening that meets the code.

- There was a question as to whether the language for Open Storage should be changed from “[...] the Department finds such storage material is not visually obtrusive” to “the Department finds such storage is visually intrusive.” Staff is not aware of any issues or controversies related to the current language for open storage and how it is presented or administered in practice. This language appears to be working, so staff is not proposing any changes to it.

A revised draft amendment is attached with this staff report.

Neighborhood/Community Interests (if known):

No public comment was received prior to or at the Public Hearing. The public comment period remained open through Friday, June 28, 2013, and none was received.

Options:

- A. Recommend to City Council to amend the OMC 18.36.060 Landscaping and Screening, sub-sections (I) and (L), with or without additional amendments.
- B. Do not recommend to City Council to amend the OMC 18.36.060 Landscaping and Screening, sub-sections (I) and (L), and provide direction to staff.

Financial Impact:

Included in base budget.