



August 26, 2026

Martin Landa (Applicant/Requestor)
1242 W. Kesler Lane
Chandler, AZ 85224
Transmitted via email to: martyl@mjlmicro.com
Phone: (602) 999-1830

RE: Revised Zoning Interpretation – Landscape Screen
Subject Property: 1232 W. Kesler Lane, Chandler, Arizona 85224
Zoning District: Planned Area Development (PAD) for Single-Family Residential
Date of Request: June 26, 2025

Dear Mr. Landa:

This letter is issued in response to your request for an interpretation of the City of Chandler Zoning Code as it applies to the property identified above. This interpretation is issued by the Zoning Administrator pursuant to Chandler City Code 35-2300 and Ariz. Rev. Stat. § 9 462.06(A), which authorize the Zoning Administrator to render written interpretations of the provisions, requirements, and applicability of the city's zoning code.

I. Background and Facts Presented

The subject property is located at 1232 W. Kesler Lane in Chandler, Arizona, and is zoned PAD for Single-Family Residential. According to the information supplied in your request, the property owner has installed a continuous line of Ficus Nitida plants along the interior perimeter of the rear yard. The shrubs extend above the existing block wall. Your request seeks clarification regarding whether such vegetation qualifies as a "landscape screen" subject to height limitations contained in Chapter 35 of the Chandler City Code.

For purposes of this interpretation, the city relies on the facts submitted in the request.

II. Question Presented

Does a continuous planting of Ficus Nitida shrubs/trees located along the rear- and side-yard boundary of a property constitute a "landscape screen" as that term is used in Sections 35-401(8), 35-501(6), 35-601(6), 35-601.1(6), and 35-701(6) of the Chandler

Zoning Code, and is such vegetation subject to the seven-foot height limitation applicable to fences, walls, and landscape screens?

III. Applicable Zoning Code Provisions

Each of the zoning districts listed below includes identical regulatory language:

Section 35-401(8) – AG-1 District

Section 35-501(6) – SF-33 District

Section 35-601(6) – SF-18 District

Section 35-601.1(6) – SF-10 District

Section 35-701(6) – SF-8.5 District

The code language in each of those sections provides:

“Fences, walls and landscape screens not exceeding seven (7) feet in height adjacent or contiguous to rear and side yard lines and not to exceed three (3) feet in height adjacent or contiguous to the front yard lines.”

IV. Analysis

The question posed is essentially whether a hedge should be regulated like a fence or wall. Historically, the city has not regulated or enforced vegetation on private yards located within single-family residential zoning districts. Chapter 35 does not prescribe landscaping in private yards, nor does it limit or prohibit the type of landscaping that can be planted in private yards.

While the word “landscape” evokes the outdoor environment and plants, generally, the operative term for purposes of the height limit expressed in the code sections referenced above is the word “screen.” The Chandler Zoning Code defines “Screened/screening” as follows:

*Screened/screening: The concealment of unattractive land uses, such as storage areas or parking lots, from public eye through the installation of landscaping, walls, fences, earth berms, or other devices as specified by the Zoning Code. Chain-link fencing with slats, **vegetation or other material shall not be considered as screening under this definition.***

The last part of the definition is presented in bold text to emphasize in clear and definitive terms that vegetation is not to be considered as screening by the Zoning Code. If the term “landscape screen” does not refer to vegetation, then what does it refer to?

In design and construction usage, a “screen” denotes a built or manufactured element, such as a panel, lattice, fence, or wall, that is intended to block sight or restrict

movement. A “landscape screen,” therefore, is a screen wall that is used as a design element in a landscape plan, which may or may not have vegetation growing on it. The placement of the phrase “landscape screens” in the same sentence as “fences” and “walls” implies that is a reference to a type of wall element, rather than a reference to vegetation that may form a visual barrier.

Additionally, a height limit inherently presupposes an element with a fixed, ascertainable height at the time of construction or installation. This certainty on height would be something that could be regulated and approved as part of a building permit review or other zoning approval. A screen wall has a defined height the moment it is built, but a hedge does not have a defined height at the time of planting. A hedge’s height depends on plant species, growth rate, maintenance schedule, and season, and is not something fixed by a permit application in the way a wall’s height is. Hedges vary in density and height over time. The practical unworkability of enforcing a static seven-foot cap against a living, growing hedge supports the inference that the code drafters intended “landscape screen” to mean a constructed screen wall, whose height can be verified and permitted, rather than plant material.

If landscape screens were defined as hedges, or consisting of vegetation as it is being suggested, the city would be faced with significant impractical enforcement challenges. For example, it would not be sensible or realistic for city code enforcement officers to issue notice of violations or citations to all homeowners in the city who have bushes or trees exceeding seven feet in height within their rear yards near the side or rear property lines. Another significant challenge would be determining when a plant, tree or group of plants and/or trees constitute a landscape screen. One large tree, similar to the one located within your own rear yard, could be considered a landscape screen. For these reasons, it would be entirely impractical, inconsistent with the Zoning Code’s definition of screening, as well as with the long-established practice within the City of Chandler to begin imposing a height limit on vegetation planted on private property.

V. Determination

I conclude that the term “landscape screen” as used in Chapter 35 does not apply to hedges as described in your request. Rather, a “landscape screen” means a screen wall that is used within a landscape design, such as a panel or lattice material.

To address the specific questions you posed in your request, I respond as follows:

1. Does the term “landscape screens” in Sections 35 601(6) and 35 601.1(6) include vegetative installations such as hedges, shrubs, or trees planted in a continuous configuration for screening purposes? **Answer: No**

2. If so, is a vegetative landscape screen subject to the seven foot height limitation applicable to fences, walls, and landscape screens? **Answer: No**
3. Does the Ficus Nitida installation at 1232 W. Kesler Lane constitute a “landscape screen” under the ordinance? **Answer: No**
4. If the installation exceeds seven feet in height, is it in violation of the ordinance? **Answer: No**
5. If the City interprets “landscape screens” to exclude vegetation, please provide the legal and textual basis for that interpretation, including any definitions, policies, or legislative history relied upon. **Answer: See above.**

VI. Right to Appeal

Your appeal to the zoning interpretation letter dated July 17, 2026 was received on July 20, 2026. A hearing with the Board of Adjustment has been scheduled for September 9, 2026 at 6:00PM and will be located in the Council Chambers at 88 E. Chicago Street, Chandler, Arizona, 85225.

Please notify me if you wish to withdraw your appeal after reviewing this revised interpretation. I can be reached directly at 480-782-3059 or david.delatorre@chandleraz.gov. If I do not hear from you, we will proceed with the Board of Adjustment hearing as planned.

Sincerely,



David de la Torre

Zoning Administrator