



HARNETT COUNTY DEVELOPMENT SERVICES  
PLANNING SERVICES

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# Buffering Guide

FEBRUARY 2022



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# GENERAL INFORMATION

## What is the purpose/intent of commercial buffering?

The following buffering regulations are established to protect and enhance the natural landscape of Harnett County and to ensure the appropriate usage of plant material in new construction. It is the intent of these regulations to preserve natural tree cover and to include new tree planting with development in order to:

- Reinforce the community identity of Harnett County
- Reduce visual blight, noise, and glare
- Increase building and property values
- Prevent soil erosion
- Reduce storm water runoff
- Increase groundwater recharge
- Create shade and reduce solar overheating

## Minimum Standards for Installation

- **Large Maturing Tree:** All required large maturing trees shall have a minimum caliper of two (2) inches, measured six (6) inches above the proper planting level, or a minimum height of six (6) feet at the time of planting.
- **Medium & Small/Ornamental Tree:** All required medium and small/ornamental trees shall have a minimum height of six (6) feet at the time of planting. In lieu of the large maturing tree planting requirement, medium and small/ornamental trees shall be planted at a rate of two (2) trees for every required large maturing tree.
- **Shrub:** Shrubs shall be a minimum of two (2) feet in height at time of planting.
  - Shrubs planted for screening purposes shall form the density necessary to fulfill the requirements of this Ordinance within two (2) years from the time of planting.
  - Shrubs planted in conjunction with a berm shall be exempt from the minimum height requirement.
- **Ground Cover:** Ground cover shall include evergreen or organic covering, and provide 100 percent (100%) coverage within one (1) year of planting, except for mulch or turf which shall provide 100 percent (100%) coverage upon installation. Organic mulch or inorganic materials (such as river rock) may be utilized to fulfill the ground cover requirement of this Ordinance but may not be substituted for required plantings and shall provide 100 percent (100%) coverage upon installation.
- **Berm:** A berm shall have a maximum of 3:1 slope with a minimum crown width of two (2) feet and planting combination, with the berm an average height of three (3) feet and dense plantings which will, when combined with the berm, achieve a minimum height of six (6) feet and 75 percent (75%) opacity within two (2) years.



*All specifications for the measurement, quality, and installation of trees and shrubs shall be in accordance with American Standards for Nursery Stock published by the American Nursery & Landscape Association, free and in otherwise sound and healthy condition.*

## Existing Vegetation

The retention of existing vegetation shall be maximized to the extent practical, wherever such vegetation contributes to required buffering and screening or to the preservation of significant trees.

# BUFFER TYPES

## All buffers types shall include:

- A staggered row of large maturing trees, spaced not more than 30 feet apart; and
- Low-growing evergreen shrubs, evergreen ground cover, or mulch covering the balance of the buffer area.

## Type A: Requirements

All Type A options must maintain a minimum width of 15 feet (applies to side and rear property lines).

### Option 1

A row of evergreen shrubs placed not more than four (4) to six (6) feet apart which will grow to form a continuous hedge of at least six (6) feet in height within two (2) years of planting.



### Option 2

A masonry wall located within the required buffer area; such wall shall be a minimum height of six (6) feet (above finished grade) and, if a block wall, it shall be painted on all sides; or an opaque fence six (6) feet in height.



### Option 3

A Berm coinciding with the requirements of Type A buffer, "shall have a maximum of 3:1 slope with a minimum crown width of two (2) feet and planting combination, with the berm an average height of three (3) feet and dense plantings which will, when combined with the berm, achieve a minimum height of six (6) feet and 75 percent (75%) opacity within two (2) years.



# BUFFER TYPES

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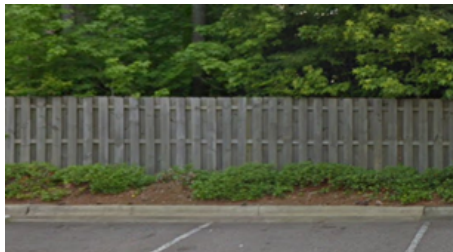
## Type B: Requirements

All Type B options must maintain a minimum width of 30 feet (applies to front, side, and rear property lines).

### Option 1

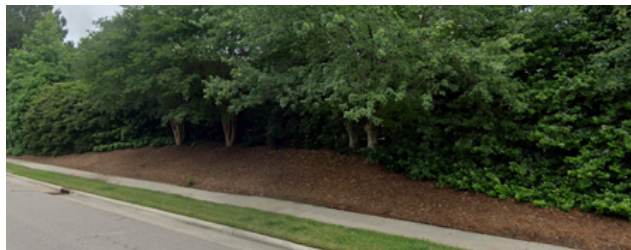
An opaque fence located within the required buffer area; such fence shall be a minimum height of six (6) feet in height and employs materials commonly utilized to meet the specified requirements and definition of opaque fencing standards.

- An opaque fence is typically constructed of sight obscuring materials (such as but not limited to: cedar, masonry, redwood, pressure-treated lumber, privacy slats, and other materials resistant to rot and decay) that block the area enclosed by the fence from view from neighboring properties or public right-of-ways and do not visually disrupt the natural elements of the area. The fence shall be continuous, permanent, assembled with durable materials, maintained in good condition, and remain consistent in appearance. Fabric, mesh screening materials will not satisfy the requirements of the ordinance.
- To achieve opaque fencing, one may use these examples:



### Option 2

A Berm coinciding with the requirements of Type B buffer, "§ shall have a maximum of 3:1 slope with a minimum crown width of two (2) feet and planting combination, with the berm an average height of three (3) feet and dense plantings which will, when combined with the berm, achieve a minimum height of six (6) feet and 75 percent (75%) opacity within two (2) years."



# BUFFER TYPES

## Type C: Requirements

- Minimum width of 10 feet (applies to area between right-of-way and building front)
- Five (5) low-growing shrubs for every required large maturing tree.



## Type D: Requirements

All Type D options must maintain a minimum width of 15 feet (applies to property lines adjacent to public right-of-way or as otherwise noted within the Unified Development Ordinance).

### Option 1

A row of evergreen shrubs, 10 shrubs for every required large maturing tree, placed not more than four (4) feet apart which will grow to form a continuous hedge of at least six (6) feet in height within two (2) years of planting



### Option 2

An opaque fence located within the required buffer area; such fence shall be a minimum height of six (6) feet in height and employs materials commonly utilized to meet the specified requirements and definition of opaque fencing standards.

- An opaque fence is typically constructed of sight obscuring materials (such as but not limited to: cedar, masonry, redwood, pressure-treated lumber, privacy slats, and other materials resistant to rot and decay) that block the area enclosed by the fence from view from neighboring properties or public right-of-ways and do not visually disrupt the natural elements of the area. The fence shall be continuous, permanent, assembled with durable materials, maintained in good condition, and remain consistent in appearance. Fabric, mesh screening materials will not satisfy the requirements of the ordinance.
- To achieve opaque fencing, one may use these examples:



# UTILITY, MECHANICAL, & TRASH REQUIREMENTS

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## Utility & Mechanical Screening

- All non-residential and multi-family developments mechanical, utility equipment which is located on, beside, or adjacent to any building or developments shall be fully screened from the view of streets and adjacent property.
- The screen shall exceed the height of the equipment, shall not interfere with the operation of the equipment, and shall use one or a combination of the following screening techniques:
  - Building materials and design which are compatible with those used for the exterior of the principal building or evergreen plantings or other acceptable alternative approved by the Zoning Administrator.
- In situations where mechanical and utility equipment is (are) located on the roof of a structure, all devices will be fully screened from the view of streets or adjacent property using technique 1 (one).

## Trash Containment Area Screening

- All trash containment devices, including compactors and dumpsters, shall be located and designed so as not to be visible from the view of adjacent right(s)-of-way and properties.
- If the device is not visible from off the site, then it need not be screened.
- The type of screening used shall be a continuous row of large maturing evergreen trees or other acceptable alternative approved by the Administrator.

# ACCEPTABLE EXAMPLES OF VEGETATION SCREENING

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Japanese or  
Waxleaf Ligustrum  
*(Ligustrum Japonicum)*

- Grows 6 to 12 feet tall foot spread.
- Rapid grower.
- Does well in sun or shade.
- Very tough shrub.
- Tolerates drought and poor soils.



Elaeagnus or Silver  
Berry  
*(Elaeagnus Pungens)*

- Grows 8 to 12 feet high.
- Has an 8 to 10 foot spread.
- Moderate to rapid grower.
- Does well in wet locations and a wide range of soil conditions.



Evergreen  
Euonymus  
*(Euonymus Japonicus)*

- Reaches 10 to 12 feet tall and has a spread of up to 5 feet.
- Moderate to rapid grower.
- Plant in sun or shade. A very hardy shrub.
- Grows well in moist soil but will tolerate considerable drought.
- Grows lush when fertilized.



Southern Wax  
Myrtle  
*(Myrica Cerifera)*

- Upwards of 15 to 20 feet in height with a 15 to 20 foot spread.
- A moderate grower in sun or shade.
- Tolerates a wide range of soils but thrives on acidic, wet and poorly drained soils.



Pfitzer  
Juniper  
*(Juniperus chinensis)*

- Grows 4 to 6 feet high with a spread of 4 to 6 feet.
- Moderate growth rate.
- Enjoys full sun and tolerates drought and poor soils.
- Very hardy evergreen.





*While this document does contain actual language from the Harnett County Unified Development Ordinance, it should not be considered a substitute for any of Harnett County's regulatory documents. This document was created to serve as a guide to the screening and buffering techniques and requirements within Harnett County, and we ask that you please seek the relevant ordinance for a complete list of requirements.*

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## CONTACT

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