

## ■ Help Keep Streets and Sidewalks Clear

To protect public health and safety, it is important to keep streets, sidewalks, walkways, and other public right of way areas free of obstructions. A tree or large shrub at an intersection can block the ability of a driver to see other cars, bicyclists, or pedestrians crossing the street. Furthermore, maintaining streets and sidewalks in safe and useful condition encourages others to walk or bike, helping to reduce traffic on our roads.

Whether you are a new or longstanding Mill Valley resident, property owner, or business owner, you should be familiar with your responsibility to keep sidewalks and streets clear of debris, vegetation, and other obstructions. Your fellow citizens depend upon your commitment to neighborhood safety.

## ■ Keeping Vegetation Trimmed

Landscaping can beautify a neighborhood, but it can also become a safety concern. Regularly sweeping up vegetation debris may prevent someone from slipping or having to walk into the street. In some cases, vegetation may have grown to a point that pedestrians and bicyclists must duck, walk single file, or walk into the street in order to get by. Also, as vegetation matures, what may have been a low hedge or small trees can become a screen that blocks the clear view of traffic.

It is critical to traffic safety that a driver's line of sight remain free and clear of obstructions. While the maintenance of the public right-of-way is often the City's responsibility, homeowners have an obligation to take care of any vegetation or obstructions that present a potential traffic safety hazard.

## ■ Maintaining Sidewalks

Keeping sidewalks clear of obstructions is important in creating a walkable, pedestrian-friendly environment. Property owners are responsible for maintaining the sidewalks adjacent to their property, ensuring that vegetation, debris, litter, and garbage bins do not block access for pedestrians.

Besides overgrown vegetation, cars parked on sidewalks, in particular, pose a safety hazard for pedestrians. Cars on sidewalks may mean that people in a wheelchair, people pushing strollers, or a group of preschoolers are forced into the street, creating a dangerous situation.

### Landscape on Private vs. Public Property

Any tree or vegetation planted on private property is the property owner's responsibility, including if it is encroaching into the public right-of-way. Property owners are responsible for trimming overgrown trees and shrubs that are blocking sight lines or blocking a path or walkway. The Public Works Department abates sidewalk obstructions by sending an Abatement Notice to the owner, requiring trimming within a reasonable time. If the shrubbery is not removed, the Department may have it removed at the expense of the owner, including administrative costs.

For fallen trees or other vegetation blocking the public right-of-way or roadway, you should contact the Mill Valley Public Works Department, or after hours contact the Mill Valley Police Department. If it is outside of the City limits, but is on County property, contact the County of Marin Public Works Department.

If you are concerned about landscaping that prevents you from using walkways or having clear visibility at intersections, contact the appropriate City department or the property owner, depending on the location of the problem.

### Tree Removal

Before pruning or removing a tree, you must assess whether a permit is required. There are two types of tree-cutting permits required by the City of Mill Valley—one for trees on City property and one for trees on private property. The Parks & Recreation Department oversees the application process for tree cutting on City property, while the Department of Planning and Building oversees permits for tree removal on private property. For more information on tree regulations and the permit process, contact the appropriate City department.

### Defensible Space

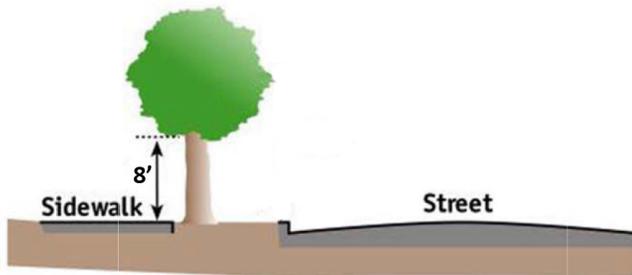
Maintaining landscaping is not only important for traffic safety, but also for fire safety. Within the City of Mill Valley, property owners have a year-round responsibility and obligation to maintain the vegetation on their property in a condition that will not contribute to the spread of a fire. For more information on fire resistant landscaping, contact the City of Mill Valley Fire Department.

# HELPFUL GUIDELINES

Homeowners have an obligation to take care of any vegetation or obstructions that present a potential traffic safety hazard. For the ease and safety of everyone, follow the guidelines in this brochure. *These guidelines are subject to change. Check with Public Works and the Planning Department for the most current ordinances.*

## Proper Tree Clearances

Lower tree branches adjacent to any public right-of-way should be trimmed in order to provide a clearance of not less than 8 feet.

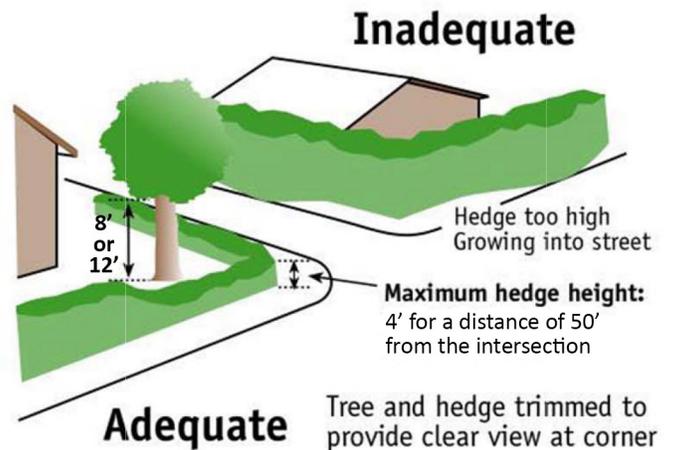


## Fencing

The most important factor to consider when designing a fence is how it may hinder visibility. For example, a tall solid fence may prevent a driver backing out of a driveway to see a child on a bicycle on the sidewalk. If you are submitting a fence application near a driveway or a road, it is suggested you start with a design that limits the fence height to 30 inches within a 10-foot triangular area on either side of the driveway or road. See the City's Municipal Code for further guidance on the location and design of fences, as whether a permit is required.

## Intersection Clearance

In order to ensure a clear view of the street and approaching traffic, lower tree branches must be kept trimmed to 8 feet for sidewalks and 12 feet for streets. Hedges, bushes, or shrubs must be limited to 4 feet in height for a distance of 50 feet from any intersection or curve.



## Examples of Landscaping in Mill Valley:



Keeping sidewalks clear of obstructions is important in creating a safe pedestrian environment.



Trees and hedges must be kept properly trimmed in order to maintain a clear view of an intersection.



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The information in this brochure is one component of the City of Mill Valley's Traffic Calming Program. For more information on Mill Valley's Traffic Calming Program, visit the City's website, under Public Works.

For more information on removing vegetation on City property or concerns regarding sidewalk repairs, contact the Public Works Department at (415) 388-4033.

For information on tree removal on private property or fence permits, contact the Planning and Building Department at (415) 388-4033