

Introduction

The Urban Forest Manual (UFM) is a guide created to facilitate the planning, design, installation and maintenance of trees and landscaping required for new development and redevelopment per the City of Tacoma's (City) Tacoma Municipal Code (TMC) 13.06.090B Landscaping Standards and other applicable portions of the Zoning Code (TMC 13.06). It is intended to be used concurrently with TMC 13.06.090B to ensure the requirements and standards are executed properly. Before finalizing development plans, visit the Planning and Development Services (PDS) website at www.tacomapermits.org, contact the permit center at (253) 591-5030, or visit them at 747 Market Street on the third floor, to verify that all other applicable City codes and manuals have been met.

Intent

The City's landscaping requirements are intended to contribute to the aesthetic environment of the City and provide an attractive urban setting to enhance livability and foster economic development. These requirements also provide green spaces that can support the citywide tree canopy goal of 30 percent, support wildlife in the urban environment, and help reduce storm water runoff, filter pollution, and reduce the urban heat island effect. These landscaping requirements also buffer and soften the visual impacts of development, and support the planting, maintenance, and preservation of a stable and sustainable urban forest.

TMC 13.06.090B helps to support this intent by requiring landscaping (trees, shrubs and groundcover) be installed when significant development activities take place. In crafting TMC 13.06.090B, the City sought to achieve these objectives in a flexible manner that balances urban density development activities with livability and community health. Landscaping requirements generally apply to new construction and substantial alterations of structures, parking areas, streets, and sidewalks. Minor alterations are exempt from landscaping requirements, except for street tree requirements triggered by off-site improvements as specified in [Section 2.4](#). The TMC also contains a range of options intended to provide flexibility while still meeting the intent, as well as incentives for inclusion of desired features like saving mature trees, and planting larger tree species, native plants, and Low Impact Development stormwater facilities.

When required, landscaping must comply with the TMC and this UFM's standards for plant selection, installation, and maintenance. These standards are intended to better ensure plants survive and thrive, to minimize conflicts with infrastructure, and in some cases to provide a substantial visual buffer. Generally, landscaping plans and management plans detailing how landscaping will be maintained must be prepared by a professional. TMC 13.06.090B also references the UFM as a source of additional guidance on the technical aspects of landscaping. However, please note that TMC 13.06.090B is the prevailing source of regulatory authority and shall prevail if conflicts arise between TMC and landscaping requirements as defined in this Manual.

In certain instances, other City codes may require or pertain to landscaping. Additional landscaping requirements, erosion control, and other stormwater related measures are contained in the City’s Stormwater Management Manual available online at cityoftacoma.org/stormwatermanual. For tree planting, pruning, and removal on public lands, including the right-of-way and public property, refer to TMC Title 9.20 Urban Forestry, in addition to the requirements contained in this UFM. For tree and landscaping requirements within a regulated Critical Area, refer to TMC Title 13.11 Critical Areas Preservation.

Determining Tree and Landscaping Requirements

The UFM is organized to guide users in determining if and how landscaping is required in association with development activities. The following steps are recommended:

1. Determine the specific zoning designation for the property you are intending to develop or redevelop.

*Tree and landscaping requirements for all zones, including Urban Residential (UR) zones, are contained in **Chapter 2**. Refer to TMC 13.06.090B and Figure 1-1 Tree and Landscaping Requirements Overview of the general landscaping requirements of Chapter 2.*

2. Determine if your proposed development will trigger landscaping requirements, and which ones apply.

***Chapter 1** of the UFM provides an overview of the City’s landscaping requirements and an indication of when they typically apply. It is intended to be used in conjunction with TMC 13.06.090B.*

3. If landscaping is required, determine how much and what type is required.

***Chapter 2** of the UFM includes a landscaping requirements table, for use in determining how much landscaping will be required, based on the location, scope and type of development activities.*

*In addition, UFM **Chapter 3** provides guidance on determining whether landscaping features eligible for incentives or bonuses under the landscaping code may reduce the amount of required landscaping or provide flexibility on planting location.*

4. Determine if tree protection requirements apply to your site

*If developing or redeveloping in UR1, UR2, or UR3 zones, and **there are existing trees on your site**, you will need to prepare the required existing tree inventory along with arborist report and tree protection plan, as applicable, in compliance with **Chapter 7**.*

5. Determine requirements intended to ensure that landscaping survives and thrives.

***Chapter 4** of the UFM provides guidance on planting and installation.*

6. Based on the landscaping that is required and how it should be selected and cared for, prepare your application for submittal with your building or site development permit. To enable staff to determine that your proposed landscaping meets the TMC, the following items are required for submittal:

- *Landscaping Requirements Table* – discussed in **Chapter 2** and provided in Appendix 1.
- *Landscape Plan* – refer to **Chapter 5** and Appendix 2.
- *Landscape Management Plan* – refer to **Chapter 6** and Appendix 3.
- *Tree Protection Plan and Arborist Report (if retaining vegetation)* – refer to **Chapter 7** and Appendix 4.

7. After submittal, City staff will guide you through the review and approval process.

Once construction permits are issued, landscaping is required to be installed (or bonded for) in accordance with the approved plans and pertinent TMC requirements. Ongoing maintenance and replacement of required landscaping is the responsibility of the property owner.