

# COMMUNITY DESIGN ELEMENT

## INTRODUCTION

Thoughtful community design can enhance the quality of life for residents 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 ensure the protection of the City's natural and built features. 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 to permit 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 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 *clutter* to Medina's neighborhoods.

## Vehicular Surfaces and Parking

All collector streets should be maintained as narrow, two-lane roadways except for 84<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE (from NE 12<sup>th</sup> Street to the SR 520 bridge/interchange) and the corner of 84<sup>th</sup> Ave NE and NE 24<sup>th</sup> 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 screened from the public right-of-way, and parking in front yard setbacks should be minimized and 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 fire department requirements.

## Medina Landscape Plan

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, is 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 should not be permitted on a property prior to development.

The Medina Landscape Plan 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 Landscape Plan 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 from City streets and from neighboring properties;
- 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 Landscape Plan consists of three items:

1. A map diagramming the Landscape Plan for streets and neighborhoods.
2. A chart, “Key to Medina Landscape Plan,” which relates the street and neighborhood designations to appropriate trees, shrubs, and groundcover.
3. A Preferred Landscaping List of Suitable Tree Species List (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 Landscape Plan, 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 Landscape Plan. 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. 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 Arborist.

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

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

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# CITY OF MEDINA

## Gateways to the City

### LEGEND

- ★ SR 520 off-ramp at 84th Ave NE
- ★ NE 24th ST at 84th Ave NE
- ★ NE 12th ST at 84th Ave NE
- ★ NE 10th ST at lake Washington Blvd
- ★ Overlake Drive East at City Limits



SR 520 - BRIDGE

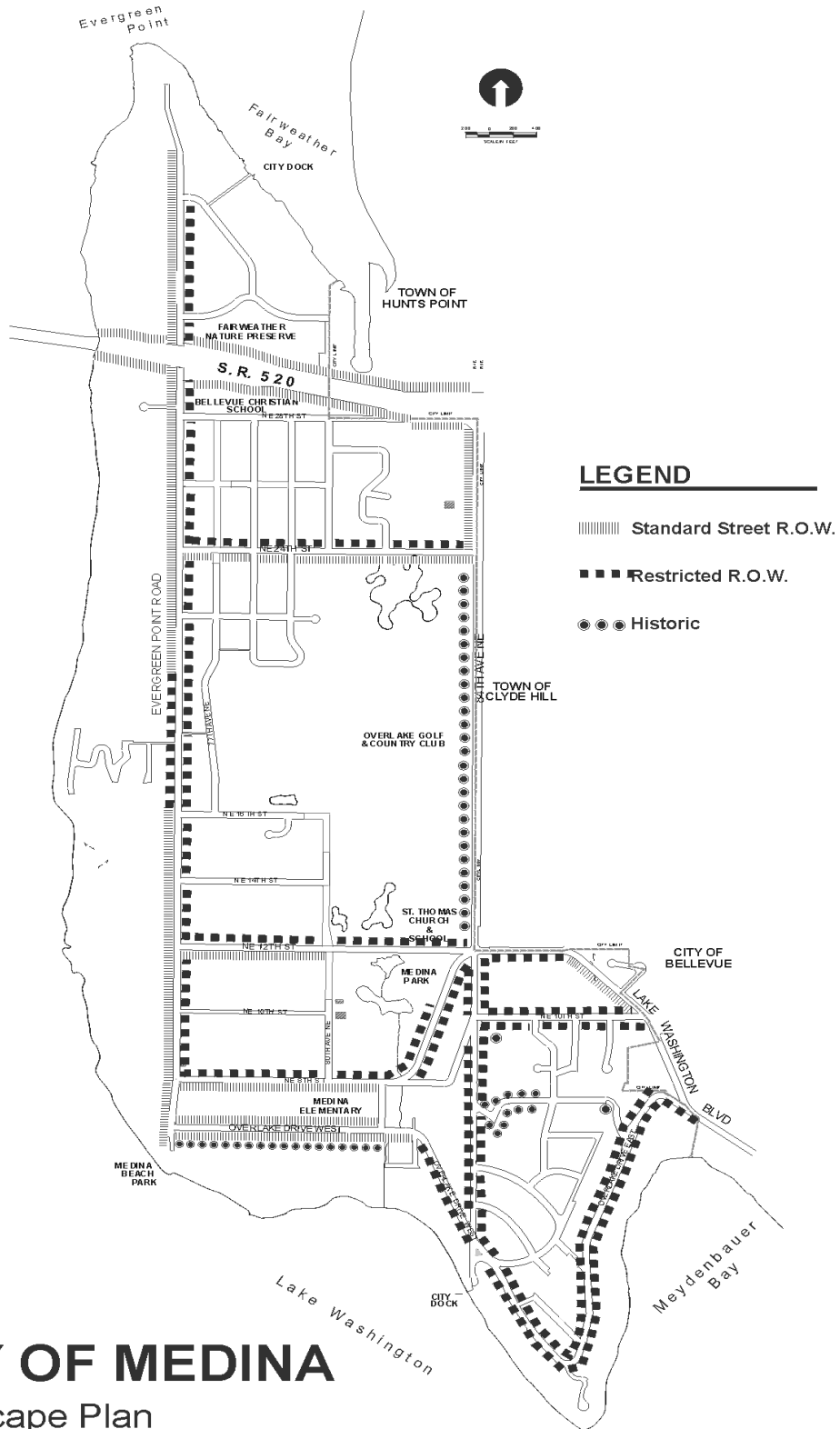
LAKE WASHINGTON



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 to maintain the rights-of-way landscaping adjacent to their property including mowing, weeding, and preserving safe site lines.

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**Key to Medina Landscape Plan**

SYMBOL	SITUATION	TREES	SHRUBS	GROUND COVER
<b>ARTERIAL RIGHTS-OF-WAY AND 15' OF FRONT YARD</b>				
	Standard ROW	List A	List C1	List C2
	- 15' of front yard	List A	List C1	NA
●●●●●	Restricted ROW (due to wires, views, etc.)	List B	List C1	List C2
	- 15' of front yard	List A	List C1	NA
<b>HISTORIC/SPECIAL/PUBLIC USES</b>				
⊙⊙⊙⊙	Golf Course - 84th Avenue NE	Maintain Historic Hawthorn/ Poplars	List C1	List C2
⊙⊙⊙⊙	Designated Sites/Areas - 7th Street, Original Maples - Corner 84th & 10th, Giant Double Sequoia - Overlake - South side between Evergreen Point & 82nd	Retain, restore with improved species. Obtain easement to retain.  Obtain easement over 15' of front yard to retain trees.		
	Public Uses Medina Park City Hall & Park Fairweather Nature Preserve St. Thomas Church and School Medina School Three Points School Overlake Golf Course	Develop Landscape Master Plans and/or Present Landscape Plans with Special/Conditional Use permits or Variances.		
[ ]				

\*List\* references are to the City's Preferred Landscaping Species List.

## **Public Spaces**

The City's large open spaces, Fairweather Nature Preserve, Medina Park, and the Overlake Golf & Country Club, are defining elements of Medina's community character. Medina Beach Park, the two schools, and St. Thomas Church and School also contribute to the City's neighborhood character.

The distinctive landscaping along the perimeter of the golf course is an important visual feature long identified with Medina. In particular, the long stand of Bowhall Maples along 84<sup>th</sup> 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 maintain this landmark. As the existing Bowhall Maples reach the end of their useful life they will need to be replaced with a species that is visually similar, since Bowhall Maples are not on the List of Suitable Tree Species.

Fairweather Nature Preserve and Medina Park both have a significant area that has been left in a natural state. Fairweather Nature Preserve has 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 12<sup>th</sup> Street and 82<sup>nd</sup> Avenue NE. The natural areas and wildlife of these parks should be left undisturbed. If some 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.

## **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.

## **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 Establish and maintain iconic gateways at the entry points into 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. Fences should be screened with vegetation so they are not generally visible from the street. The historic landscaping along the perimeter of the golf course is an iconic 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.
- 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.
- 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 artwork, arts, and community activities in public places, such as parks and public buildings.
- CD-P17 Where appropriate and feasible, provide landscaping, seating, Dark Sky compliant lighting, and other amenities for sidewalks, walkways, and trails.

### **Vegetation and Landscaping**

- CD-P18 Residents shall 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-P19 Clear cutting is not permitted on property prior to, or during, development.
- CD-P20 Preserve vegetation with special consideration given to the protection of groups of trees and associated undergrowth, specimen trees, and evergreen trees.
- CD-P21 Promote water conservation in landscape and irrigation system designs.
- CD-P22 Use Low Impact Development techniques, unless determined to be unfeasible, within the right-of-way.
- CD-P23 Minimize the removal of existing vegetation when improving streets or developing property unless hazardous or arborist recommended.
- CD-P24 Encourage and protect systems of green infrastructure, such as urban forests, parks, green roofs, and natural drainage systems, in order to reduce climate-altering pollution and increase resilience to climate change impacts.
- CD-P25 Encourage concentrated seasonal planting in highly visible, public, and semi-public areas.
- CD-P26 Encourage landscaping that screens the view of houses from the street.
- CD-P27 Consider creating a voluntary program to inventory the cities trees to access tree canopy loss.

### **Historic Preservation**

- CD-P28 Consider creating a voluntary program to inventory the city's historic resources prior to redevelopment.
- CD-P29 Consider the designation of historic landmark sites and structures to recognize their part in Medina's history.