

## ORDINANCE NO. 23-1273

### AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF LAKE FOREST PARK, WASHINGTON, CREATING CHAPTER 12.50 OF THE LAKE FOREST PARK MUNICIPAL CODE (LFPMC), RETAINING WALLS; AND AMENDING CHAPTER 16.26 LFPMC REGARDING TYPE III PERMITS; PROVIDING FOR SEVERABILITY, AND ESTABLISHING AN EFFECTIVE DATE

---

**WHEREAS**, the adoption of land use and zoning regulations is a valid exercise of the City's police power and is specifically authorized by RCW 35A.63.100 and RCW 36.70A.040; and

**WHEREAS**, within the express terms of the Growth Management Act, the Washington State Legislature has specifically conferred upon the governing bodies of Washington cities the right to establish and adopt interim development regulations; and

**WHEREAS**, large scale retaining walls in or adjacent to publicly owned rights-of-way can result in visual and physical blight, tree and vegetation removal, and become de facto landmarks identifying the City of Lake Forest Park (the "City")

**WHEREAS**, it is imperative that negative impacts of these retaining walls be mitigated with structural and aesthetic design, planting, and other mitigation measures; and

**WHEREAS**, it is imperative that these retaining walls that become significant, recognizable features in the City be integrated with and support the community identity; and

**WHEREAS**, chapter 12.50 of the Lake Forest Park Municipal Code ("LFPMC") would establish regulations for retaining walls in or adjacent to publicly owned right-of-way;

**WHEREAS**, an Environmental Checklist for a non-project action was prepared under the State Environmental Policy Act, Chapter 43.21C RCW, pursuant to Chapter 197-11 WAC, and a Determination of Non-Significance ("DNS") was issued on April 12, 2023; and

**WHEREAS**, in accordance with the requirements set forth in RCW 36.70A.106, the City provided the Washington State Department of Commerce notice of the City's

intent to adopt the proposed amendments on April 6, 2023, and received notice that the Department had granted expedited review on April 20, 2023; and

**WHEREAS**, the City Council held open public meetings to review the proposed regulations during meetings on January 26, 2023; February 6, 2023, February 23, 2023, April 13, 2023, May 11, 2023, May 18, 2023, June 5, 2023, June 8, 2023, June 22, 2023, July 13, 2023, and July 27, 2023; and

**WHEREAS**, the City Council held public hearings on May 11, 2023, June 22, 2023, and July 27, 2023 regarding the proposed regulations for retaining walls; and

**WHEREAS**, the City Council adopted interim retaining wall regulations in Ordinance No. 23-1270 on June 8, 2023, and after the public hearing on June 22, 2023, adopted an amendment to the interim regulations in Ordinance No. 23-1272.

**NOW, THEREFORE, THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF LAKE FOREST PARK, WASHINGTON, DO ORDAIN AS FOLLOWS:**

Section 1. ADOPTION. The City Council of the City of Lake Forest Park hereby creates chapter 12.50 LFPMP, Retaining Walls as follows:

**12.50.010 Purpose and intent.**

The purpose and intent of this chapter is to:

- A. Recognize that while at the basic level, a retaining wall is a structure that holds or retains soil behind it, retaining walls can also result in visual and physical blight, tree and vegetation removal, impairment of gateway areas, and other impacts that require visual design, planting, and topographic, and aesthetic mitigation;
- B. Recognize that retaining walls can be built from different materials to achieve the strength required and achieve mitigation and aesthetic goals;
- C. Require aesthetic and other design features that mitigate these wall impacts and reflect the community environment, as adopted in Retaining Wall Design Standards and this Chapter 12.50;
- D. Recognize that retaining walls are frequently adjacent to noise sensitive areas such as residential dwelling units and other land uses that are noise sensitive and subject to inequitable noise impacts, which can be intensified by removal of vegetation and trees and/or by the reflected noise from retaining wall surfaces;
- E. Require proof of compliance with state regulations for noise attenuation, absorption, and transmission; recognize that compliance may be achieved through a variety of techniques and materials such as the use of tilted retaining walls to direct noise upward, large and small variations of façade to break up low to high frequencies, and sound reflection mitigation;

F. Require landscaping to avoid visual dominance of the retaining wall, potentially discourage graffiti, and add visual quality;

G. Encourage building material choices that ensure aesthetics, durability, maintenance, and cost;

H. Promote cooperation between the State of Washington Department of Transportation ("WSDOT"), the City, and the project proponent; and

I. The intent in this Chapter 12.50 is that the term "shall" (or "shall not" in the negative) represents a requirement to satisfy the regulation. The intent in this Chapter 12.50 the term "should" (or "should not" in the negative) indicates a provision that is strongly encouraged, but that is not an absolute requirement. Compliance with a "should" provision is voluntary, but highly desirable to the community.

#### **12.50.020 Retaining wall construction and design.**

A. Public benefit. Retaining walls located within the right-of-way shall be installed to benefit the general public by supporting or protecting public transportation infrastructure and shall not be for private development gain.

B. Application type.

1. An application for retaining wall construction and design approval shall be processed pursuant to the requirements in chapter 16.26 LFPMC for a Type III permit, administrative decision made by the code administrator. The Public Works director shall be the "code administrator" for the Type III permit decision.

2. For proposed retaining walls 25 feet or more in length and that propose removal of 10 or more trees that are either exceptional, landmark, or significant trees as defined in Chapter 16.14 LFPMC, a Neighborhood meeting shall be held pursuant to the requirements in LFPMC 16.26.050, provided however, that the Neighborhood meeting is not required to be held prior submittal of the application for the retaining wall.

3. For purposes of sending notice of the Neighborhood meeting under LFPMC 16.26.050(B), notice shall be mailed to owners of real property within 500 feet of either side of the right-of-way for the entire length of the retaining wall project. For projects involving more than one lot, notice of the Neighborhood Meeting shall also be sent to the Planning Commission and Tree Board. For purposes of sending the notice of application under LFPMC 16.26.040(D)(1)(b), notice shall be mailed to owners of real property within 500 feet of either side of the right-of-way for the entire length of the retaining wall project.

C. Transportation design manuals and regulations. Retaining walls located on private property or right-of-way that support or protect public transportation infrastructure shall,

at a minimum, meet the requirements set forth in the latest edition of the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) Design Manual, Bridge Design Manual, and the International Building Code. These manuals and codes provide policies, procedures, and methods for developing and documenting design improvements to the transportation network.

1. The retaining wall construction type shall be the same from the highest to the lowest portion of each independent wall segment. Where walls are terraced or tiered, all tiers/terraces shall consist of the same wall construction type for the length of each independent segment.

2. Concrete retaining walls shall be coated with a moisture barrier and anti-graffiti paint.

3. Total structural isolation is required for public and private retaining walls adjacent to each other.

4. The Public Works director shall take into account long term maintenance requirements, constructability, and recommendations on same from the applicant's engineers, and independent third-party engineers.

5. Easements may be required for the maintenance, operation, and replacement of the wall.

6. The applicant shall provide documentation of how the retaining wall design satisfies, or exceeds, applicable WSDOT traffic noise policy and procedures. The documentation should include an assessment of noise impacts from the proposed design, including consideration of tree and vegetation removal, reflected noise, and proximity to residences, as well as proposed reflection and absorption techniques such as the use of tilted retaining walls to direct noise upward and variations in the facade to break up low to high frequencies.

7. Prior to issuing a decision on the retaining wall, the Public Works Director shall obtain, at the applicant's expense, a written structural review and recommendation from an independent third party with professional expertise and no affiliation with the applicant.

#### D. Retaining Wall design.

1. An architectural finish or engineered block shall be used that integrates with and supports the community identity of the City showing a strong relationship to the surrounding natural environment including native trees, flora, and fauna of the region. The architectural finishes included in Provision 1 of the Retaining Wall Design Standards dated July 27, 2023, are examples that satisfy this requirement. The Public Works Director will review and issue a decision on the architectural finish and engineered block consistent with this section after obtaining, at the applicant's expense,

a written review and recommendation from an independent third party with professional expertise and no affiliation with the applicant.

2. Landscaping treatments shall be used on retaining walls that reduce the harshness of these walls. The landscaping standards included in Provision 2 of the Retaining Wall Design Standards dated July 27, 2023, are examples that satisfy this requirement. The Public Works Director will review and issue a decision on landscaping treatments consistent with this section after obtaining, at the applicant's expense, a written review and recommendation from an independent third party with professional expertise and no affiliation with the applicant.

3. As a condition of permit approval, the Public Works Director shall require as needed, based on the impacts and circumstances related to a particular retaining wall, installation of a temporary irrigation systems, and the funding for or implementation of a 3-year tree and plant monitoring and maintenance plan, including the replacement of failed trees and plants.

Section 3. AMENDMENT. The City Council of the City of Lake Forest Park hereby amends section LFPMC 16.26.010, as follows:

**16.26.010 Purpose and application.**

A. This chapter establishes standard procedures for land use and related decisions made by the city of Lake Forest Park. They provide for an integrated and consolidated permit review process to promote timely and informed public participation and to eliminate redundancy and thereby minimize delay and expense.

B. This chapter applies to all applications for land use and related decisions made under chapter 12.50 LFPMC, and Titles 15, 16, 17 and 18 LFPMC.

Section 4. AMENDMENT. The City Council of the City of Lake Forest Park hereby amends section LFPMC 16.26.030, as follows:

**16.26.030 Classification of decisions.**

. . .

C. Type III – Administrative Decisions Made by a Code Administrator.

1. Threshold determinations under the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA);
2. Administrative variances;
3. Shoreline exemption permits;

4. Sensitive area permits issued pursuant to Chapter 16.16 LFPMC, with the exception of requests for exemption under LFPMC 16.16.250 and the exception of minor sensitive area permits as described under LFPMC 16.16.080(A)(2);

5. Short subdivisions; and

6. Retaining wall permits pursuant to chapter 12.50 LFPMC.

...

Section 5. EXPIRATION OF INTERIM REGULATIONS. The interim development regulations adopted in Ordinance 23-1270 and Ordinance No. 23-1272 shall expire upon the effected date of this ordinance.

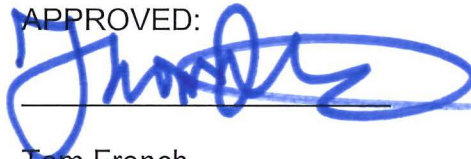
Section 6. SEVERABILITY. Should any portion of this ordinance, or its application to any person or circumstance, be declared unconstitutional or otherwise invalid for any reason, such decision shall not affect the validity of the remaining portions of this ordinance or its application to other persons or circumstances.

Section 7. CORRECTIONS. The City Clerk is authorized to make necessary corrections to this ordinance including, but not limited to, the correction of scrivener's/clerical errors, references, ordinance numbering, section/subsection numbers and any references thereto.

Section 8. EFFECTIVE DATE. This ordinance shall take effect five (5) days after passage and publication.

**APPROVED BY A MAJORITY** of the Lake Forest Park City Council this 27<sup>th</sup> day of July, 2023.

APPROVED:




Tom French  
Deputy Mayor

ATTEST/AUTHENTICATED:



Matthew McLean  
City Clerk

APPROVED AS TO FORM:

  
\_\_\_\_\_

Kim Adams Pratt  
City Attorney

Introduced: July 27, 2023  
Adopted: July 27, 2023  
Posted: August 1, 2023  
Published: August 1, 2023  
Effective: August 6, 2023

## Retaining Wall Design Standards

July 27, 2023

### INTENT

These provisions are intended to mitigate the impact of large, monotonous retaining walls in the right-of-way by requiring architectural and landscaping treatments that reduce the harshness of such walls and reflect the community identity.

### INTERPRETATION

The terms used in these standards indicate whether provisions are required or whether they are discretionary, but highly recommended and desirable.

**SHALL**—The use of the term “shall” (or “shall not” in the negative) represents a requirement of the design to meet the intent of the guideline. This provision must be followed as part of planning, design, and implementation of the project.

**SHOULD**—The use of the term “should” (or “should not” in the negative) indicates a provision that is strongly encouraged, but that is not an absolute requirement. Compliance with this provision is voluntary, but highly desirable to the community.

### PROVISIONS

1. The architectural finish of retaining walls shall depict artistic images having a strong relationship to the Pacific Northwest and the surrounding natural environment including native trees, flora, and fauna of the region. (see examples in Figures A and B)

FIGURE A





FIGURE B

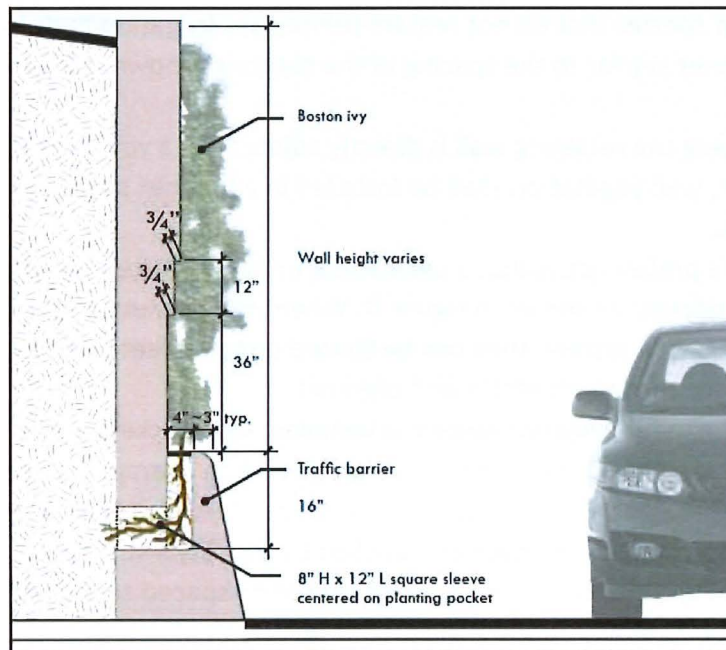


2. In addition to the architectural finish requirements of Provision 1, landscaping and vegetation such as that found in Figures C and D below shall be installed. Trees, shrubs and ground cover planted adjacent to a wall should incorporate plant species native the pacific northwest where possible.
  - a. In situations where the retaining wall is behind a sidewalk, the plantings shall be drought tolerant species that do not require permanent irrigation and shall be spaced in a manner similar to the spacing of the plantings shown in Figure C below.
  - b. In situations where the retaining wall is directly adjacent to a vehicular travel lane or shoulder, wall vegetation shall be installed in a manner similar to that described below.
    - i. The City's preference is that a permanent irrigation system be installed for vine pockets as shown in Figure D. When vine pockets are supported by an irrigation system, they can be spaced up to 10 feet apart on average for the length of the wall segment.
    - ii. If no permanent irrigation system is installed, vine pockets as shown in Figure D shall be spaced every 6 to 8 feet apart on average for the length of the wall segment unless structurally infeasible as demonstrated by a qualified structural engineer and verified by the City's structural engineering consultant. Vine pockets should be spaced so that the vines do not substantially obscure the artistic images depicted on the walls.
    - iii. Where landscaping is planted in front of the retaining wall, vines should be densely planted in front of the wall in a way that does not substantially obscure the artistic images depicted on the walls.

FIGURE C



FIGURE D



Vine Pocket – Example Section

3. The wall construction type for an independent wall segment may deviate from the requirements of Provisions 1 and 2 if it can be demonstrated to the Public Works Director's satisfaction that vegetation will grow directly from the wall face as shown in Figures E and F and will reach a



coverage of 80% of the wall front surface within 36 months. The plantings should be native and a permanent irrigation system shall be incorporated.

FIGURE E



FIGURE F

