

PART 12-435

BUFFERING AND SCREENING GUIDELINES

12-435-1. LOCATION OF BUFFERS.

1. Incompatible Use Areas

Buffers should be used between incompatible land uses including, but not limited to, industrial, commercial, residential, and high density or low density uses. It is not desired that these uses occur in close proximity, but if they do, the adverse impacts of one use on the other shall be mitigated with distance, visual screening, access control, sound control, and other mitigation and buffering techniques.

2. Traffic Areas

Buffers should be used between traffic areas such as pedestrian ways, roadways, parking lots and other areas which concentrate people and where views of unsightly conditions can impact their impression and image of an area or use. Trash collection areas, service docks, loading docks, outdoor storage areas, mechanical equipment, etc. should be screened and buffered using the guidelines set forth herein.

12-435-2. KINDS OF BUFFERS

1. Visual Barriers

Visual barriers such as fences, dense landscape, earthforms (berms or mounds), or some combination of these may be used as a means of controlling views that may be undesirable and incompatible with adjacent uses.

2. Sound Barriers

Sound barriers such as block or concrete walls or dense landscaping may be used as a means of controlling the impact of sound on adjacent uses. Generally, barriers such as block and concrete walls are the most effective and can be used in the smallest amount of space. Such barriers should be constructed of graffiti resistant materials or surfaces. Dense landscaping and berms can also be used as sound barriers, but they must be of considerable depth and height in order to be effective.

Generally, thirty feet (30') to fifty feet (50') of area, planted with dense evergreen vegetation of varying heights in conjunction with berms or mounds of earth, are needed to create an effective landscaped sound barrier.

12-435-3. MATERIALS

1. Landscaped buffers should specify a width and the size of plant materials to be provided at initial planting. The size of plant materials can affect the initial impact and effectiveness of the buffer and a determination must be made regarding whether or not an immediate buffer is desired. If an immediate buffer is necessary, landscaping is probably not the best choice or may be required to be used in combination with other buffer or screening instrument provided herein.

2. Fences and Walls

Visually obstructing materials such as fences constructed of wood, composite materials, concrete or masonry are typically used. In determining the appropriate choice, maintainability and vulnerability to the elements, graffiti and other forms of vandalism, should be considered. Wood and composite materials are more vulnerable to vandalism and destruction and are more difficult to clean. Concrete and masonry construction is much more vandal resistant and may be constructed of graffiti-resistant surfaces which make removal of graffiti or resurfacing easier. Smooth, clean, lightly colored surfaces are more attractive to vandals and should be avoided. Textured surfaces, combined with landscape materials and plants which restrict access to the barrier, have a deterrent effect on vandalism and graffiti and should be used appropriate. In any event, walls and fences should be compatible with the design of the structures.

12-435-4. OTHER COMMUNITY USES

Screens and buffers of a useful size can also be used to provide pedestrian access between neighborhoods and use areas. Pedestrian and bicycle access can reduce traffic congestion thereby increasing air quality within the City. Wherever possible, pedestrian, equestrian, and bicycle paths should be considered within a development and, if provided, should access other public right-of-ways.

12-435-5. MAINTENANCE.

Buffered areas should be maintained by the developer or property owner, unless otherwise agreed to by the City.

