

2025-10-24

Departure Request Narrative

Glacier Car Wash – Ellensburg, WA

Narrative: Departure Request for Fence and Buffer Requirements (North and South Boundaries)

The Ellensburg Land Development Code (LDC) and the pre-application notes for this project establish requirements for landscape buffering and fencing along property lines, especially where commercial parking lots abut other properties.

North Property Line (Parking Lot Adjacency)

- Code Requirement: If a shared access road with Tractor Supply is not developed, ECC 15.520.070(B)(d) requires a 6–8 foot tall screen fence on the north property line, with at least 5 feet of Type A, B, or C landscaping in front. Departures may be considered if the alternative meets the purpose of the standard.
- Functional and Visual Buffer: The project proposes to provide a 5' landscape buffer with Type B or C landscaping along the north property line and side yards, but requests a departure from the requirement to install a 6–8' tall fence in addition to the landscape buffer.
- Purpose of the Standard: The intent of the code is to provide visual screening, soften the view of parking areas, and minimize impacts between adjacent uses. The proposed landscape buffer, with dense plantings, will achieve these goals by providing a filtered or partial screen, enhancing the visual character, and maintaining safety and visibility.
- Site Conditions: The adjacency is parking lot to parking lot, not to a sensitive use or residential property. The landscape buffer will provide adequate separation and visual relief, and a tall fence may not be necessary to achieve the code's purpose in this context.
- Precedent and Flexibility: The code explicitly allows for alternative treatments and departures (ECC 15.210.060), provided the applicant demonstrates that the alternative meets the purpose of the standard. The proposed approach is consistent with this flexibility, especially given the lack of a shared driveway and the commercial-to-commercial interface.

South Boundaries (Side Yards)

- Code Requirement: Per ECC 15.520.020(C) and pre-app notes, side yard property lines must incorporate one of the following: Type A landscaping at least 10 feet deep; or Type B or C landscaping at least 10 feet deep, or at least 5 feet deep if combined with a 6–8 foot tall screen fence; or alternative treatments that meet the purpose of the standards.
- Project Proposal: For the south boundaries (side yards), we are requesting a departure to allow an alternative treatment: a low screen fence or hedge up to 42 inches in height, as specifically referenced in the pre-app notes as an acceptable example for situations where a more open visual character is appropriate.
- Justification: The proposed 42" screening fence, will soften the view and provide an appropriate visual buffer while maintaining openness and safety. This approach is consistent with the flexibility provided in both the zoning code and pre-app notes.



We respectfully request departures from the strict fence requirements along both the north property line and the south boundaries (side yards), proposing instead:

- A 5' wide Type B or C landscape buffer (without a 6–8' fence) along the north property line.
- A low screen fence up to 42" in height as an alternative treatment along the south boundary.

Both alternatives are supported by the code and pre-app notes as long as they meet the purpose of the standards—providing visual screening, separation, and compatibility with adjacent uses. The proposed treatments are appropriate for the site context, maintain safety and visibility, and align with the intent of the City's development standards.

