Memorandum

TO: **Historic and Architectural Advisory Committee (HAAC)**

FROM: **Emily Heymann, Planner**

DATE: **January 31, 2020**

SUBJECT: **Screening & Landscaping in the Village**

"Good fences make good neighbors" – and good fences make even better neighbors when the intensity and activity between neighboring uses is very different. Concerns heard at DRB meetings are less so about the use itself, and more so about the functions of that use: headlight glare shining into windows, voices and peering eyes on a restaurant patio, seeing the dumpster enclosure, etc.

Existing landscaping are focused on buffers along the entire parcel boundary, to provide greenspace and pervious surface in lieu of maximum lot coverage limitations. In the Village, parcel sizes are smaller and narrower, these landscape buffer standards can limit or outright restrict adaptive reuse. For example, providing a landscape buffer at the required width alongside a "commercial driveway" may be physically impossible given the parcel size and location of the existing structure. A lot of dense landscaping is required to

This screening requirement is not intended to be require buffering between neighboring residential "backyard" uses: decks, patios, grills, pools, play equipment, storage shed. For example, a new single- or two-family dwelling is proposed near existing single-family dwellings. The intensity of use is similar: 2 or fewer PM peak hour trips. Some landscaping along the exterior property boundary to provide some lot line delineation and softening of the new structure should be required, but not a dense buffer completely hiding the new home (and potentially obstructing views of the mountains or sunrise/sunset). However, say a project with 4 or more units is proposed near existing single-family dwellings. Now there is a shared parking area 6+ vehicles spaces generating 4+ PM peak hour trips, and perhaps a dumpster enclosure. The new multiplex should be required to install a strategically located fence to prevent most of the headlight glare from interfering with the neighbors and obstruct the view/noise of the dumpster. But the backyard of the multi-units should not be screened from the backyard of the existing neighbors. The fence shall be located as close as possible to the parking/vehicle maneuvering area or solid waste management (i.e. dumpster enclosure) area to prevent most of the headlight trespass. Screening fences for commercial seating areas can be located farther back so the seating area can have an open, airy feel with natural light and not feel "boxed-in" by a tall fence. This screening requirement is not intended to screen 100% of light and view trespass, but rather control the majority of it.

Suggestion: Landscaping standards and compatibility audit based on neighboring properties within a 200-ft radius of the new/incompatible activity: parking areas, outdoor seating/sales areas, solid waste management (i.e. dumpster enclosure). Within that radius, consider the units that are fully & partially within the 200-ft, as well as units where their associated landholding, but not structure is within the 200-ft radius, for example a portion of the driveway or backyard.

Maneuvering area definition: where vehicles transition from the road to driveway and/or driveway into the parking area, or back up space within the parking lot (such as a hammerhead)

Example screening requirements:

- 6-ft tall opaque fence. The DRB can reduce or increase the height of the fence where the proposed use or topography make 6-ft too much or too little. The DRB may require fences use lattice work for the portion taller than 6-ft.
- Fences less than 30' in length: can be located 1 foot off the property line (enough space for fence maintenance
- Fences greater than 30' in length: Must have softening landscaping on exterior side and setback 3-4 ft from property line (enough space to maintain fence and landscaping without trespassing on neighboring property)
- Landscaping, edible and flowering species preferred, on exterior side
- Chain link fence with privacy slats is prohibited
- A living fence or hedge can be substituted for a manufactured fence where the applicant demonstrates 60% (higher? Lower?) or more of the light is obstructed. A manufactured fence may be required until the living edge is mature.
- Hedge must be opaque year-round
- The applicant must provide a manufactured fence until the hedge is fully grown or in the event the hedge no longer provides coverage

Landscaping on Exterior Side of a Fence - yes or no?

Pros:

- Softens the view of fence
- "Better" view for the neighbors (objective)
- Enhance greenery in the village

Cons:

- Maintenance can easily be forgotten by property owner "out of sight, out of mind"
- Some species will overgrow on neighbor's property

The DRB can waive the requirement for a screening fence:

- Where the parking/maneuvering area for an existing residential use is not consolidated with the commercial use. Other sections of this bylaw, encourage/require/incentivize shared parking/dumpster/etc areas. For example, say a single-family dwelling is converted to a mixed-use building with a residential unit and a commercial use, but the SFD parking is not consolidated with the commercial use parking lot. The SFD parking area is existing and does not need a fence, but the new commercial parking area is subject to the screening standards. This scenario would likely occur where the existing residential and proposed commercial parking areas are physically separated by structures, separate curb cuts, topography, etc.

- Where the presence of dense vegetation, topography, or existing structure(s), on the subject or neighboring property provides sufficient screening for visual and headlight trespass. The applicant must provide photographic evidence for the DRB to consider.

- Where the light/visual trespass will occur on a parcel of similar or greater intensity of activity. For example. This standard will aid the DRB in administering the bylaw as the village evolves. There are very few commercial and multi-family properties in the village currently. As the bylaw is implemented and the village evolves in a more commercial/multi-unit manner, the need for fences and screening between similar propeorties will diminish. For example, if a restaurant is proposed next to an office building. The restaurant does not need to screen their parking lot from the office parking.

The bylaw should lead with strong intent statements upon which the DRB makes a finding.

Example 1: Pretend the Long Trail Vet is a single-family home and they are proposing a vet facility under the new rules. Pretend the existing parking area on the map is proposed as new. The proposed parking area is shown in red and the red X marks the "center point." The green circle is a 200-ft radius from the center of the red X. The property to the east, the National Guard, is a higher intensity of use so no screening fence is required. Typical landscape buffer with some plants should be required. Landscaping would have to take into consideration 3 residential properties to the west. The applicant would need to proposed a fence or dense vegetation along the west and north sides of the parking lot to prevent headlight trespass. In this case, given that only 1 house is fully within the 200-ft radius and not directly adjacent to the parking lot, a small section of fence or some screening should be sufficient on the northwest corner of the parking lot. Some plantings should be required along the remainder of the parking lot (125-ft in length) to soften the view of the parking area for the 2 residentials properties who have a view of the parking lot from the yards, but where the headlights are not shining directly into their windows.

<u>Example 2:</u> Pretend the Conforti's house at 23 Old Stage Road is converted to a restaurant with a large parking lot. They cannot expand the parking lot into the front yard of Route 2 or Old Stage Road under the current or revised bylaws. They propose a parking lot in the backyard.

Drawing a 200-ft radius, consider the units fully, partially, and land-only in the circle:

- 5 units fully within 200-ft radius
- 4 units partially in 200-ft radius
- 1 unit with no-structure in 200-ft radius

West: The parking lot abuts a duplex. The maximum screen should be required here, an opaque fence, possibly with exterior landscaping for softening.

North: 3 units fully and 1 unit partially within the 200-ft radius, separate by a low volume dead-end street. There is a retaining wall and grade change on the northside of the proposed parking lot. Large existing trees that should remain and be protected. *Should an opaque fence or some dense screening vegetation be required?* The applicant shall identify a radius around the existing trees to project them from salt, ground compaction, etc. and a planting plan for if/when trees fall or are removed as hazard trees.

East: 1 house is partially in the 200-ft radius (16 Old Stage Road). The house at 23 Old Stage Road provides buffering. That house's backyard and the front yard of the property to the north are in the

200-ft radius. The east side of the parking lot should be softened with landscaping of varying height and species to create a natural greenspace of a residential scale.

South: The parking lot will be visible from Williston Road, but 130-ft away from edge of pavement. The intent of the screening fence is to protect lower activity uses from higher activity uses, the high-volume state right-of-way does not need to be protected from the parking lot. In this location some landscaping should be provided to soften the view of the parking area from the road/sidewalk. Landscaping standards should call for a variety of native species that provide a mix of flowering blooms in the summer and evergreen species in the winter.