



Memorandum

To: Planning Commission
From: Thomas Dansie, Director of Community Development
Date: September 26, 2025
Re: Buffer Yards: Commercial Adjacent to Residential

Executive Summary

In the September work meeting the Commission discussed strategies to better separate commercial uses from residential uses. The Commission reviewed “buffer yard” regulations from several other communities. Buffer yards are required landscape areas with screening elements designed to mitigate the negative impacts of commercial uses on adjacent residential uses. The Planning Commission directed staff to research different types of possible buffer yard requirements that could be included in the code. This report discusses the existing condition of buffers between residential and commercial uses in Springdale. It then presents conceptual options for buffer yard requirements that could be added to the code.

Existing Conditions

The Town Code currently does not have a specific buffer yard requirement. The Code requires increased setbacks (in most cases) between residential and commercial properties. It also allows the Planning Commission to require a screening wall or fence between residential and commercial, but does not give specifics on the height or placement of such a screen. The landscape ordinance contains general language about using landscape to screen parking and other potentially impactful uses. Other than these basic regulations the current Town Code does not specifically address buffering between commercial and residential uses.

Due to the lack of specifics in the Code, current transitions between residential and commercial uses in Springdale generally have either no specific buffering, or if buffering is present it is limited to a simple fence (sometimes combined with landscaping). Rusted corrugated metal is the fencing material of choice in Springdale. However, there are some examples of more thoughtful buffering incorporating dense landscape, berms, and other features to provide a more pleasing transition.

The photographs below show a number of different existing residential to commercial transitions in Springdale.

Example 1: Eight foot fence, five feet off the driveway, minimal to no landscape.



Example 2: Five foot fence immediately adjacent to driveway topped with a dense hedge.



Example 3: Eight foot fence, designed to preserve existing mature trees with a wide landscape area on the interior (facing commercial) side of the fence.



Example 4: Five foot fence with a wide landscape buffer on the exterior side (facing the residential) of the fence.



Example 5: Six foot fence with wide landscape buffer on the interior (facing commercial) side of the fence.



Example 6: Eight foot fence combined with existing mature vegetation on the exterior of the fence.



Example 7: Eight foot fence with some vegetation on the interior side of the fence, adjacent to a public multi-use trail.



Example 8: Discontinuous fence with extensive landscape buffer on the exterior (facing the public street) side of the fence.



Example 9a: Berm with short fence on top of the berm, with extensive landscaping on the exterior (facing residential) side of the fence. This view shows the interior of the buffer.



Example 9b: Same buffer as shown above, viewed from the exterior of the buffer.



Potential Buffer Yard Options

Based on research of other communities, the Planning Commission's discussion in the September meeting, and the above analysis of existing buffers in Springdale, staff has developed three conceptual options for buffer yard regulations that could be added to the Code.

These three options vary in the width of the buffer and the amount of landscape required. Option One is a narrow buffer with a tall fence and dense tall vegetative screening requirement. Option Two is a wider buffer with a requirement for a combination of berm and fencing, with a moderate amount of vegetative screening. Option Three is the widest buffer, and requires more landscaping and no fence. Each of these has advantages and disadvantages. One option may be appropriate on one property, and not on another. The Commission should consider each option.

1. Where would this option be appropriate?
2. What changes to the concept as presented could be made to make the buffer more effective?
3. Will this option accomplish the General Plan directive to "protect residential neighborhoods from the impacts of commercial development"? (See Land Use Town Appearance Sub-Goal F)

Each buffer yard concept is presented on the following pages. They are described in detail below.

Buffer Yard Option 1

This buffer yard is the narrowest concept. It may be appropriate on smaller lots only that don't have enough space for a larger buffer. Given the narrow nature of the buffer, it requires a taller fence and more dense vertical vegetation to mitigate the negative impacts of the commercial use.

Buffer Yard Option 2

This is patterned after the buffer yard in Example 9 of the existing Springdale conditions. It requires a mix of berms, fences, and vegetation. The average required width is 20 feet, however the buffer yard can vary in width from a minimum of 15 feet to a maximum of 25 feet to allow flexibility and creativity in design. (Note: the property owner could choose to make the buffer wider than 25 feet, but would only get credit for 25 feet of width. This prevents a situation where a property owner could use a very wide section of buffer to average out more narrow buffers and still meet the 20 foot average requirement.)

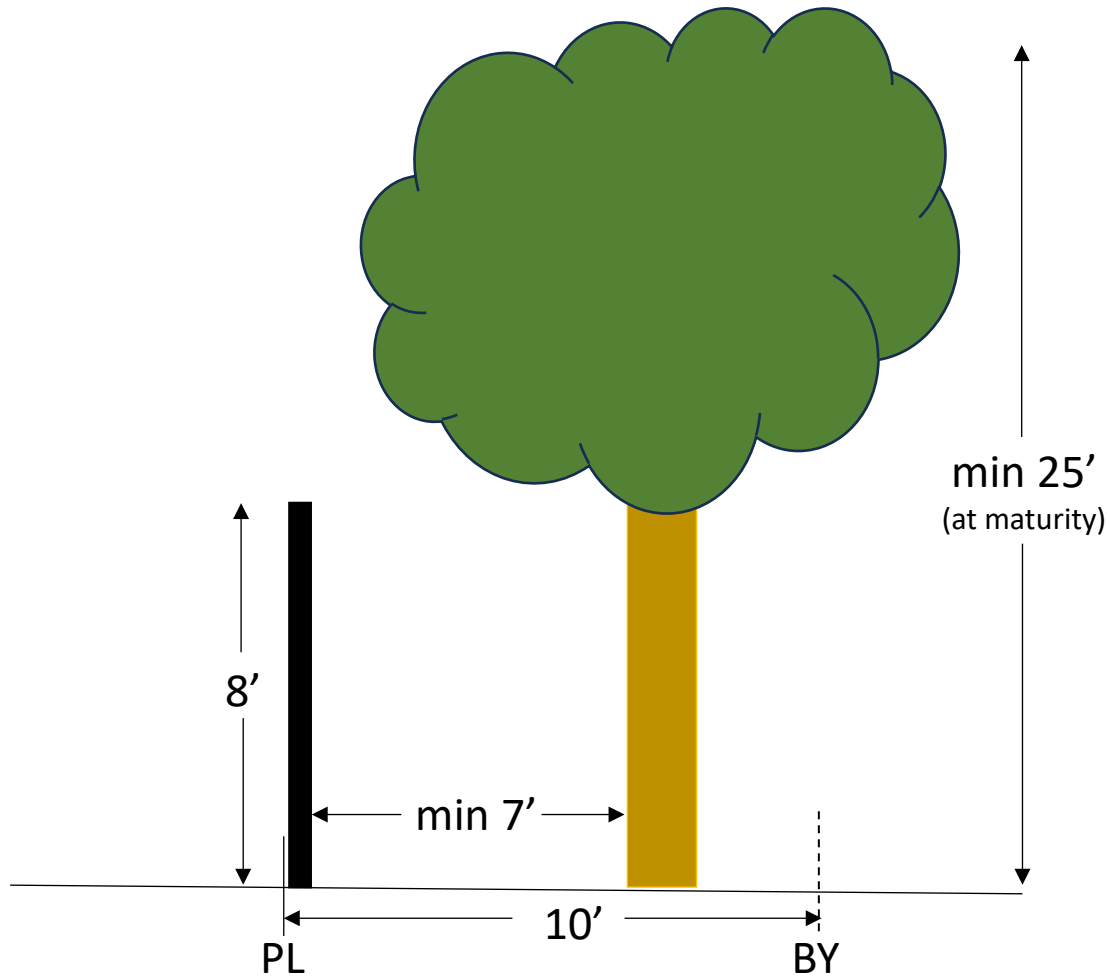
Buffer Yard Option 3

This is the widest buffer. It uses additional width and increased vegetation to mitigate the impacts of the adjacent commercial use. Like Option 2, the width of the buffer yard can vary, as long as the average is 35 feet.

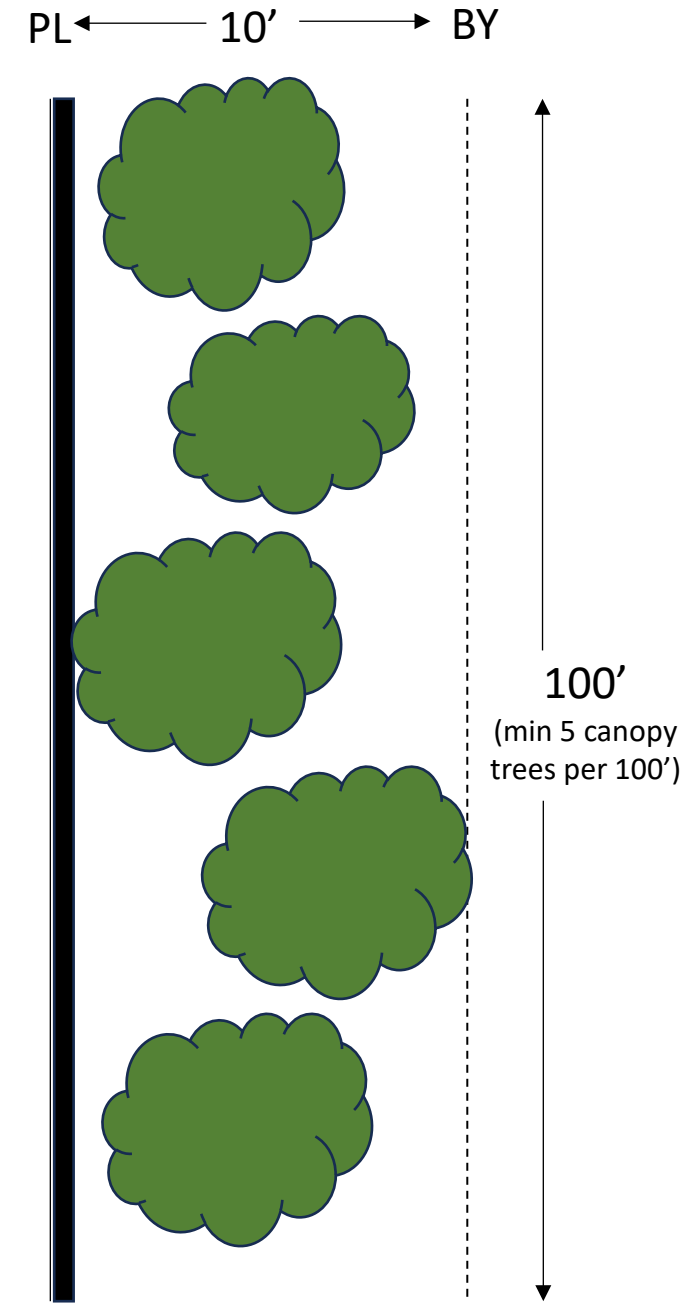
Planning Commission Action

The Commission should discuss the buffer yard concepts presented in this report. The Commission should give staff direction on how to modify, add to, or replace these options to better accomplish the objective of the general plan to better protect residential neighborhoods. Staff will then revise these concepts and bring them back at the next meeting.

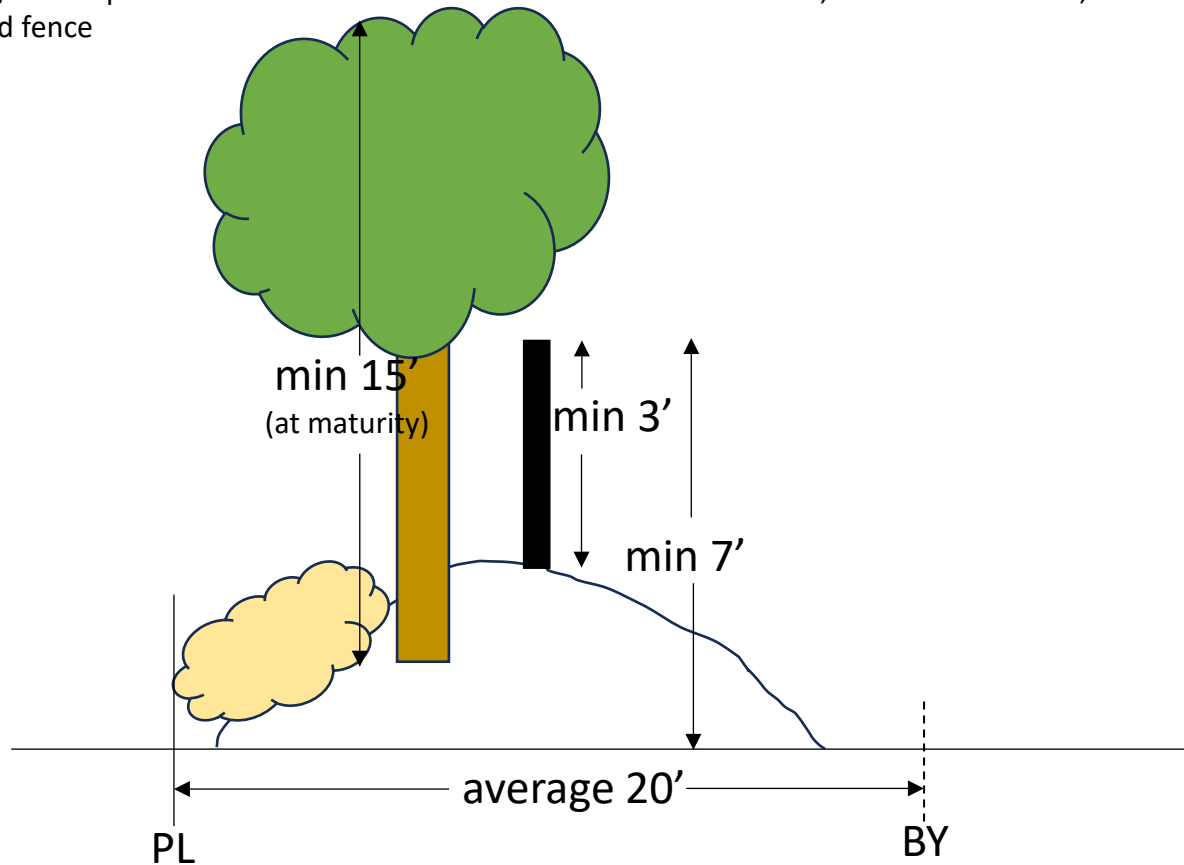
- Min 5 large canopy or evergreen trees per 100'
- Trees must be placed on the interior side of the wall/fence (relative to the subject property)
- Wall/fence must be completely solid and opaque, 8' in height, placed completely inside the subject property (i.e. not straddling the property line).
- Wall/fence options: block or concrete wall with stucco or stone face, rusted metal fence



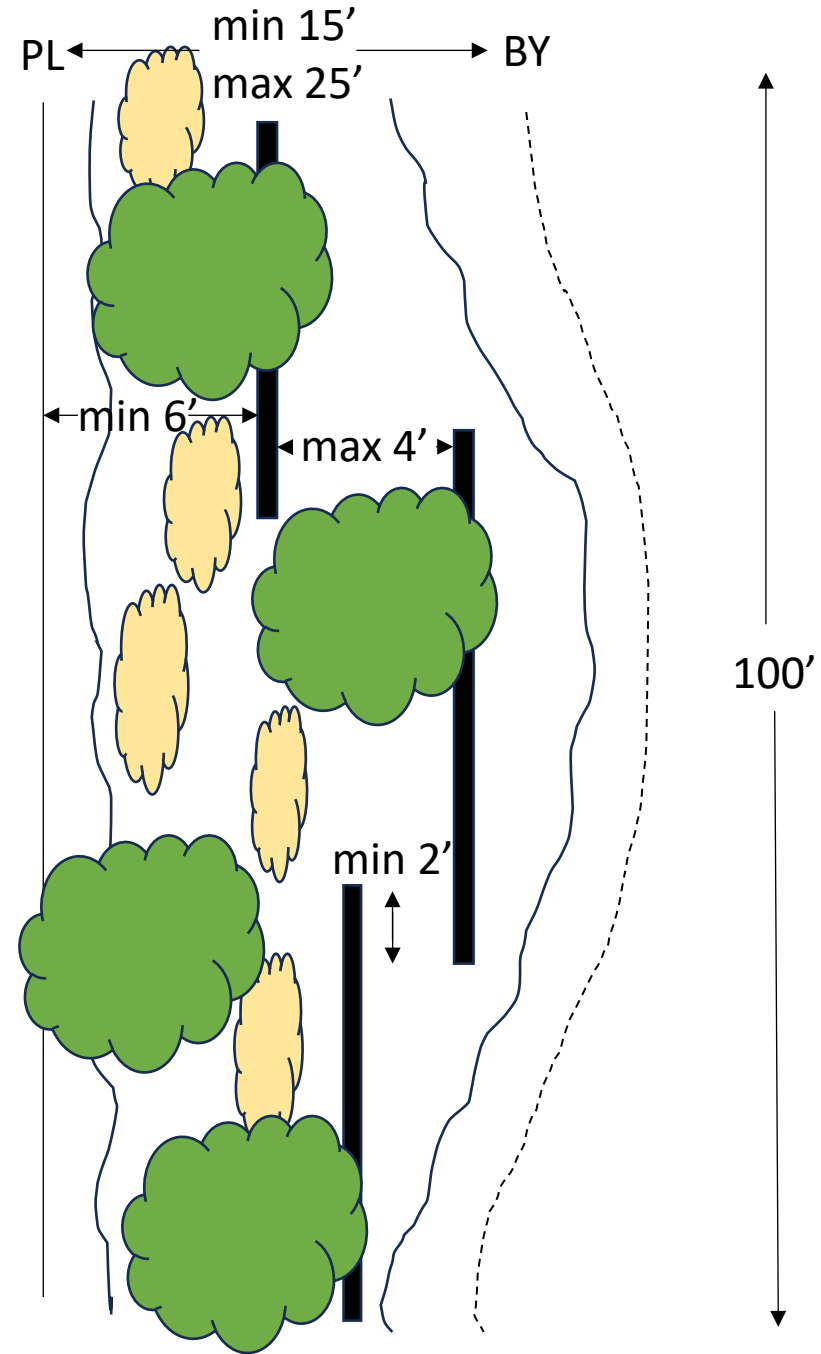
OPTION 1



- Min 4 medium trees per 100'
- Trees must be placed on the berm, and on the exterior side of the wall/fence (relative to the subject property)
- Buffer yard width must average min 20' in every 100' length
- Min 40% of area on exterior of wall/fence covered with low maintenance, drought tolerant shrubs/flowers
- Wall/fence must be completely solid and opaque, minimum 3' tall – combination of berm and fence must be minimum 7' tall
- Wall/fence may be discontinuous, but if so must have min 2' overlap and may not be separated from other section by more than 4'
- Wall/fence options: block or concrete wall with stucco or stone face, rusted metal fence, wood fence



OPTION 2



- Min 3 medium trees (15' at maturity) trees per 100'
- Buffer yard width must average min 35' in every 100' length
- Min 6 vertical shrubs (at least 3' at maturity) per 100'
- Min 6 red/buff sandstone boulders (at least 30" in minimum diameter measurement) per 100'
- Drought tolerant groundcover/flowers must cover at least 30% of the total area of the buffer yard, distributed evenly through the entire buffer yard

