



**CITY OF FIRCREST  
PLANNING COMMISSION  
A G E N D A**

March 2, 2021  
6:00 p.m.

City Hall  
115 Ramsdell Street

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- 1) Roll Call**
- 2) Election of Chair**
- 3) Approval of the January 5, 2021 Minutes**
- 4) Citizen Comments (For Items Not on the Agenda)**
- 5) Public Hearing**
  - a) None
- 6) Unfinished Business**
  - a) None
- 7) New Business**
  - a) Review of Joint Meeting
  - b) Public Building Design Review
  - c) Through-lot Setbacks
- 8) Adjournment**

To comply with the Governor's orders, our Planning Commission meetings will be physically closed to the public. Below is the call-in information for the public to listen via Zoom. If you would like to make a public comment, you may speak at the appropriate time or e-mail the Planning Administrator your comment before 5 pm and it will be read into the record.

**Zoom Meeting Details:**

*Dial-in Information: +1 253 215 8782 Webinar ID: 878 1820 0280 Passcode: 760317*

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87818200280?pwd=dHNGWG4ydVRyOEILNmRzTHh6cVA0dz09>

**CITY OF FIRCREST PLANNING COMMISSION  
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES**

January 5, 2021  
6:00 PM

Fircrest City Hall  
115 Ramsdell Street

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**CALL TO ORDER**

Planning and Building Administrator Angelie Stahlnecker called the regular meeting of the Fircrest Planning Commission to order at 6:00 p.m. (meeting was held by remote attendance)

**ROLL CALL**

Commissioners Kathy McVay, Sarah Hamel, Ben Ferguson, and Shirley Schultz were present. Andrew Imholt was excused. Staff present: Planning and Building Administrator Angelie Stahlnecker and Administrative Assistant Suzie Cappiello.

**SELECTION OF CHAIR**

**McVay moved and Schultz seconded nominating Sarah Hamel to continue as Chair and Kathy McVay to continue as Vice-Chair. Upon vote, motion carried unanimously.**

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

The minutes for the meeting of December 1, 2020 were presented for approval.

**Moved by Imholt and seconded by Ferguson to approve the minutes. Upon vote, motion carried unanimously.**

**CITIZENS COMMENTS**

None.

**PUBLIC HEARINGS**

Case No. LU21-01 – FMC 22.26.023 Wall Sign Amendments

Hamel opened the public hearing at 6:04 p.m.

Planning and Building administrator Angelie Stahlnecker presented the staff report. Staff has proposed to change the maximum area of group 1 signs (nonresidential/noncommercial buildings) from 32 square feet to the sliding scale set forth in Table 3. Also, staff proposed to require only signs above a tenant space of a multi-tenant building to be centered. Currently, all wall signs are required to be centered.

Hamel invited public comments. No comments were received.

Hamel closed the public hearing at 6:16 p.m.

Discussion included:

- Sign code does not limit number of signs
- Amendment was initiated by plans for new community center signage
- Desire to remove requirement that signs be centered

Moved by Ferguson and seconded by Shultz to adopt Resolution No. 21-01, a resolution of the Planning Commission of the City of Fircrest, Washington, recommending adoption of amendments to the Fircrest Municipal Code 22.26.023 except for sentence requiring signs to be centered. **Upon vote, motion carried unanimously.**

## **UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

None.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

### 2021 Planning Commission Work Plan

Planning and Building Administrator Stahlnecker presented the staff report identifying a draft 2021 work plan for the Planning Commission.

The Planning Commission removed wall signs amendments as it has been completed and added review of existing policies for racial bias.

**Moved by McVay and seconded by Imholt to approve the 2021 Work Plan as shown in Exhibit A of the staff report and as amended by discussion. Upon vote, motion carried unanimously.**

### 2021 Comprehensive Plan Amendment Window

Planning and Building Administrator Stahlnecker presented the staff report identifying that the Comprehensive Plan Amendment window will be February 3 – March 31, 2020. No major amendments to the Comprehensive Plan were expected except updates to the 6-year TIP.

**Moved by McVay and seconded by McGinnis to approve the 2020 Comprehensive Plan update schedule and set the amendment submission period for March 1 – April 30, 2021 as shown in Exhibit A of the staff report. Upon vote, motion carried unanimously.**

### Housing Affordability - Presentation.

Planning and Building administrator Angelie Stahlnecker presented a PowerPoint presentation on housing issues in the region. The presentation focused on regional and local statistics and

examples related to housing availability, affordability, equity, and diversity. Staff encourages the Planning Commission to consider small changes to  
Discussion included:

- Using THU instead of just AMI when determining need
- Consider sustainability of current homes by allowing conversion of existing structures
- Consider upzone in areas adjacent to commercial or medium density areas
- Want to add density in a responsible way
- Allow people to age in their homes
- Support increase in ADUs
- Recognize there is a fear of renters
- How do we address perceptions and misinformation
- Requested more research on rental houses versus ownership
- For the joint meeting, requesting discussion on rental perception, provide Fircrest examples, policy direction,

## **ADJOURNMENT**

**Moved by Ferguson and seconded by Imholt to adjourn the meeting at 7:43 p.m. Upon vote, motion carried unanimously.**

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Sarah Hamel  
Chair, Fircrest Planning Commission

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Angelie Stahlnecker  
Planning/Building Administrator



**DATE:** March 2, 2021  
**TO:** Planning Commission  
**FROM:** Angelie Stahlnecker, Planning & Building Administrator  
**SUBJECT:** Public Building

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**BACKGROUND:** At the August 19, 2019 study session, there was a general consensus from the City Council to review the guidelines for public buildings in a residential neighborhood in anticipation of the replacement of Whittier Elementary.

As part of the recent bond, the Tacoma School District plans to replace Whittier Elementary in 2027. Whittier Elementary is located at 777 Elm Tree Lane and has a zoning designation of Residential-4 (R-4). Schools are allowed in the R-4 zone with a conditional use permit.

The zoning was established for residential construction, while the design guidelines are more applicable to commercial or apartment complexes.

Current standards include:

- Allowed as Conditional Use Permit
- Maximum Height 30' – Mechanical equipment excluded
- Setbacks: front – 25', Side-street side-yard – 15'
- Modulation: for walls greater than 40', 6 feet for at least 20% of length
- Articulation requirements
- 40% structure coverage
- 50% impervious coverage

Some of the items discussed included:

- Moving all parking, circulation, busses off of public street
- Requiring intersection improvements
- Circulation proposal should incorporate what is currently working
- Desire a traditional, Classic “brick” look
- Requiring an underground retention pond
- Keeping height limit to 30 feet; may have some leeway if tucked into hillside
- Revised how parking number is calculated
- While the intent could be considered a shall, the guidelines are shoulds not shalls

Staff is requesting the Planning Commission to assist in the review and helping determine what should be required, and what should be suggested.

It may include amending some of our design guidelines, adding a design guideline section for public buildings, amending the section to “guidelines and standards” and change some of the shoulds to shalls to increase its authority, or add to our performance standards in [FMC 22.58.008](#).

Below are some of the design criteria that I believe are most applicable for our review. Graphics have been removed to conserve space. The full code is found [online at FMC 22.64](#).

## **Chapter 22.64 DESIGN GUIDELINES**

### **22.64.001 Purpose.**

(a) A city’s character is determined by the collective images created by its architecture, streets, parks, shops, open spaces, public art, and buildings. These features reflect the concerns of the citizenry and the image the citizens have of their community. Whether planned or happenstance, the results are a reflection of, and in turn, reflect upon the image the citizens present to themselves and to outsiders.

(b) Good designs are not expensive. The final results are not more costly to build than poorly conceived, badly designed developments, and in fact, may cost less to build and operate. An appropriately scaled building with enhancing facades, signage, color, and ornamentation can provide the same interior square footage as an ill-conceived rectangular box – and may even be more functional and efficient.

(c) Good designs result from a process that includes forethought, planning, standards, examples, critical reviews, and consequence. The purpose of this chapter is to define and illustrate those features that the community finds to be worthy of emulation when the design of new projects is undertaken.

(d) These guidelines seek to suggest possible design concepts and approaches that realize the desired state. The guidelines use the verbs “should” and “may” rather than “shall” and “must,” recognizing that the objective is the ends, not the means. The guidelines seek to achieve a community design aesthetic within a process that allows individual expression and flexibility to meet changing circumstances while enhancing the ambiance of the city.

(e) These guidelines do not alter the land uses or densities allowed in the underlying zoning districts defined in the preceding sections of this code. Rather, these guidelines seek to define and illustrate how new developments can respond to the character of the surroundings.

(f) While the standards defined in this chapter are guidelines and not regulations, a project developer will demonstrate how each relevant guideline has been accounted for. A project developer may propose alternative solutions, but each relevant criterion will be addressed. (Ord. 1272 § 8, 2001; Ord. 1246 § 18, 2000).

#### **22.64.002 Natural features.**

Intent – Retain natural features and landmarks as open space amenities.

(a) Developments should be clustered on capable and useable soils with the least visual or natural value.

(b) Natural features like knolls, hills, ponds, and streams should be retained as open space.

(c) Natural landmarks, like significant trees, and manmade landmarks, should be preserved and made the focus of new developments where possible.

(Ord. 1272 § 8, 2001).

#### **22.64.003 Grading and storm drainage.**

Intent – Retain the natural landscape and avoid creating unnatural or unsightly grading, drainage, and other site disturbances.

(a) Structures, roadways, and other site improvements should be designed to blend with the natural topography with the minimum amount of site disturbance and grade changes. Large cuts and fills that require tall or long retaining walls or rockeries are not appropriate.

(b) Major drainage corridors and detention facilities should be graded and landscaped to blend with the natural landscape in accordance with the provisions of the city stormwater drainage standards and policies. Where possible, stormwater facilities should be incorporated into the site's design as aesthetic amenities, enhanced portions of walkway or trail corridors, and/or special visual accents. (Ord. 1272 § 8, 2001).

#### **22.64.004 Landforms and viewscapes.**

Intent – Fit building improvements into the natural landscape and preserve views of surrounding features.

(a) Buildings should be fit into the existing topography to appear to be an integral part of the natural landform. On sloping sites, buildings should be stepped into the slope to reflect the sloping grade.

(b) Buildings should be placed to preserve and frame views of natural features including shoreline and mountain ranges, and significant townscapes including architectural landmarks from other properties within the surrounding viewscape. (Ord. 1272 § 8, 2001).

#### **22.64.006 Parking lots and areas.**

Intent – Develop parking areas that highlight buildings and pedestrian areas, screen parked vehicles from adjacent land uses, and reflect land use activities.

(a) Parking areas or lots should not functionally or visually intrude onto intersections, public walkways, and trail corridors.

(b) Parking areas or lots should be located in the rear of a site or in courtyard configurations or along the side of a building if screened from adjacent land uses to retain a building frontage along road corridors and control the scale of the streetscape.

(c) Parking lot aisles should be aligned perpendicular to commercial, retail, and office building entries to provide protected walking spaces and visual focus on building entrances.

(d) Parking lots should be screened from adjacent land uses by grade differences, walls, fences, trellises, earth berms, and/or planting materials to reduce the visible extent of paved surfaces and buffer noise. Screening improvements should be high enough to block views of and from the parking areas into the first floor of adjacent residential units.

(e) Parking areas should be lighted with pedestrian-scale, non-glare, hooded fixtures that do not intrude onto adjacent properties.

(f) Parking structures should be integrated into surrounding buildings or streetscapes using facades, artworks, landscaping, or other means that visually filter the view of parked cars from pedestrian walkways and trails, adjacent building occupants, and the commercial roadway.

(g) Commercial streets will be reserved for short term; customer-oriented parking spaces, particularly during off-peak traffic hours and prime retail hours and events. Where possible and practical, loading activities should be accomplished from a side street or back property location to reserve through access streets for customer parking use.

(Ord. 1272 § 8, 2001).

#### **22.64.007 Parkways, gateways, bikeways, and trails.**

Intent – Create alternative methods of transportation that functionally and efficiently provide access between open space corridors, neighborhoods, parks, public facilities, and urban activity centers.



(a) Parkways or Boulevards. Defined by distinctive street trees, median landscaping, signage, paving, walkway, parking improvements or other furnishings, will be developed within public right-of-way along major city roadway corridors to identify entry into the city and through specific districts therein.

(b) Gateways. Defined by distinctive landscaping, signage, paving, or other furnishings, will be developed within the public right-of-way at major street intersections to identify entry into the city and/or specific districts therein.

(1) Landmark buildings should be developed around the perimeter or the edge of gateways to reinforce the entry identification.

(2) Landmark buildings may use distinctive roof forms, facades, dramatic lighting, artworks, cupolas, or other features to distinguish and reinforce the gateway affect.

(c) Bikeways. On-road bicycle designations, shoulders, and lanes will be developed along major roadways to provide access to residential neighborhoods, parks, public facilities, and community shopping districts.

(1) Bicycle access lanes, signage, pavement markings, and other transportation designations of an appropriate AAHSTO class should be provided on access roads, driveways, and other transportation corridors into multifamily and all nonresidential projects that link the site with the city bikeway system.

(2) Bicycle storage racks, lockers, and other supporting furnishings should be located at the entry and garage or parking lots of multifamily and all nonresidential buildings or projects.

(d) Sidewalks and Pathways. Handicap accessible sidewalks and walkways will be developed along major roadways to provide access to residential neighborhoods, parks, public facilities, and community shopping districts.

(1) Sidewalks and walkways of an appropriate class should be provided within multifamily and all nonresidential projects that link the site with the city sidewalk system.

(2) Sidewalks and walkways should be constructed of durable, seamless materials that are suitable for handicap access, baby strollers, roller skates, and other equipment.

(3) Street trees, shrubs, and other landscaping should be provided along the walkway corridors for buffers and shade.

(4) Benches, trash receptacles, lighting, and other furniture should be provided along the walkway corridors to support pedestrian activities.

(e) Walking and Hiking Trails. Handicap accessible off-road trails and pathways will be developed through woodlands, along wetlands and natural drainage corridors, and within open spaces to provide access to unique environmental features, residential neighborhoods, parks, public facilities, and community activity centers.

(1) Walking and hiking trails of an appropriate class should be provided within multifamily planned development, and all nonresidential projects that link the site with the city trail system.

(2) Trails should be constructed of asphalt, crushed rock, bark, or other materials that are suitable for handicap access but do not damage the trail corridor environment.

(3) Tree stands, hedges, bramble bushes, cattails, and other natural vegetation should be preserved along the trail corridor to provide buffer and visual interest.

(4) Interpretive and directional signage, benches, and other furniture should be provided along the trail corridors to support walking and day hiking activities.

(Ord. 1272 § 8, 2001).

#### **22.64.009 Modulation and articulation – Walls and roofs.**

Intent – Reduce building mass to human scale and increase visual detail and interest.

(a) Building elevations shall be vertically and horizontally modulated to create architectural relief and interest where required by code. For single-family and duplex residential buildings, modulation is encouraged, but not required, for interior side and rear elevations. Specific requirements are listed in the development standards tables for certain zoning districts.

(b) Vestibules, entries, and other architectural adaptations should articulate further visual definition and reduce the mass of larger buildings, especially commercial and mixed-use structures.

(c) Modulation and articulation should be used in a clear rhythm to reduce the perceived size of all large buildings.

(d) All buildings should be defined by roof forms or features that create a visually distinct base and top. Pitched roofs should have one or more visible ridge lines; roof areas should be broken up with dormers, opposing gables, different pitches, or other feature to avoid creating massive undifferentiated area.

(e) Residential buildings should provide architectural details that create pedestrian scale and interest, such as porches and stoops, bay windows and dormers, recessed windows and alcoves, and window and siding trim.

#### **22.64.010 Building scale.**

Intent – Create buildings that reflect function with visually interesting architectural definitions.

(a) A building’s architectural scale should be defined with well-proportioned details and elements that relate to human scale such as:

(1) Porches and recessed entry areas.

(2) Bay windows, balconies, and other occupied spaces.

(3) Recessed window openings vertically proportioned with smaller panes of glass.

(4) Chimneys, roof overhangs, and cornices.

(5) Gabled or hipped roofs including nested rooflines.

(b) Building features should reflect the space within a building, reinforce site conditions like a corner or courtyard, and articulate building modulation.

(c) Building features should be consistent and unified with the overall architectural design of the building. Building elements should be articulated and proportioned to relate to the building as a whole.

(d) Building materials may be changed to enhance or accent building features.

(e) Building features should use roof and foundation design elements to articulate a base line or plane and cap or crown to the structural form. (Ord. 1272 § 8, 2001).

#### **22.64.011 Building entries.**

Intent – Create visible, functional, efficient, and safe building pedestrian access systems.

(a) All buildings should have a principal entry accessed and visible from the street, parking areas, access walkways, and sidewalks. The principal building entrance should address the street or front sidewalk, as opposed to the building’s parking lots and access roads.

(b) Building entries should be highlighted with architectural elements like columns, arches, porches, recesses, pedestrian-scaled lighting, signage, artworks, or other improvements to create architectural focus and visual interest.

(c) The entry area should be covered, recessed or otherwise protected to allow social interaction and activity.

(d) Building entry and access shall be provided within the private property beyond the public walkway, sidewalk, or trail corridor. Vestibules and other recessed areaways shall be used to define and provide pedestrian access apart from the public walkway space.

(e) Vestibules and other recessed areaways should visually alert pedestrians within the public walkway or sidewalk of entry foot traffic to avoid conflicts.

(Ord. 1272 § 8, 2001).

#### **22.64.012 Building materials.**

Intent – Use construction materials and methods that are durable, maintained, visually attractive, and functional to the region.

(a) Building exteriors should be constructed of durable, easily maintainable materials. Materials should be composed of texture, patterns or quality of detailing that is attractive at close distances.

(b) In general, siding textures and colors should reflect regional building patterns using wood siding, shingles, brick, stone, terra-cotta tile, and other features.

(c) Metal siding should have visible corner moldings and trim, matte finishes, and neutral or earth tone colors.

(d) Non-durable siding materials like plywood; corrugated metal or fiberglass are discouraged, as is mirrored glass in residential or pedestrian-oriented areas. Such non-durable materials may be used to match existing materials on the same building or lot and for small areas that accent or highlight a unique design element, but should not be used for large expanses of wall surface.

(e) Concrete walls should be enhanced with texturing, coloring, and/or by incorporating embossed or sculptured surfaces, mosaics or artworks.

(f) Concrete block walls should be enhanced with textured block surfaces, colored mortar, decorative bond patterns, and/or by incorporating other masonry materials.

(g) Stucco and similar trowel surfaces should be trimmed in wood or masonry and sheltered from extreme weather by roof overhangs. (Ord. 1272 § 8, 2001).

#### **22.64.013 Accessory buildings.**

Intent – Design accessory buildings that relate to and complement the principal structures.

(a) Independent parking structures, storage buildings or other accessory enclosures should be designed to complement the principal, adjacent buildings in form, detail, color, and material.

(b) Generally, accessory buildings and structures shall be designed with similar or complementary roof slopes and building materials as the primary structure. (Ord. 1272 § 8, 2001).

#### **22.64.014 Service equipment and activities.**

Intent – Locate trash, mechanical, and utility service equipment in ways that are functional, secure, and visually screened.

(a) Trash receptacles and service areas should be located to the side or rear of buildings in enclosed and secure areas that are not accessible or visible from public sidewalks and walkways. – addressed in FMC 22.58.008(c)

(b) Meters, electrical conduit, telecommunications boxes, satellite dishes, and other utility equipment should be located to the side or rear of buildings in locations and housings that are secure, vandal-proof, and not visible from public areas.

(c) Roof-mounted mechanical equipment and other accessories should be located within screened areas or behind building areas that are secure, visually integrated into the building structure and shell, and screened from adjacent properties or public corridors.

(d) Window air conditioning units should not be installed where the equipment overhangs pedestrian spaces or walkways. (Ord. 1272 § 8, 2001).

#### **22.64.015 Solar orientations.**

Intent – Maximize passive and active solar energy possibilities.

(a) Building designs, particularly within new developments, should be located to maximize the use of passive solar potentials.

(b) Where possible, major window areas and outdoor activities should be oriented along the south-facing facades and yards. (Ord. 1272 § 8, 2001).

#### **22.64.016 Ground floor activities.**

Intent – Create vertical mixed use building opportunities with visual interest that encourage pedestrian activity in ground floor spaces that attract residents, employees and visitors alike.

(a) Ground floor commercial space should be devoted to retail use in accordance with underlying zoning requirements where the building fronts onto a street, sidewalk, pedestrian

walkway or trail corridor. In neighborhood commercial (NC) areas, no more than 25 percent of the ground floor area should be devoted to office use – nor should office uses occupy the front 50 percent of the ground floor fronting a public street or sidewalk unless authorized through the site plan review process.

(b) In neighborhood commercial (NC) areas, structures containing enclosed parking facilities at ground floor level should provide a continuous commercial storefront space at least 15 feet in depth along at least 75 percent of the length of any facade located no more than 30 feet from a street property line or adjoining a pedestrian plaza.

(c) Ground floor commercial space should have a floor to ceiling height of at least 15 feet where the building fronts onto a street, sidewalk, pedestrian walkway or trail corridor. (Ord. 1562 § 52, 2015; Ord. 1272 § 8, 2001).

#### **22.64.017 Building frontages.**

Intent – Create buildings that provide interest and activity along street and pedestrian area frontages.

(a) Buildings that face onto commercial parking streets and/or public walkway and trail corridors should be built to front onto the pedestrian space or activity area to create continuous frontages of interest to the corridor.

(b) Buildings may abut or share common side walls subject to International Building Code (IBC) fire code and emergency access requirements. (Ord. 1473 § 5, 2009; Ord. 1272 § 8, 2001).

#### **22.64.018 Upper floor balconies, alcoves, and decks.**

Intent – Create upper floor areas that provide visual interest and activity potentials.

(a) Upper floors should incorporate balconies, alcoves, decks or other outdoor spaces to provide an amenity and increase visual definition to the building – particularly of the building frontages that face onto commercial streets and the public pedestrian walkway or trail corridors.

(b) Upper floor spaces must be provided within the private property's building envelope and should not intrude upon or over the public walkway or trail corridors. (Ord. 1272 § 8, 2001).

#### **22.64.019 Awnings and canopies.**

Intent – Create an overhead covering of pedestrian areas that is functional, visually interesting, and safe.

(a) As an amenity, commercial or retail developments may provide permanent or retractable awnings, overhangs, arcades or skylights sheltering pedestrians and shoppers from the elements where the public walkway or trail corridor traverses through the site.

(b) The design of awnings and canopies should provide natural lighting and openness and continuous protection from the elements but not overly obscure or shadow the walkway or trail corridor.

(c) Awnings or canopies should be hung above the display window space at least 10 to 14 feet above the public walkway with a minimum eight-foot vertical clearance.

(d) Structural supports for awnings or canopies will be provided from the building or adjacent private property and may not intrude or be supported by posts or columns within the public walkway or trail corridor.

(e) Awnings may extend four to eight feet into the public walkway from the building's face depending on the width of the public walkway or trail corridor. (Ord. 1272 § 8, 2001).

#### **22.64.023 Garage entries and driveways.**

Intent – Develop vehicle access, storage, and parking areas and improvements that enhance residential buildings and activities.

(a) Garage entrances should be subordinate to the pedestrian entry in scale and detailing. Where possible, the parking entry should be located to the side or rear of the building and away from the pedestrian entry from the street.

(b) Garages should be architecturally compatible with the residential portion of the building using the same building forms, materials, and details. Architectural elements may be continued from the residential portion of the building onto the parking structure using friezes, cornices, trellises, or other devices.

(c) Large residential buildings may further integrate parking garages by:

(1) Locating the garage partially or wholly below grade,

(2) Using the top of the garage as a deck, garden, or recreational use of the residents,

(3) Locating residential units or shops on the outside of the garage with direct access from street level sidewalks and pathways.

(d) Open carports should not be visible from the street. Garage edges may be bermed or landscaped to screen views from the street or pedestrian areas. However, vehicular entries should be clearly defined to alert pedestrians.

(e) Where possible, driveways should be consolidated to reduce the width of curb cuts, intrusion on pedestrian walkways, and the visual impact of paving areas. (Ord. 1272 § 8, 2001).

#### **22.64.026 Blank building and retaining walls.**

Intent – Create building and retaining walls that are of human scale, texture, and visually interesting.

(a) Residential buildings should not orient large areas of blank walls to the street. Building ends should be designed and articulated with windows and other architectural treatments.

(b) Blank walls should be screened with landscaping, architectural features, or artworks including trellises with vines and landscaped planting beds.

(c) Retaining walls should be composed of brick, stone, or other modulated material or treated sculpturally to reduce scale and appear less monolithic. Hanging or climbing vegetation may be incorporated to soften the appearance.

(d) High retaining walls should be terraced to provide landscape setbacks, especially adjacent to pedestrian areas. (Ord. 1272 § 8, 2001).

#### **22.64.029 Commercial walkways.**

(See also FMC [22.60.013](#)).

Intent – Create pedestrian areas that link commercial and retail activities with adjacent buildings, properties, and neighborhoods in ways that are functional, efficient, visually interesting, and supportive of business activities.

(a) Buildings should front onto walkways to be developed within each district in accordance with the non-motorized transportation element of the comprehensive plan.

(b) Commercial walkways should be incorporated into the site development as the principal, publicly accessible pedestrian space and design focus of the development and between the development and adjacent properties and surrounding residential neighborhoods.

(c) Walkways should be a minimum of eight feet along street frontages in office areas, and up to 12 feet along street frontages and into the development of major pedestrian-oriented commercial districts and developments.



(d) Walkways or trails should integrally connect each development, particularly retail and commercial projects, with adjacent properties and residential neighborhoods.

(e) Walkways or trails should extend through parking lots and parking areas in separated medians or other placements that protect pedestrians from vehicular traffic.

(f) Where feasible, public walkways should extend through the building development as passageways or alleyways. Such walkways may be open or covered provided that they are publicly accessible. (Ord. 1272 § 8, 2001).

#### **22.64.032 Streetscape furnishings.**

Intent – Create public/private commercial walkways and spaces that are complementary, functional, safe, visually interesting, and of efficient investments.

(a) Improvements to the public walkway or trail corridor spaces will utilize the public streetscape furnishings palette selected for the corridor.

(b) Improvements to the adjoining private spaces should incorporate or continue the materials, colors, and/or styles of the public furnishings palette in order to provide design continuity.

(c) Where appropriate, project developments should provide pedestrian-scaled lighting fixtures to illuminate walkways, trails, parking areas, and other people spaces. Lighting shields should direct illumination onto pedestrian spaces and away from adjacent properties or uses. Generally, freestanding fixtures should not exceed 14 feet in height. (Ord. 1272 § 8, 2001).

#### **22.64.033 Public artworks.**

Intent – Install public artwork improvements in public spaces and building areas that are accessible, informative, and entertaining.

(a) Commercial building and property developments should incorporate outdoor artwork that is physically and visually accessible to the public.

(b) Artwork may be permanently incorporated into functional areas that are physically and visually accessible to the public including parking lots, accessory buildings and structures, as well as building entries.

(c) Where the building or site is of historical or cultural interest, interpretive signage and other exhibits or monuments should be incorporated into building or site improvements that are physically and visually accessible to the public. (Ord. 1272 § 8, 2001).

#### **22.64.034 Lighting. – also addressed in FMC 22.58.018**

Intent – Install street and areaway lighting systems and standards that are functional, properly scaled, safe, and visually enhancing.

(a) Sidewalk and walkway areas should be illuminated with indirect lighting using streetscape elements like trees, walkways, canopies, and entryways.

(b) Pedestrian spaces should be illuminated with standards that are scaled to people using light poles 10 to 12 feet in height or bollards three to four feet in height.

(c) All light fixtures should be shielded to reduce glare on public streets and spaces, and adjacent properties. (Ord. 1272 § 8, 2001).

#### **22.64.035 Roadway corridors and street frontages.**

Intent – Create landscaped setbacks and edges that functionally and visually defines the pedestrian or motor vehicle orientation of the roadway and adjacent land uses.

(a) Commercial street corridors are the public rights-of-way and the setbacks required within and around roadways and parking lots in nonresidential zones.

(1) The setback from the street edge will be landscaped to provide “see-through vegetation” that functions as a partial visual separator to soften the appearance of parking areas and building elevations.

(2) These zones shall be planted with an overhead tree canopy suitable for a mixed motor vehicle and pedestrian environment.

(b) Residential street corridors are the public rights-of-way and the setbacks required within and around collector and arterial roadways and parking lots in all residential zones.

(1) These zones will be landscaped to provide a “filtered screen vegetation” that functions as a visual separator between the street, parking areas, and residential activities.

(2) These zones shall be planted with an overhead tree canopy suitable for a mixed motor vehicle and pedestrian environment.

(c) Parkway road corridors are the public rights-of-way and the setbacks required along major roadway entries into the community.

(1) These parkway road corridors will be landscaped to provide a “filtered to view blocking vegetation” using natural materials that provide continuity with adjacent landscapes.

(2) Parkway road corridors shall be planted with an overhead tree canopy suitable for a motor vehicle and bicycle environment. (Ord. 1272 § 8, 2001).

### **22.64.036 Urban buffers. Also dealt with in FMC 22.62**

Intent – Create landscape improvements around parking lots and properties that functionally and visually buffers activities, buildings, and land uses from each other.

(a) Urban parking lots are commonly shared by residential developments, and all parking areas and lots provided for employees, customers, and other public users within the nonresidential zones. Urban parking areas will be landscaped to provide shade and visual relief while maintaining clear sight lines within parking and access areas.

(1) Shrubs will not exceed a height of three feet around parking lot entries, access aisles, and other vehicle-maneuvering areas in order not to visually block views among vehicles and pedestrians.

(2) The selected plant materials and landscape designs may mix evergreen and deciduous trees to create a continuous canopy.

(3) Plantings may be contained in planting islands or strips having an area of at least 120 square feet with a narrow dimension of not less than eight feet that is unobstructed by vehicle overhang (see FMC [22.62.007\(b\)](#)).

(b) Urban buffers with filtered screening are the perimeter landscape areas provided between nonresidential land uses. These buffers will function as a visual separator between uses within these zones.

The selected plant materials and designs may mix evergreen and deciduous trees and shrubs to create a filtered screen effect.

(c) Urban buffers with full screening are the perimeter landscape areas provided between residential and nonresidential zones. These buffers will function as a visual barrier to obscure views of incompatible activities and improvements.

The selected plant materials and designs may include a mix of primarily evergreen trees and shrubs to form an effective full screen effect.

(Ord. 1272 § 8, 2001).

### **22.64.037 Sidewalks and walkways.**

Intent – Create landscape improvements along and between public/private pedestrian spaces that are continuous, visually attractive, and fully developed.

(a) Landscaping along public sidewalks or walkways will utilize the street trees and plant materials palette selected for the public walkway or trail corridor.

(b) Improvements within the adjoining private spaces, such as outdoor eating areas, plazas, and the like, should incorporate or continue the same plantings in order to enhance the definition of the corridor.

(c) Street trees and other plantings should be of sufficient size at time of planting to create a finished look to the development, street, and walkway area. (Ord. 1272 § 8, 2001).

#### **22.64.038 Buildings and yards.**

Intent – Create landscapes that enhance properties, improve neighborhood appearances, and protect property investments.

(a) The landscape design should highlight and focus views of the building frontages and entries, particularly window displays, pedestrian areas, and amenities.

(b) The design should create a special or individual character of the private portions of each property and building.

(c) Vines may be planted on buildings, fences, walls and other blank surfaces, particularly structures faced with brick and masonry, or that are enhanced with trellis overhangs.

(d) Moveable planters with seasonal plantings should be placed at building entries, particularly within alcoves and inner courtyards.

(e) All plantings, particularly ornamentals, shall be provided irrigation or other watering methods to ensure plant survival.

(Ord. 1272 § 8, 2001).

#### **22.64.039 Screening.**

Intent – Create screens around and over refuse, storage, loading docks, mechanical and utility equipment, and other areas that are functional, effective, safe, and visually pleasing to passersby and adjacent land uses.

(a) Landscape, fence or other opaque improvements should be erected to visually screen refuse, storage, loading docks, and other areas that are not to be accessible or viewed from public walkways, corridors, and roadways.

(b) Areas that are visible from the upper stories of adjacent structures should have an opaque or semi-opaque horizontal cover or screen to mitigate unsightly views that is compatible with the site's architecture.

(c) Latches and other devices should be used to secure refuse and storage areas from animals and children.

(d) Mailboxes, utility meters, lighting, and other service elements should be incorporated into the overall site and landscape screening design of the project. (Ord. 1272 § 8, 2001).

#### **22.64.040 Landscape materials. – also covered in FMC 22.62**

Intent – Install landscape materials that are native, drought resistant, and appropriate to the purpose of the improvement.

(a) New landscaping materials shall include native or non-invasive naturalized species that have adapted to the climatic conditions of the coastal region of the Pacific Northwest.

(b) New landscape materials shall consist of drought-tolerant species, except where site conditions within the required landscape areas assure adequate moisture for growth.

(c) Within the landscape buffer areas about the property, particularly along secondary access roads and around parking lots that do not abut the public pedestrian walkway or trail corridors – site plantings should be grouped to simulate natural stands and should not be planted symmetrically or of even spacing unless a symmetrical or even spacing pattern has already been established in the vicinity.

(d) Buffer areas should retain existing significant trees and vegetation to maintain continuity with original and adjacent natural areas.

(e) Within higher density residential developments, buffer or open spaces may be grouped into common open space areas that define building placements, provide visual accents, preserve landscape or landform features, or house common activity areas – such as playgrounds, swimming pools, or parking areas.

(f) Plant materials and designs, especially street trees, should match or complement the materials or patterns that have already been established along the street or in the neighborhood in color, ultimate size, historical design, and other physical characteristics. (Ord. 1272 § 8, 2001).



THE CITY OF FIRCREST

Planning and Building Department

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**DATE:** March 2, 2021  
**TO:** Planning Commission  
**FROM:** Angelie Stahlnecker, Planning & Building Administrator  
**SUBJECT:** Through-lot setbacks

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**BACKGROUND:** The City has been asked by a resident to re-examine FMC 22.58.003(a), Accessory Buildings as it relates to setbacks for through-lots. In this particular situation, the property owners are interested in constructing a 400sf mini-pool house structure. Due to the restrictions for through-lots, this would not be allowed. The issues of structures in the “rear” yard of through-lots has been discussed before.

The current code establishes the rear setback of a through-lot as the same setback as the required front yard setback for the principal residential structure: 20 feet for R-6 and 25 feet for R-4. For many lots this means they are unable to build an accessory structure in their rear yard.

Historically, through-lot regulations were intended to keep “rear” yards of properties fronting on streets such as Claremont Street and Alameda Avenue looking like front yards. From both an aesthetic and functional viewpoint, the requirement was intended to reduce clutter along street frontages and to prevent sight obstructions for pedestrians and vehicles. The idea being that a through-lot backyard could be adjacent to another properties front yard and the intent was not to see large garages lined up along the street. The original regulations included limiting fence heights to four feet, similar to front yards.

Today, the code regulates through-lots as rear lots for everything outside of accessory building setbacks. Properties are allowed to have a 6-foot fence plus a foot of lattice along the property line.

In 2018, the Planning Commission amended the code to exempt structure that did not require a building permit from this standard since this one exception created a situation ripe for confusion and unintentional compliance issues. Currently, a structure that is no more than 200 square foot can be built within 5 feet of the rear and side yard.

**ANALYSIS:** The vast majority of homes affected have their rear property lines along Claremont Street or Alameda Avenue. So far, I have only identified one instance where a backyard is adjacent to a front yard. There are a few instances where a fenced backyard is adjacent to an unfenced yard with rear driveway access which resembles in appearance a front yard.

Relatedly, a side street side yard of a corner lot has a setback of 15' for primary structures and accessory structure that don't require permits, but the majority are adjacent to a front yard.

Staff has identified three possible options:

1. Eliminate the exception for through-lots
2. Reduce the rear setback for through-lots
3. Add it to the exceptions that can be reviewed under an administrative use permit

**PROCEDURE:** Per 22.78.003, an amendment must be initiated by a motion of the City Council, a motion of the Planning Commission, or the application of a city department. The way our code is written a property owner can only initiate a map amendment, not a text amendment.

If the Planning Commission would like to consider a possible amendment, they could add it to the work plan by motion, which would meet the code requirements.