MEMORANDUM

To: Thurston County Planning Commission
From: Scott Longanecker, Associate Planner
Date: July 21, 2010
Subject: 2009/2010 Development Code Docket item A-6; Amend Development Code to increase landscaping buffers between incompatible uses and zones

Following the May 19, 2010 and July 7, 2010 Planning Commission (PC) meetings, some changes were suggested by PC members. A public hearing was set for August 18, 2010, however the Planning Commission wanted one additional work session prior to the hearing to discuss minor modifications (below).

Definition of “native plant species” for Titles 20, 21, 22 and 23.

Native Plant Species – “A native plant species is one that occurs naturally in a particular region, state, ecosystem, and habitat without direct or indirect human actions” (Federal Native Plant Conservation Committee, 1994).

Section 2. – Applicability (pgs. 3 and 4 of staff report)

New Options for Consideration for the proposed applicability section 2.:

New language in green as recommended by the PC at the May 19, 2010 briefing. Additional language in red as recommended by the PC at the July 7, 2010 briefing.

Option 1) Combine subsections 2.a. and 2.b..

2. Applicability. Where the common property line is at least twenty feet (20’) in length and where a proposed use is adjacent to an incompatible use as described in section 1.

(Add full citation for applicable code, i.e. title 21, 22 etc.)

Option 2) In addition to the original two triggers (2.a. and 2.b. [below]); add an additional trigger (2.c.) such that this requirement is required when an existing home is located within 30 feet of the property line shared with a proposed development.
2. Applicability -
   a. Where the common property line is at least twenty feet (20’) in length and
   b. where a proposed use is adjacent to an incompatible use as described in section 1.
   or
   c. where an existing residence is located within 30 feet of a lot line shared with a proposed development.

   (Add full citation for applicable code, i.e. title 21, 22 etc.)

Option 3) Only requires this additional landscaping when an existing home is located within 30 feet of the property line shared with a proposed development.

2. Applicability -
   a. where an existing residence is located within 30 feet of a lot line shared with a proposed development.

   (Add full citation for applicable code, i.e. title 21, 22 and 23)

Option 4) (staff’s original recommendation)

2. Applicability –

   a. Where the common property line is at least twenty feet (20’) in length and
   b. where a proposed use is adjacent to an incompatible use as described in section 1.

   (Add full citation for applicable code, i.e. title 21, 22 and 23)

Recommendation:
Staff recommends Option 1) per the Planning Commissions recommendations at the July 7, 2010 briefing.

Section 3. – Screening between incompatible uses - (pgs. 3 and 4 of staff report)

New Options for Consideration for the proposed Screening between incompatible uses.

New language in green as recommended by the PC at the May 19, 2010 briefing. Additional language in red as recommended by the PC at the July 7, 2010 briefing.

Option 1) Remove reference to native vegetation or make optional and add designer qualifications for landscaping plans consistent with other existing codes.

3. Screening between incompatible uses – At minimum, screening shall consist of a 30-foot wide buffer containing the following:
a. A vegetated buffer of predominantly native species (75% native minimum) that will provide a very dense sight barrier and physical buffer to significantly separate conflicting uses and land use districts.

b. Plant materials and ground cover shall be selected and maintained so that the 30-foot buffer will be fully vegetated within three years.

c. A combination of trees, shrubs, earthen berms, and related plant materials or design features may be selected, provided that the resultant effect is sight-obscuring from adjoining properties. In addition, fences and walls may be incorporated into the landscaping buffer.

d. A minimum of one tree per 25 linear feet. Trees shall be a minimum one inch in caliper measured six inches above the base at the time of planting.

e. Shrubs must be capable of growing to a minimum of five feet in height, within three years. Shrubs shall be planted on eight-foot centers at minimum.

f. Ground cover shall consist of bark, mulch, native grasses and/or native understory vegetation such as salal, Oregon grape, Knickknick, Sword fern, etc.

g. Retention and salvage of existing native vegetation and trees is preferred over removal and replacement of vegetation.

h. Native and drought tolerant plant species are preferred over non-native and ornamental species. Invasive species and noxious weeds listed by the Washington State Noxious Weed Control Board shall not be used in any approved landscaping plan.

i. The plan shall be prepared by a licensed Washington landscape architect, Washington certified nurseryman, or Washington certified landscaper.

**Option 2)** Keep proposed requirement of a minimum of 75% native plants for the purposes of limiting the use of invasive species and reducing the need for fertilizers and irrigation. In addition, add landscaping plan designer qualifications for landscaping plans.

3. Screening between incompatible uses — At minimum, screening shall consist of a 30-foot wide buffer containing the following:

a. A vegetated buffer of predominantly native species (75% native minimum) that will provide a very dense sight barrier and physical buffer to significantly separate conflicting uses.

b. Plant materials and ground cover shall be selected and maintained so that the 30-foot buffer will be fully vegetated within three years.

c. A combination of trees, shrubs, earthen berms, and related plant materials or design features may be selected, provided that the resultant effect is sight-obscuring from adjoining properties. In addition, fences and walls may be incorporated into the landscaping buffer.

d. A minimum of one tree per 25 linear feet. Trees shall be a minimum one inch in caliper measured six inches above the base at the time of planting.

e. Shrubs must be capable of growing to a minimum of five feet in height, within three years. Shrubs shall be planted on eight-foot centers at minimum.

f. Ground cover shall consist of bark, mulch, native grasses and/or native understory vegetation such as salal, Oregon grape, Knickknick, Sword fern, etc.
g. Retention and salvage of existing native vegetation and trees is preferred over removal and replacement of vegetation.

h. Invasive species and noxious weeds listed by the Washington State Noxious Weed Control Board shall not be used in any approved landscaping plan.

i. The plan shall be prepared by a licensed Washington landscape architect, Washington certified nurseryman, or Washington certified landscaper.

Staff recommendations:

Staff recommends option 1) adding guidance, but no strict percentage for use of native species and adding language regarding invasive species listed by the WA State Noxious Weed Control Board. With a recommendation from the Planning Commission, this item is ready to move forward to a public hearing which has been set for August 18th.