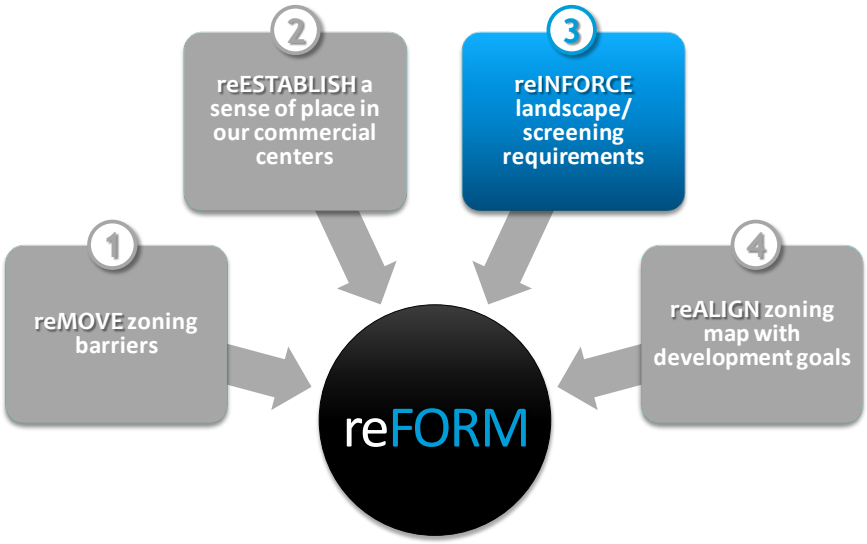
3. reINFORCE



GOAL: reINFORCE Landscape/Screening Requirements

"Comprehensive and adaptive urban forestry management approaches should be applied to sustain the city's urban forest; it is essential that adequate human and financial resources be allocated and specifically dedicated to sustaining our community's expanding public green infrastructure in conjunction with increasing development and population growth. "

—LPlan2040 (P. 9.2)

"Develop a program of standards and incentives to include bicycle amenities in employment, commercial, educational and office centers such as lockers, showers, and bicycle parking."

—LPlan2040 (P. 10.48)

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"Design standards for landscape elements should be developed and then monitored and enforced with attention to long-term sustainability, or the benefit of this investment can quickly be lost."
—LPlan2040 (P. 4.6-4.7)

"Establish stronger design standards for redevelopment projects to provide assurance that they will blend into the context of, or enhance, the surrounding neighborhood and avoid conflicting visions among developers, neighbors, and city officials."
—LPlan2040 (P. 6.10)

"Buildings with more intrusive uses should have greater setbacks, screening requirements and be built of more compatible materials."
—LPlan2040 (P. 5.7)

The Comprehensive Plan identifies issues related to design standards for the community that should be addressed. Some standards are missing and need to be created. Others are inadequate to achieve their intended purpose. And still others are not being effectively enforced. A study done by the Planning Department in 2012 reviewed a sample of sites developed over the past 5 years to determine the degree of compliance with the City's standards for landscaping and screening. That study found that less than 1/7 of surveyed properties were in full compliance with the standards, and less than half of the properties were providing 75% or more of the required landscaping. The following design standards intend to address some of these issues related to screening, buffering, and bicycle parking.

Objective A. Achieve desirable and permanent screens/ buffers

Reinforce and enhance existing standards which, with a minimum amount of maintenance, provide buffers to minimize the visual effect of adjacent incompatible land uses, land uses substantially different, and similar land uses of different character.

Strategy 1. Provide better enforcement of existing landscape/screening standards.

Enforcement of all zoning requirements, including the landscaping and screening requirement, is complaint-based. Typically, occupancy certificates for buildings are issued before the landscaping has been installed, and there is no later 'final-inspection' of the plantings to ensure compliance. Based on a study done by the

10th and South Streets

50th and O Streets

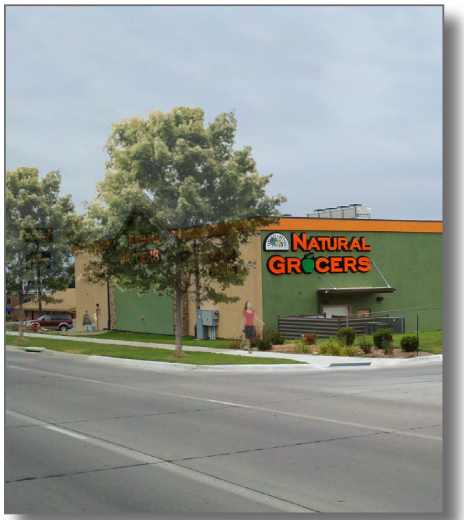
Planning department in 2012, approximately 50% of commercial properties required to provide landscaping provided less than 75% of the required screening and landscaping as per Chapter 3.50 Design Standards. There is reason to suggest that more systematic enforcement is needed. Moreover, there should be some mechanism to continue sustained monitoring of the landscape and screening requirements to ensure the landscape/ screening standards are enforced. Just checking for initial compliance is necessary but so is long-term monitoring. A new permit fee collected at the time of reviewing the landscape plan should be implemented to cover the cost of initial inspection and periodic monitoring.

Strategy 2. Require street trees at the time of building permit if not planted as part of a new subdivision.

Landscape screening is not the only Design Standard that needs improved enforcement.

Current Photo, 48th and O Streets

Research indicates that street trees have public health and environmental benefits, enhance the values of adjoining residences and the economic vitality of commercial districts, and even improve traffic safety as a traffic calming measure. Street trees are currently required when an individual or developer plats or replats a property. A bond is taken to ensure that the street trees get planted by the developer within 6 years of the approval of the plat. Many redeveloping areas of the city are already platted and do not require a plat so there is no mechanism in place to replace street trees with new developments in redeveloping areas. And some developments, if their lots are more than 10 acres in size, are not required to submit subdivision plates for the city to review. The City can ask for street trees with zoning agreements or special permits but requiring these trees on a case by case basis is not effective or desirable. A solution to this problem would be to require street trees with new developments at the building permitting stage, not just with new subdivisions. This new requirement would apply to all new construction and to the areas of expansions if valued at 50% or more of existing value of the property.



Enhanced Photo, 48th and O Streets

> ***"Continue to promote planting and management of street trees along all public streets within the corporate limits, and planting and management of trees in park areas."***
>
> ***—LPlan2040 (P. 9.10)***

Strategy 3. Require more parking lot trees.

Urban forests reduce reflective heat gain, slow down storm water runoff, provide wildlife habitat and stabilize soil, as well as provide visual relief to our landscape. One way to both maintain and enhance our existing urban forest is to require more parking lot trees. The Design Standards today do not require parking lot trees be planted for parking lots that are less than 6,000 square feet (20 parking spaces). Other communities that require parking lot trees have no such exemption. It would be appropriate to reduce the exemption to lots less than 2,000 square feet (6 spaces), and to require 1 tree for parking lots 2,000 to 6,000 square feet, as well as to increase the number of required trees from 1 to 2 on parking lots 6,000 to 12,000 square feet (20-40 spaces), and from 2 to 3 on parking lots 12,000 to 18,000 square feet (40-60 spaces).

Strategy 4. Screen parking areas and motorized vehicles on display

Low screening (3 feet) of vehicles from the street view is required for new parking lots and substantial additions to existing parking lots. However, if the lot has an average lot depth of 150 feet, it is exempt from this standard. Many redevelopment projects occur on lots that are less than 150 feet deep (approximately a half block). This exemption has resulted in little streetscape enhancement with redevelopment in older areas, and should be removed, with exceptions considered on a case by case basis. In addition, it should be clarified that the parking lot screening requirements apply not only to parking areas, but also display areas for motorized vehicles (auto dealerships). Whether the vehicles are for display or for use, the impact on the streetscape is the same.

33rd and A Streets

North Cotner Blvd. and Leighton Avenue

Required Code Revisions

- Remove exceptions 2 and 3 from Chapter 3.50 Section 7.1 of the Design Standards. This eliminates the exception of screening for lots that are less than 150 foot deep.
- Establish a new fee at the time of building permit for landscape plan reviews.
- Add Parking Display Areas to the title of Chapter 3.50 Section 7.1 of the Design Standards.
- Adjust Chapter 3.50 Section 7.1 of the Design Standards (i) to reflect exemption for lots that are less than 2,000 square feet and to require 1 tree for parking lot 2,000 to 6,000 square feet as well as to increase the number of required trees from 1 to 2 on parking lots 6,000 to 12,000 square feet and from 2 to 3 on parking lots 12,000 to 18,000 square feet.

Objective B. Enhance buffers between incompatible uses

Although the Comprehensive Plan encourages mixed use development it also recognizes that a diversity of land uses requires buffering, screening and maintaining the character of a block or neighborhood. Today's Design Standards address adjacent uses and zoning districts of substantially different character, but these standards could be enhanced by requiring more and taller screening of taller buildings from abutting residential districts, and by requiring solid screens plus dense landscaping of more intensive commercial uses.

Strategy 1. Require more and taller screening for taller buildings that abut lower density residential zoning districts.

As more redevelopment occurs, particularly on sites that are not able to accommodate extensive setbacks, there should be an alternative for buffering taller buildings that might abut lower density residential uses. This can be accomplished by providing taller permanent screens such as a combination of deciduous trees, evergreen trees and shrubs.

Strategy 2. Require solid fencing plus dense landscaping to separate more intensive uses from residential uses.

Another alternative would be to provide a setback that would accommodate a solid wall of landscaping and potentially a fence to separate uses.

10th and Charleston Streets

Required Code Revisions

- Enhance Section 7.5 (Adjacent Land Uses and Zoning Districts of Substantially Different Character; B-1, B-2, B-3, H-1, H-2, H-3, H-4, B-5, O-2, I-1, I-2, I-3 Abutting Residential Districts) of Chapter 3.50 to include additional taller landscaping for buildings that exceed 35 feet in height that are less than 40 feet from a residential district.
- Add a section to Chapter 3.5 that requires screening for uses that generate high levels of noise and activity (such as gas dispensing machines, carwashes and vacuums, vehicle sales and repair, overhead doors for service/loading, etc.) from abutting residential areas/ uses.