

COMMISSION ACTION FORM

SUBJECT: ZONING ORDINANCE TEXT AMENDMENT RELATED TO SCREENING OF MECHANICAL UNITS

BACKGROUND:

On August 4, 2010, staff presented to the Planning & Zoning Commission draft changes to the screening requirements for mechanical units. Discussion at that meeting focused primarily on three screening issues: (1) whether mechanical units should be completely screened, or just partially screened; (2) to what degree screening materials should match the principal materials on the building; and (3), how far down the road that abuts the subject site should screening no longer be required. During that discussion, the Commission suggested that screening achieving approximately 75 percent coverage would be adequate. It was also suggested that, due to cost concerns, screening materials need not be the same type and quality as the principal siding materials so long as they were consistent with the principle siding materials.

In response to these comments, staff has revised the language pertaining to screening to state that a minimum opacity of 75% shall be achieved for ground-mounted units, and that at least 75% of the height of roof mounted units shall be screened. The revised language also states that materials shall be the same color as the principle siding or trim materials on the building. This would not impose a particular material requirement, but rather, assumes that compatibility will be achieved by use of the same color. This would only apply, however, to the general screening standards. In the more sensitive zones where higher design standards are imposed, current language that requires the same types of materials is retained. Additionally, the revised language exempts units that are visible more than 300 feet beyond the side lot lines that intersect with the abutting street. Finally (and something we did not talk about at the last meeting), the revised language would exempt units that are located on roof surfaces at least 6 feet below the ground level of abutting streets or properties. This would provide relief to those situations where you might be looking down on a roof and therefore over the top of typical screening walls.

The following is a summary of the more substantive changes in the draft amendments, along with some discussion points. These were included in the Commission's August 4, 2010 Commission Action Form, and are repeated herein for convenience. (Portions of the summary have been revised to reflect the current draft of the amendments).

* Change "substantially" screened to "75%" screened for ground mounted units. This eliminates need for reference to L3 or L2 standards, which assume a minimum depth of screening area. It also eliminates words that are subjective and not well defined. Also, change screening requirements for roof mounted units to specify that 75% of the height of the unit must be screened rather than requiring the unit to be completely screened.

- * Identify the ground level as the point of reference for visibility of both ground and roof mount units. This makes it clear that screening is not required of units visible from, for example, upper floor balconies.
- * Exempt units that are visible from grade levels on abutting streets or properties that are higher than the elevation of the roof surface.
- * Identify the abutting street or highway as the point of reference when the standard applies to visibility from streets, but exempt units that are visible more than 300 feet down the road on which the subject site abuts. This makes it clear that visibility of units beyond the immediate area of the building is not a concern.
- * Eliminate reference to visibility from “abutting residential properties” for ground mount units. Only roof mount would be screened from abutting residential properties, with the ground being the point of reference. This assumes that ground-mounted units are less impacting to surrounding development because they are more likely to be screened by commonly occurring landscaping and/or fencing in backyards without additional screening directly abutting the units.
- * For clarity purposes, change language pertaining to screening materials that are “consistent with” the principle materials of the building, to materials that are “of the same color as the principal materials of the building.” (Current language for more sensitive zones that specifies that screening materials shall be of the same type, quality, and color as the principle materials on the building is retained).
- * In more sensitive zones, require screening to be integral to building design and describe how that would be achieved (this would be determined during the design and architectural review of buildings).
- * Allow visibility of wall-mounted meters on non-street facing side or rear facades if they are located beyond the centerline of any façade visible from the street.
- * Eliminate redundant, sometimes conflicting standards in CVCN, O-GSE, O-GNE and O-GSW zones. Retain only those provisions that are unique to those zones. Otherwise, have General Development Standards be applicable to all zones.

Staff has sent notice to local developers of the proposed changes and informed them that these would be reviewed by the Planning & Zoning Commission at its September 1, 2010 meeting. To date, we have received no comments on the draft amendments, but welcome public input at the meeting based upon notice sent to developers. The draft amendments are attached in both a strikeout/underlined version and a formatted version for the Commission’s consideration.

ALTERNATIVES:

1. The Planning and Zoning Commission may recommend to the City Council to adopt the amendments as proposed and attached.
2. The Planning and Zoning Commission may recommend adoption of the proposed amendments, with modifications.
3. The Planning and Zoning Commission may recommend that the City Council not adopt the proposed amendments.
4. The Planning and Zoning Commission can refer this back to staff for additional analysis.

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

The proposed amendments provide needed clarity on screening requirements, particularly in allowable methods for screening based upon the zoning district the units are located in. They provide easily defined vistas from which mechanical units should be screened to avoid questions on whether distant viewing of units is subject to the regulations, and they eliminate redundant and sometimes conflicting regulations. Staff believes that these changes would be in keeping with the intent of existing regulations, but would provide more reasonable and more easily defined provisions for their application. It is staff's recommendation that the Planning and Zoning Commission act in accordance with Alternative #1, which is to recommend that the City Council adopt the changes as proposed and attached. If the Commission would like to modify the proposed standards to further address aesthetic preferences, then Alternative #2 may be appropriate.

**Mechanical Screening Regulations
- Proposed Amendments -**

(Strikeout/Underlined Version)

The following proposed amendments pertain to regulations for the screening of mechanical equipment. Current regulations are cited below, with proposed new language shown as underlined text, and proposed deleted language shown as strikeout text:

Section 29.201(116) (Definitions)

(116) **Mechanical Unit** means a climate control device and/or a piece of hardware used for the delivery or measurement of utilities, ~~that is located above the ground and is clearly visible,~~ not including solar energy systems as defined in section 29.1309.

Section 29.408(4) (General Development Standards - Applicable City-wide)

(4) Mechanical Units.

(a) Screening Required. For all uses, except for single-family and two-family dwellings, all mechanical units located on the ground, ~~such as cooling or heating equipment, pumps or generators shall be substantially screened from ground level view from abutting streets and any abutting residential properties by a partially sight obscuring fence and/or shrubs that achieve a minimum opacity of approximately 75%.~~ Such fence and/or shrubs shall be at least six inches higher than the height of the mechanical equipment. All mechanical equipment mounted on roofs, or on the walls of buildings, shall be ~~completely~~ screened from the ground level view from both abutting streets and of any abutting residentially zoned lot and substantially screened from all other adjacent properties at any level, with materials that are ~~consistent with the architectural materials used on the exterior of the building the same color as the principal siding or trim materials of the exterior of the building.~~ Required screening shall be completely opaque, and shall ensure that at least 75% of the height of the mechanical unit is screened or otherwise unseen.

(b) Screening Exemptions. Screening of mechanical units is not required in the following instances:

(i). Wall-mounted meters and associated panels on a non-street facing side or rear facade, provided they are located beyond the centerline of any facade visible from an abutting street;

(ii) Units mounted on roof surfaces that are at least 6 feet lower than the ground level of the abutting street or property;

(iii) Units visible more than 300 feet beyond the side lot lines that intersect with the street on which the subject site abuts. (Screening is nonetheless required from other non-exempt vantage points).

Sections 29.807(5) & 29.810 (Pertaining to the CVCN & CGS Districts)

(5) Mechanical Equipment Units.

(a) ~~Comply with the standards of this section for all:~~

~~(i) cooling or heating equipment,~~

~~(ii) pumps~~

~~(iii) generators~~

~~(iv) communications equipment~~

~~(v) utility cabinets~~

~~(vi) others such mechanical equipment~~

~~(b) (a) Locate and screen such mechanical equipment units so it is not visible from adjoining properties or public streets or sidewalks and to minimize acoustic impacts of this equipment in these on surrounding residential development and areas.~~

~~(c) (b) In addition to the general provisions under Section 29.408(4), screening Screening shall be integral to and consistent with the overall design of the building, using such means as parapet walls, roof forms, or similar utilization of the buildings primary architectural features and materials, and the landscape. At a minimum, screening materials shall meet the L3 or F2 standards set forth in Section 29.403.~~

~~(i) shall include materials of the same type, quality and color as the principal materials of the building or landscape, and~~

~~(ii) at the time of installation, shall be at least six inches higher than the height of the mechanical equipment.~~

Section 29.1107(5) (Pertaining to the Southeast Entryway Gateway Overlay District):

(5) Design Standard. The following guidelines involve exterior building materials, minimum roof slopes, entrances and signs.

. . .

~~(g) Garbage Collection areas and Mechanical Units shall be screened pursuant to Section 29.408(3) and (4) of this ordinance except that:~~

~~(i) Trash receptacles for use by customers are exempt.~~

~~(ii) All mechanical equipment shall be completely screened from the ground level of any adjacent property with architectural materials that are consistent with those used on the primary building.~~

~~(h) Electrical and utility meters shall be located on the rear façade or on a non-street facing side façade provided they are located behind the centerline of the side of the building.~~

Section 29.1109(10)(g) (Pertaining to the O-GNE Northeast Entryway Gateway Overlay District)

(g) Locate drive-through windows, menu boards, mechanical equipment, and associated stacking lanes to minimize impacts on other areas of the development site, as well as impacts on adjacent properties. Such site features are to be integrated with the building design and screened from off-site property.

Section 29.1112(7) (Pertaining to the Southwest Gateway Overlay District)

(7) Mechanical Equipment

~~(a) Comply with the standards of this section for all~~

~~(i) cooling or heating equipment~~

~~(ii) pumps~~

~~(iii) generators~~

~~(iv) communications equipment~~

~~(v) private utility cabinets~~

~~(vi) meters~~

~~(vii) others such mechanical equipment~~

~~(b) Locate and screen such mechanical equipment so it is not visible from adjoining properties or public streets or sidewalks and to minimize acoustic impacts of this equipment in these areas.~~

~~(c) In addition to the general provisions under Section 29.408(4), Screening screening of mechanical units shall be integral to and consistent with the overall design of the building, using such means as parapet walls, roof forms, or similar utilization of the buildings primary architectural features and materials. and the landscape. At a minimum, screening materials shall meet the L3 or F2 standards set forth in Section 29.403.~~

~~(i) shall include materials of the same type, quality and color as the principal materials of the building or landscape, and~~

~~(ii) at the time of installation, shall be at least six inches higher than the height of the mechanical equipment.~~

**Mechanical Screening Regulations
- Proposed Amendments -**

(Formatted Version)

The following is a formatted version of proposed amendments pertaining to regulations for the screening of mechanical equipment. A version showing proposed changes using strikeout and underlined text is separately provided.

Section 29.201(116) (Definitions)

(116) **Mechanical Unit** means a climate control device and/or a piece of hardware used for the delivery or measurement of utilities, not including solar energy systems as defined in section 29.1309.

Section 29.408(4) (General Development Standards - Applicable City-wide)

(4) Mechanical Units.

(a) Screening Required. For all uses, except for single-family and two-family dwellings, all mechanical units located on the ground shall be screened from ground level view from abutting streets by a sight obscuring fence and/or shrubs that achieve a minimum opacity of approximately 75%. Such fence and/or shrubs shall be at least six inches higher than the height of the mechanical equipment. All mechanical equipment mounted on roofs, or on the walls of buildings, shall be screened from the ground level view from both abutting streets and of any abutting residentially zoned lot with materials that are the same color as the principal siding or trim materials of the exterior of the building. Required screening shall be completely opaque, and shall ensure that at least 75% of the height of the mechanical unit is screened or otherwise unseen.

(b) Screening Exemptions. Screening of mechanical units is not required in the following instances:

(i). Wall-mounted meters and associated panels on a non-street facing side or rear facade, provided they are located beyond the centerline of any façade visible from an abutting street;

(ii) Units mounted on roof surfaces that are at least 6 feet lower than the ground level of the abutting street or property;

(iii) Units visible more than 300 feet beyond the side lot lines that intersect with the street on which the subject site abuts. (Screening is nonetheless required from other non-exempt vantage points).

Sections 29.807(5) & 29.810 (Pertaining to the CVCN & CGS Districts)

(5) Mechanical Units.

(b) Locate mechanical units to minimize acoustic impacts of this equipment on surrounding residential development and areas.

(c) In addition to the general provisions under Section 29.408(4), screening shall be integral to and consistent with the overall design of the building, using such means as parapet walls, roof forms, or similar utilization of the buildings primary architectural features and materials.

Section 29.1107(5) (Pertaining to the Southeast Entryway Gateway Overlay District):

(5) Design Standard. The following guidelines involve exterior building materials, minimum roof slopes, entrances and signs.

. . .

(g) Garbage Collection areas shall be screened pursuant to Section 29.408(3) and (4) of this ordinance, except that trash receptacles for use by customers are exempt.

Section 29.1109(10)(g) (Pertaining to the O-GNE Northeast Entryway Gateway Overlay District)

(g) Locate drive-through windows, menu boards, and associated stacking lanes to minimize impacts on other areas of the development site, as well as impacts on adjacent properties. Such site features are to be integrated with the building design and screened from off-site property.

Section 29.1112(7) (Pertaining to the Southwest Gateway Overlay District)

(7) Mechanical Equipment

In addition to the general provisions under Section 29.408(4), screening of mechanical units shall be integral to and consistent with the overall design of the building, using such means as parapet walls, roof forms, or similar utilization of the buildings primary architectural features and materials.