3. COMMUNITY DESIGN ELEMENT

INTRODUCTION

Thoughtful community design can enhance the quality of life for residents, including by increasing privacy, encouraging interaction in public spaces, and creating a cohesive sense of place. The Community Design Element provides a framework for community development along with guidelines for construction and street improvements to help ensure the protection of the City's natural and built features. Medina is primarily a residential community which is nearly fully built-out. Medina's neighborhood development is distinct and enhanced by the proximity of the lake shore, views, narrow streets with extensive mature landscaping, and large tracts of public and private open space. Proximity to urban centers has reduced the pressure for higher intensity commercial activities in the City, thereby allowing Medina to maintain its small-town residential character.

Street Design

The design of Medina's streets is a major element in the City's appearance. The character and quality of the landscaping of these streets is fundamental in maintaining the City's natural, informal character. As Washington cities continue to face pressure to accommodate more growth, thoughtful transportation planning will help ensure Medina's streets can accommodate increased traffic without significant loss of trees and other vegetation, without compromising pedestrian safety and enjoyment, and without adding visual collector to Medina's neighborhoods.

Vehicular Surfaces and Parking

All collector streets should be maintained as narrow, two-lane roadways except for 84th Avenue NE (from NE 12th Street to the SR 520 bridge/interchange) and the corner of 84th Ave NE and NE 24th Street, which requires additional lanes for turning at intersections. Along collectors, parking is discouraged and the rights-of-way should not be improved for parking except in designated areas. Street rights-of-way in neighborhood areas and private lanes have historically been used to supplement on-site parking. Where practicable, these uses should be minimized and new construction and major remodeling should make provisions for the on-site parking of cars. All long-term parking for recreational vehicles, commercial trucks, trailers, and boats should be aesthetically screened from neighboring properties and the public right-of-way. Parking in front yard setbacks should be minimized and aesthetically screened. The number and width of driveways and private lanes accessing arterial streets should be minimized to reduce potential traffic conflicts and to retain the continuity of landscape, while still meeting emergency vehicle minimum requirements. Traffic calming should be implemented when possible.

Medina Community Design

Trees and vegetation help reduce the impact of development, by providing significant aesthetic and environmental benefits. Trees and other forms of landscaping improve air quality, water quality, and soil stability. They provide limited wildlife habitat and reduce stress associated with urban life by providing visual and noise barriers between the City's streets and private property

and between neighboring properties. They also have great aesthetic value and significant landscaping, including mature trees, which are always associated with well-designed communities.

It is important that citizens be sensitive to the impact that altering or placing trees may have on neighboring properties. Trees can disrupt existing and potential views and access to sun. Residents are required to consult with the City and urged to consult with their neighbors on both removal and replacement of trees and tree groupings. This will help to protect views and to prevent potential problems (e.g., removal of an important tree or planting a living fence). Clear cutting is not permitted unless approved through a City issued tree removal permit.

The Medina Community Design provides planting options to perpetuate the informal, natural appearance of Medina's street rights-of-way, public areas, and the adjacent portions of private property. The Community Design provides the overall framework for the improvement goals in these areas and should be reviewed periodically and updated where appropriate. The goals include:

- provide a diversity of plant species;
- screen development projects from City streets and from neighboring properties;
- respect the privacy of the neighborhood by encouraging vegetation and landscaping that provides screening;
- respect the scale and nature of plantings in the immediate vicinity;
- recognize restrictions imposed by overhead wires, sidewalks, and street intersections;
- recognize "historical" view corridors; and
- maintain the City's informal, natural appearance.

The Medina Community Design consists of three items:

1. A map diagramming the Community Design for streets and neighborhoods.
2. A chart, "Key to Medina Community Design," which relates the street and neighborhood designations to appropriate trees, shrubs, and groundcover.
3. A List of Suitable Tree Species (separate document).

That portion of the City' s highly visible street (formally designated as arterials) right-of-way not utilized for the paved roadway, driveways, and sidewalks is to be landscaped as specified in the Medina Community Design, using species from the List of Suitable Tree Species. This list has been developed to provide a selection of landscape options applicable to the various City streets and neighborhoods, as indicated on the Community Design. Property owners are encouraged to use the list when selecting landscaping for other areas of their properties.

The City's design objective is to maintain the City's natural, low-density, and informal appearance. The City's arterial street rights-of-way should be heavily landscaped with predominantly native trees and shrubs arranged in an informal manner. Where feasible, fences along the right-of-way should be screened with vegetation so they are not generally visible from the street. The historic landscaping along the perimeter of the golf course should be retained and/or replaced with suitable

trees, approved by the City.

In addition, special design and landscaping consideration should be given to the vehicular entry points to the City. Standards recommended by the Parks Board should be considered. The vehicular entry points are:

- SR 520 off-ramp at 84th Avenue NE,
- NE 24th Street at 84th Avenue NE,
- NE 12th Street at 84th Avenue NE,
- NE 10th Street at Lake Washington Boulevard, and
- Overlake Drive East at the City limits.

See Figure 7 for a map of the above-described City entry points.

Planting strips between a sidewalk and the street should be planted with trees and shrubs from the City's List of Suitable Tree Species. Rocks and other barriers shall not be placed within the planting strip without consulting the Public Works Department and obtaining a permit. In historical view corridors, view preservation should be maintained by the selection of appropriate species, and periodic trimming and limb removal of such species. Views which are framed by vegetation or interrupted periodically by trees located along property lines are preferable and more consistent with the City's character than views maintained by clear cutting or topping. If the desire is to preserve or augment views, limb removal and pruning should be employed rather than topping.

A number of existing streets have drainage ditches adjacent to the roadway. As adjacent properties are developed, or redeveloped, and/or as street improvements are made, the City may require these drainage ways to be placed in pipes and filled, or otherwise improved, and landscaped to City standards. Any resulting area should be landscaped to screen properties from the street. Where natural drainage courses exist, provision should be made to preserve adjacent natural vegetation. Additionally, such landscaping that may impair the visibility of pedestrians, cyclists, and/or vehicles should be discouraged. Property owners are required to maintain the rights-of-way landscaping adjacent to their property including planting. mowing, weeding, removing leaves from storm drains, snow removal and preserving safe sight lines and access.

Community Spaces

The City's parks, natural spaces and green spaces, its small town businesses, schools, church, and other amenities are defining elements of Medina's community character.
The distinctive landscaping along the perimeter of the golf course at Overlake Golf and Country Club is an important visual feature long identified with Medina. In particular, the long stand of trees along 84th Avenue NE has become a historic visual landmark and is the first thing one sees when entering the City. It is the intent of the City to preserve this landmark beyond the lifespan of the existing poplar trees. As trees in this stand reach end of life, they should be replaced with similar tree species from the "City of Medina List of Suitable Tree Species".

Many of Medina's parks have significant area that has been left in a natural state. Fairweather Park and Nature Preserve have a dense stand of trees and understory, and Medina Park has a large wetland. Non-native landscaping has been minimized in both parks, with the exception of a landscaped portion of Medina Park at the corner of NE 12th Street and 82nd Avenue NE. The natural areas and wildlife of these parks should be left undisturbed. If maintenance activity is required due to severe winds or other destructive forces, these areas should be restored with native species. Landscaping in other areas of these parks should be consistent with the overall natural setting found in the parks.

City Hall and Medina Beach Park are located on the site of the former ferry terminal that connected Medina with Seattle. Landscaping in the park has been primarily hedges along the parking area and north property line and maintenance of a number of shade trees. These grounds are used extensively by City residents during the summer months, so landscaping must leave much of the park open. A long-term landscaping, maintenance, and clearing plan should be developed to maintain this historic site in a manner that is consistent with and enhances public use.

City character is enhanced by several unopened rights of way, creating pathways that allow for community interaction.

GOALS

CD-G1   Retain Medina's distinctive and informal neighborhood development pattern.

CD-G2   Maintain the informal, natural appearance and safety of the Medina's street rights-of-way and public areas.

CD-G3   The historic landscaping along the perimeter of the golf course is a distinctive part of Medina's character and should be retained and/or replaced in the future with an appropriate selection of trees. Equally as important with this perimeter area is maintaining view corridors into the golf course which contributes a sense of added open space in the heart of the community.

POLICIES

Citywide Character

CD-P1   Preserve and enhance trees as a component of Medina's distinctive sylvan character.

CD-P2   Foster and value the preservation of open space and trails as integral elements to the City.

CD-P3   Create a safe, attractive, and connected pedestrian environment for all ages and abilities throughout the city.

CD-P4   Support the efforts of individual neighborhoods to maintain and enhance their character and appearance.

CD-P5   Preserve unopened rights of way as integral elements to the City.

CD-P6   Encourage infill and redevelopment in a manner that is compatible with the existing

neighborhood scale.

Street Corridors

CD-P7   Maintain and implement the Street Design Standards and the Landscaping Plan, including landscaping of arterial street rights-of-way.

CD-P8   Refine and update the Street Design Standards and Landscaping Plan as needed based on community input.

CD-P9   The City's design objective is to maintain the City's natural, lower-density, and informal appearance. Medina's highly visible streets as identified in the Landscaping Plan should be heavily landscaped with native trees and shrubs arranged in an informal manner.

CD-P10   Special design and landscaping consideration should be given to the entry points to the City.

CD-P11   Consider alternative street and sidewalk designs that enhance walkability, and minimize environmental impacts, including permeable surfaces where feasible and appropriate.

CD-P12   Consider opportunities for adding street lighting in areas that are supported by the surrounding neighborhood which where feasible should be Dark Sky-compliant and shielded from shining into nearby residential windows.

CD-P13   Maintain and implement street designs that enable effective traffic calming throughout the city.

Open Space

CD-P14   Preserve, encourage, and enhance open space as a key element of the community's character through parks, trails, and other significant properties that provide public benefit.

CD-P15   Utilize landscape buffers between different uses to provide natural transition, noise reduction, and delineation of space.

CD-P16   Encourage community activities in public places, such as parks and public buildings. Support public art installations where appropriate.

CD-P17   Where appropriate and feasible, provide landscaping, seating, Dark Sky compliant lighting, and other amenities for sidewalks, walkways, and trails.

CD-P18   The City should seek to educate the public on required maintenance of planter strips in the public Rights-of-Way using existing channels for communication and outreach.

Vegetation and Landscaping

CD-P19   Residents should consult with the City and with their neighbors on both removal and replacement of trees and tree groupings to help to protect views and to prevent potential problems (e.g., removal of an important tree or planting a living fence).

CD-P20   Clear cutting is not permitted unless approved through a City issued tree removal permit.

CD-P21   Preserve vegetation with special consideration given to the protection of groups of trees and associated undergrowth, specimen trees, and evergreen trees.

CD-P22   Promote water conservation in landscape and irrigation system designs.

CD-P23   Use Low Impact Development techniques, unless determined to be unfeasible, within the rights-of-way.

CD-P24   Minimize the removal of existing vegetation when improving streets or developing property unless hazardous or arborist recommended.

CD-P25   Encourage and protect systems of green infrastructure, such as urban forests, native bio-diversity, parks, green roofs, and natural drainage systems, in order to reduce climate-altering pollution and increase resilience to climate change impacts.

CD-P26   Encourage concentrated seasonal planting in highly visible, public, and semi-public areas.

CD-P27   Support the creation and continued maintenance of vegetation and landscaping that screens the view and sight-lines of houses from adjoining residential properties, with an emphasis on preserving privacy of adjoining residential properties and reducing visual and sound impacts.

CD-P28   Consider creating a voluntary program to inventory the City's trees in order to measure existing tree canopy and track canopy loss or growth.

CD-P29   Eradicate invasive species such as English Ivy to prevent trees from being girdled.

Historic Preservation

CD-P30   Consider creating a voluntary program to inventory the city's historic resources prior to redevelopment.

CD-P31   Consider the designation of historic and iconic landmark sites and structures to recognize their part in Medina's history.

CD-P32   Preserve the commercial district of the Post Office and Green Store.

Figure 6 - Community Design Map

Community Design Standards				
Standard Designation	Situation	Landscape Requirements		
		Trees	Shrubs	Groundcover
Standard Street ROW	Standard ROW	List A	List C1	List C2
	15' Front Yard	List A	List C1	NA
Restricted ROW (Due to Wires, views, etc.)	Standard ROW	List B	List C1	List C2
	15' Front Yard	List A	List C1	NA
Historic	Golf Course Frontage	List A	List C1	List C2
Historic Tree Frontage	Historic Tree Frontage	Retain, restore with improved species. Obtain easement to retain Obtain easement over 15' of front yard to retain trees.		

Table 2 - Community Design Standards

(Applicable to areas identified in Figure 6 - Community Design Map)

Figure 7 - City Entry Points