

D# 61 CONSTRUCTION & SECURITY FENCING

General Description

Temporary construction and security fencing around vacant buildings and properties have an aesthetic impact on Renton's neighborhoods. The Planning Division proposes establishing a new City project in partnership with the Arts Commission to mitigate the negative visual impacts of these barriers in the most visited areas of the City. Covers and screenings for such fencing would be developed with City funds, where screening would be created with an artistic, natural, or Renton-themed visual, and would easily be moved from site to site as construction and fencing of properties shift. Such screening would be located along public streets for projects that have a non-residential component. Geographic areas for screenings:

- **City Center** Community Planning Area: Downtown, North & South Renton, Rainier.
- **Center Village** Comprehensive Plan Land Use Designation: Sunset & Highlands.
- **Commercial Corridor** Comprehensive Plan Land Use Designation: Business district areas outside of the City Center and along highly traveled corridors.

Impact Analysis

Effect on rate of growth, development, and conversion of land as envisioned in the Plan

No foreseen impacts.

Effect on the City's capacity to provide adequate public facilities

No foreseen impacts.

Effect on the rate of population and employment growth

No foreseen impacts.

Whether Plan objectives are being met as specified or remain valid and desirable

The Renton Comprehensive Plan objectives and goals remain valid and desirable through this proposal. Plan policies promote improving design in much of the City including elements such as gateways, landscaping, new residential and non-residential development, and other elements in Renton's built environment.

Further, the Renton Arts and Culture Master Plan was recently adopted by City Council in August 2010 and provides support and guidance for the proposal. The Vision for this new Master Plan is that, "Renton aspires to be a center for arts and culture where traditional and contemporary arts thrive and creative industries are cultivated". Tactics and actions of the Plan from pages 50-53 include:

- Build arts awareness in the community.
- Expand public art collection to include new media, build on relationship with City departments to include art in the public right of way early in the planning process [and] continue that relationship through construction and opening.
- Explore real estate opportunities and partnerships for arts spaces both temporary and longer-term, among others.

Effect on general land values or housing costs

No foreseen impacts.

Whether capital improvements or expenditures are being made or completed as expected

No foreseen impacts.

Consistency with GMA, the Plan, and Countywide Planning Policies

The proposal is not inconsistent with the State Growth Management Act, Puget Sound Regional Council Vision 2040, King County Comprehensive Plan Policies, and Renton Comprehensive Plan. The Renton Arts & Culture Master Plan and other citywide planning documents provide supportive guidance. Renton Comprehensive Plan policies provide general direction where the vision and content of the Plan speak to improving livability for residents, visitors, and business which includes aesthetic improvements through design features in the built environment.

Specific to improved design to support improved aesthetic and attractiveness of neighborhoods, Renton has set precedence in its policies for urban design and its positive impact on surrounding properties and overall livability of the city for land use zones including new residential projects and most commercial and mixed-use areas.

Effect on critical areas and natural resource lands

No foreseen impacts.

Effect on other considerations

Various concepts for screening of construction sites and vacant buildings or vacant properties have been considered by the Planning Division. Concepts have been briefly discussed with Code Enforcement, Planning, and Economic Development staff. One concept would be to require opaque/non-transparent screening of construction sites along public streets which could be administered through the construction and building permit approval process. This approach is limited in application to all sites that may have security fencing as it would only cover projects requiring permits (mainly for building construction).

Currently, no fence or permit is needed for non-residential properties. These properties are allowed up to an 8-foot high fence (examples include unimproved and delapidated properties or vacant properties with empty buildings). There are a number of examples of such properties in the City where periphery fencing has been temporarily established. No screening requirement could be made of these properties unless property and code enforcement standards were amended or a new permit required for such non-residential fences.

Also, safety issues for the proposed programming would need to be reviewed with Police.

Staff Recommendation

Staff recommends funding a program developed by staff, the Planning Commission, and Arts Commission to create screening options to visually improve Renton's neighborhoods while

private and public properties are either being developed or sitting (inactive) for future improvement. The program could either be a one time project with multiple screens developed, or the creation of a larger on-going program.

Staff has researched different programs that provide screening and art on fencing and barriers around the country and locally. In contacting Kirkland and Seattle permitting divisions, neither have requirements for art as part of construction projects. Although primarily in larger cities, there are many programs where non-profit and public funding sources provide support for added visual screening similar to what is being described in this proposal.

The proposal could potentially enhance Renton's current marketing efforts to employees, residents, and visitors while enhancing the aesthetic of neighborhood's in transition.

Of the different programming concepts, creating temporary and moveable installations would be the easiest to implement and could increase community support and awareness of arts within the Renton community while mitigating against unsightly views in the City's most visited areas. By providing already created installations and approaching developers or property owners in the community with the opportunity to enhance the visual aesthetic of Renton's neighborhoods, the proposal would be similar to working with empty storefronts along a main street, to create a visual attraction while the space waiting for tenants to fill the space. The concepts not being proposed of requiring developers to add art to safety fencing as part of construction would create new systems to be managed and coordinated amongst multiple divisions at the city and may be difficult to implement.

Examples of screenings can be viewed at the websites below:

- Downtown Alliance - Re: Construction program - <http://www.downtownny.com/reconstruction>
- Seattle Office of Arts & Cultural Affairs - <http://artbeat.seattle.gov/2010/10/27/office-to-dedicate-artwork-for-downtown-construction-fence/>

Implementation Requirements

Potential steps to implement this proposal are:

- Brief Arts Commission and related staff on possible project.
- Receive direction and support from Planning & Development Committee and City Council.
- Host joint meeting of Planning & Arts Commission to develop criteria and guidelines.
- Host a design competition.
- Develop materials for approaching property owners with construction activities and security fencing where screenings could be installed.