



Memorandum

To: Planning Commission
From: Thomas Dansie, Director of Community Development
Date: October 31, 2025
Re: Buffer Yards: Commercial Adjacent to Residential

Executive Summary

The Planning Commission has reviewed buffering strategies in the previous two work meetings. These strategies are intended to better mitigate the impacts of commercial development adjacent to residential development. The Commission directed staff to develop options for a “buffer yard” requirement for new development on commercial property. The Commission reviewed concept sketches for these buffer yard options in the October meeting. Staff has prepared a draft ordinance for the Commission to review based on the feedback given in the October work meeting.

Commission Feedback from the October Meeting

In October the Commission reviewed three different buffer yard concepts. The Commission generally liked all three. The Commission gave staff direction to further develop these options with the following feedback:

- Buffer Yard Option 1 (wall/fence and trees) should be modified to require the wall/fence to be on the property line.
- Buffer Yard Option 2 (berm plus wall/fence) should be modified to require the wall or fence to be discontinuous, but there should not be a requirement for how many breaks or discontinuous sections there should be.
- Buffer Yard Option 3 (wide landscape area) was good as presented.
- The ordinance should either require or strongly encourage the owner of the commercial property to consult with adjacent residential property owners on the specific style of buffer yard developed.
- The wall/fence material used in the buffer yard (when required) should be based on the specific impact it is intended to mitigate (e.g. noise, light, odor, etc.).

Summary of Changes to the Concept Buffer Yard Options

Based on the above feedback staff has made the following changes to the buffer yard concepts:

- Clarified the fence in buffer yard option 1 must be on the property line, but it may not encroach onto the adjacent property.
- Revised buffer yard option 2 by requiring the fence to be discontinuous, rather than having that as an option.
- Revised buffer yard option 3 by increasing the number of shrubs required. This change is independent of the Commission’s direction. The landscape ordinance requires four shrubs to be

planted for every 1,000 square feet of landscape area. The option three buffer yard is 35 feet wide. Thus, in every 100 feet of length there is 3,500 square feet of landscape area. Under the existing landscape ordinance this amount of landscape area requires 14 shrubs. The shrub requirement for the option three buffer yard now reflects this existing requirement from the landscape ordinance.

- Included a requirement for commercial property owners to consult with owners of adjacent residential property on the type of buffer yard developed. Staff does not believe the ordinance can legally require the adjacent residential property owner to select the buffer yard option developed. However, the ordinance can require communication and consultation.
- Staff did not make changes to the fencing material based on the Commission's direction (i.e. fence material should be based on the impact being mitigated). Fences and walls can be used to mitigate a variety of impacts. Thus, they should not be designed to address only one. They should be designed to mitigate a variety of potential impacts. Further, the use of a commercial property is likely to change over time. The landscape buffer (inclusive of the wall/fence) should be designed such that it can mitigate an evolving and changing set of impacts coming from the commercial property. Staff feels the requirement that the wall/fence should be solid and opaque is an effective standard that will allow the buffer to respond to a variety of commercial impacts.

Draft Ordinance Language

Staff has drafted ordinance language based on the three buffer yard concepts discussed in the last meeting. This language, along with the concept drawings for the three buffer yard options, is attached to this report.

Planning Commission Action

The Commission should give staff direction on the draft ordinance language and refined buffer yard concepts.

Draft Buffer Yard Ordinance Language

10-18-6.5: Landscape Buffer Yards

A landscape buffer yard is required on all boundaries of a property in the CC or VC zone adjacent to any property in the FR or VR zone, including all FR and VR sub-zones, or any overlay zone with a primarily residential use. Landscape buffer yards shall meet the requirements of this section. The area of the landscape buffer yard shall be included when calculating the total amount of landscape on the property for compliance with section 10-18-4(A). The quantity of trees, shrubs, and groundcover in a landscape buffer yard shall be included when calculating the total amount of trees, shrubs, and groundcover on a property for compliance with section 10-18-4(C).

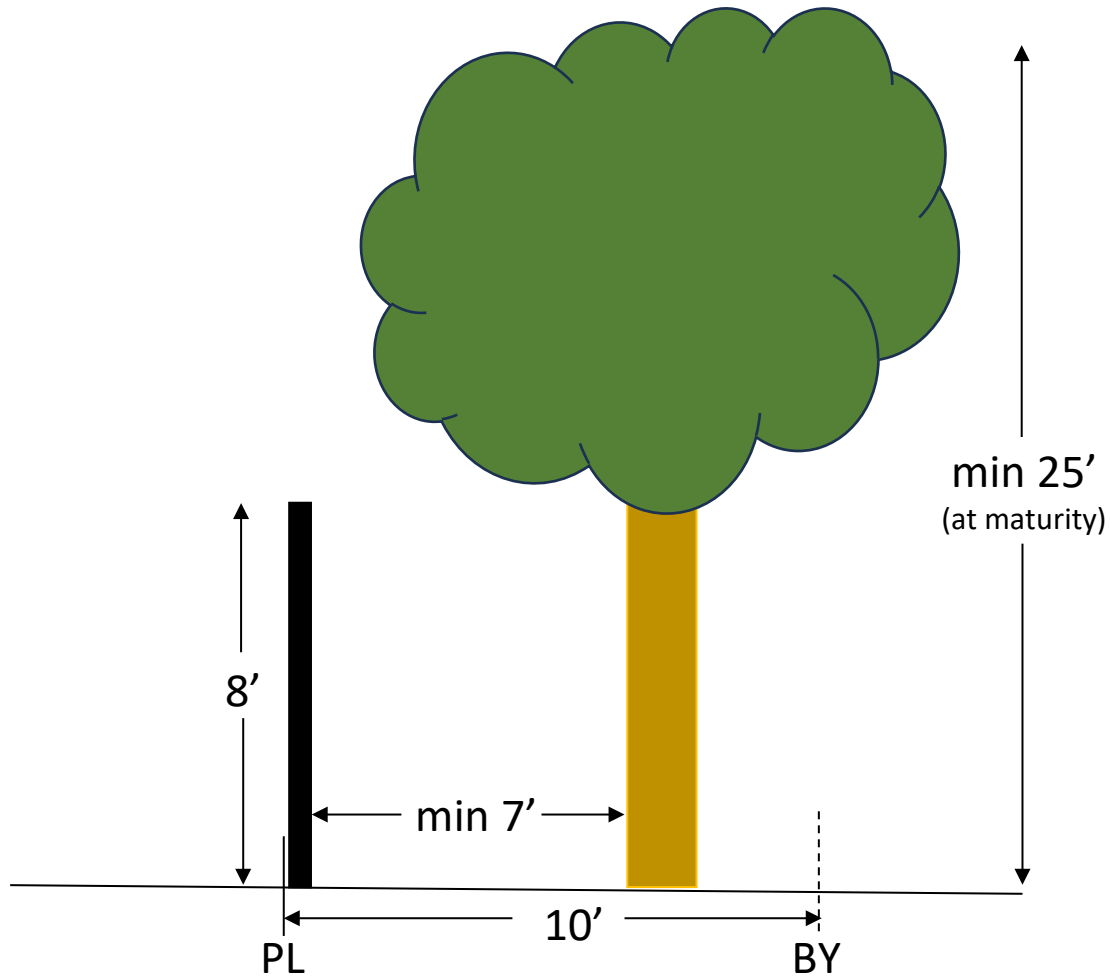
- A. General Landscape Buffer Yard Requirements: All landscape buffer yards shall meet the following requirements:
1. Landscape buffer yards shall be located entirely within the commercial property to which they pertain. No portion of an adjacent property or right-of-way shall be considered part of the landscape buffer yard.
 2. Landscape buffer yards shall be located on the outer perimeter of a property wherever the property is adjacent to a property in the FR zone, VR zone, or an overlay zone with a primarily residential use. Landscape buffer yards shall extend to the property boundary.
 3. The owner of the property where the landscape buffer yard is located shall be responsible for the ongoing care and maintenance of the landscape buffer yard. If any required vegetation in the landscape buffer yard dies, the property owner shall replace the vegetation with vegetation of the same type within four months.
 4. A landscape buffer yard may be used only for the following uses and purposes:
 - a. Landscaping and buffering from adjacent properties.
 - b. Stormwater management, but only in conjunction with Low Impact Design stormwater management techniques.
 - c. Underground utility lines and appurtenances, but only when they do not impair the buffering function of the landscape buffer yard.
 5. None of the following may be located in a landscape buffer yard:
 - a. Buildings or structures, except fences as required by landscape buffer yard standards.
 - b. Parking areas, including parking access lanes, backing space for parking areas, and other areas associated with parking.
 - c. Driveways, fire lanes, fire apparatus turnarounds, loading areas, storage areas, or other similar improvements.
 - d. Dumpsters, trash storage enclosures, recycling bins, composting bins, or similar items.
 - e. Mechanical or electrical equipment such as air conditioning units, generators, etc.

- f. Passive recreational areas such as walkways, paths, benches, courtyards, patios, decks, and similar improvements.
 - g. Commercial uses such as outdoor dining, open air displays, signage, etc.
- B. Coordination with Adjacent Property Owners: There are three landscape buffer yard options available to a property owner to satisfy the landscape buffer yard requirement on a property. The owner of the property requiring the landscape buffer yard shall choose the landscape buffer yard option that provides the best buffering and screening to adjacent residential properties, based on the nature and character of both the commercial property and the adjacent residential property. Commercial property owners should work cooperatively with owners of adjacent residential properties to determine which of the landscape buffer yard options provides the most effective buffering. Ultimately, the commercial property owner is responsible for selecting the landscape buffer yard option that will be developed on the property. However, as part of the landscape plan submittal required in section 10-18-3, the commercial property owner must submit documentation of all attempts to communicate and cooperate with all adjacent residential property owners regarding their opinions on the landscape buffer yard option selected.
- C. Landscape buffer yard Options: An owner of property that requires a landscape buffer yard may select any of the three following options to satisfy the landscape buffer yard requirement, subject to communication with the adjacent residential property owners as outlined in paragraph B above:
 - 1. Option 1 - Wall and trees.
 - a. Landscape buffer yard width must be a minimum of 10 feet.
 - b. A fence or wall must be placed on the property line.
 - i. The wall / fence must be eight feet in height, unless the adjacent residential property owner requests a lower height. In no instance shall the wall / fence be less than six feet in height.
 - ii. The wall / fence must be completely solid and opaque.
 - iii. The wall / fence may not encroach onto the adjacent property.
 - iv. The wall / fence must be made of one of the following materials:
 - 1. Block or concrete with a stucco or stone veneer facing.
 - 2. Rusted metal.
 - c. A minimum of five large canopy or evergreen trees must be planted within every 100 foot length of landscape buffer yard.
 - i. The trees must be a species selected from the Town's approved plant list.
 - ii. The trees must be projected to reach a minimum height of 25 feet at maturity.
 - 2. Option 2 - Berm and fence.
 - a. Landscape buffer yard width must average a minimum of 20 feet within every 100 feet of landscape buffer yard length.

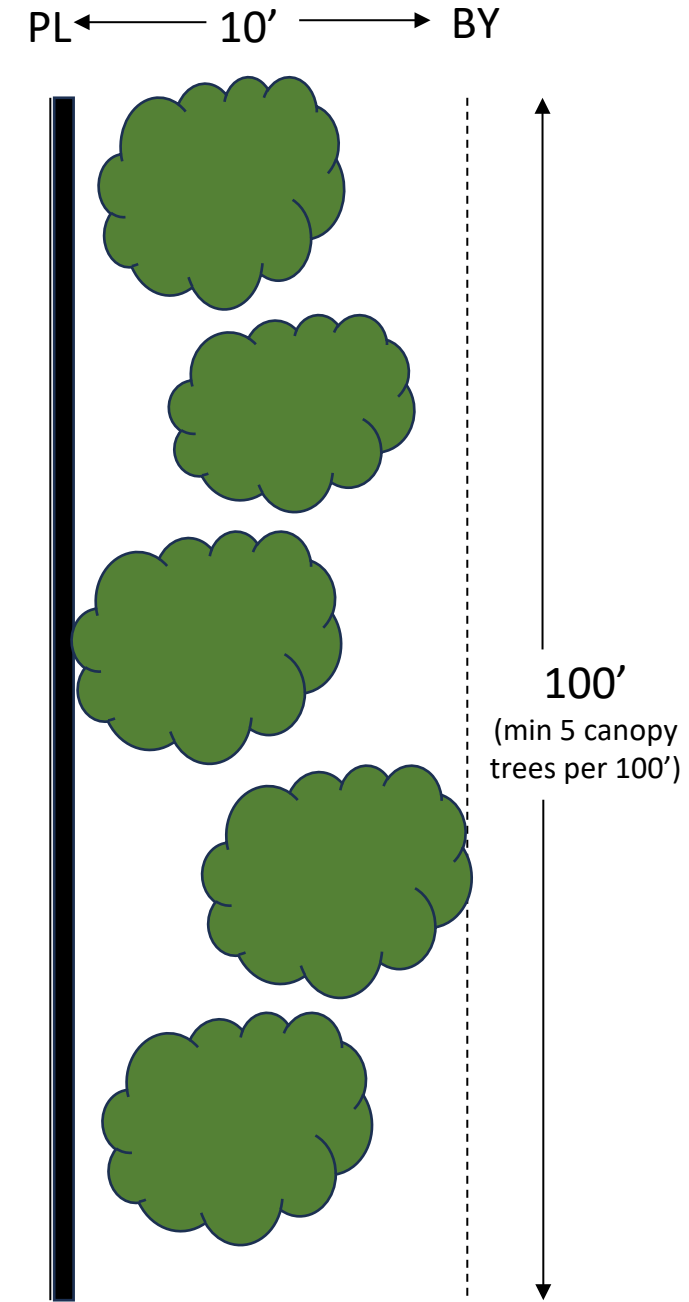
- i. The landscape buffer yard may vary in width to better accommodate the natural or topographic nature of the property, or to provide more effective buffering to adjacent property.
 - ii. The minimum width of the landscape buffer yard may be no less than 15 feet.
 - iii. No more than 25 feet of landscape buffer yard width shall be used to calculate the average width.
 - b. A landscaped berm must run the entire length of the landscape buffer yard.
 - i. The berm must be a minimum of four feet in height.
 - c. A solid and opaque wall or fence must be placed on top of the berm.
 - i. The combined height of the wall or fence plus berm must be at least seven feet.
 - ii. The wall / fence must be made of one of the following materials:
 - 1. Block or concrete with a stucco or stone veneer facing.
 - 2. Rusted metal.
 - 3. Wood.
 - iii. The wall / fence must run the entire length of the landscape buffer yard, and must be discontinuous and staggered within the width of the landscape buffer yard.
 - 1. Each discontinuous section must have a minimum two foot overlap along the long axis of the landscape buffer yard with the subsequent section.
 - 2. The maximum distance between each discontinuous section as measured across the short axis of the landscape buffer yard is four feet.
 - d. The berm must be landscaped as follows:
 - i. A minimum of four canopy or evergreen trees must be planted within every 100 foot length of landscape buffer yard.
 - 1. The trees must be a species selected from the Town's approved plant list.
 - 2. The trees must be projected to reach a minimum height of 15 feet at maturity.
 - 3. Trees must be placed between the wall / fence and the nearest property boundary.
 - ii. A minimum of 40% of the area between the wall / fence and the nearest property boundary must be covered in low maintenance, drought tolerant shrubs and/or perennial flowers selected from the Town's approved plant list.
- 3. Option 3 - Wide landscape buffer yard
 - a. Landscape buffer yard width must average a minimum of 35 feet within every 100 feet of landscape buffer yard length.

- i. The landscape buffer yard may vary in width to better accommodate the natural or topographic nature of the property, or to provide more effective buffering to adjacent property.
 - ii. The minimum width of the landscape buffer yard may be no less than 25 feet.
 - iii. No more than 45 feet of landscape buffer yard width shall be used to calculate the average width.
- b. A minimum of three canopy or evergreen trees must be planted within every 100 foot length of landscape buffer yard.
 - i. The trees must be a species selected from the Town's approved plant list.
 - ii. The trees must be projected to reach a minimum height of 15 feet at maturity.
- c. A minimum of 14 large shrubs must be planted within every 100 foot length of landscape buffer yard.
 - i. The shrubs must be a species selected from the Town's approved plant list.
 - ii. The shrubs must be projected to reach a minimum height of three feet at maturity.
- d. A minimum of six large sandstone boulders must be placed within every 100 foot length of landscape buffer yard.
 - i. The boulders must be a red or buff color, consistent with the color of naturally occurring sandstone visible from Springdale.
 - ii. The boulders must measure a minimum of 30 inches in their smallest diameter.
- e. A minimum of 30% of the area of the landscape buffer yard must be covered in low maintenance, drought tolerant shrubs and/or perennial flowers selected from the Town's approved plant list.

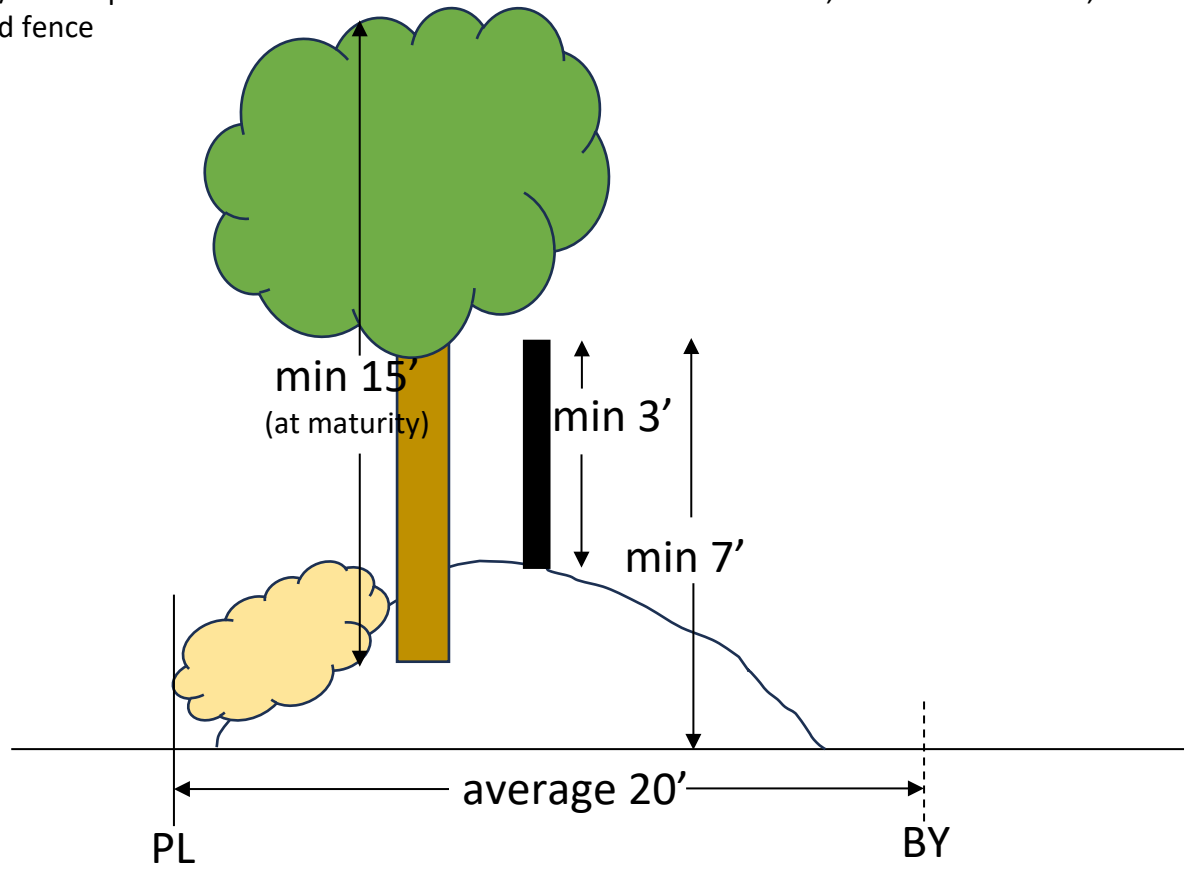
- Min 5 large canopy or evergreen trees per 100'
- Trees must be placed on the interior side of the wall/fence (relative to the subject property)
- Wall/fence must be completely solid and opaque, 8' in height, placed completely inside the subject property (i.e. not straddling the property line).
- Wall/fence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



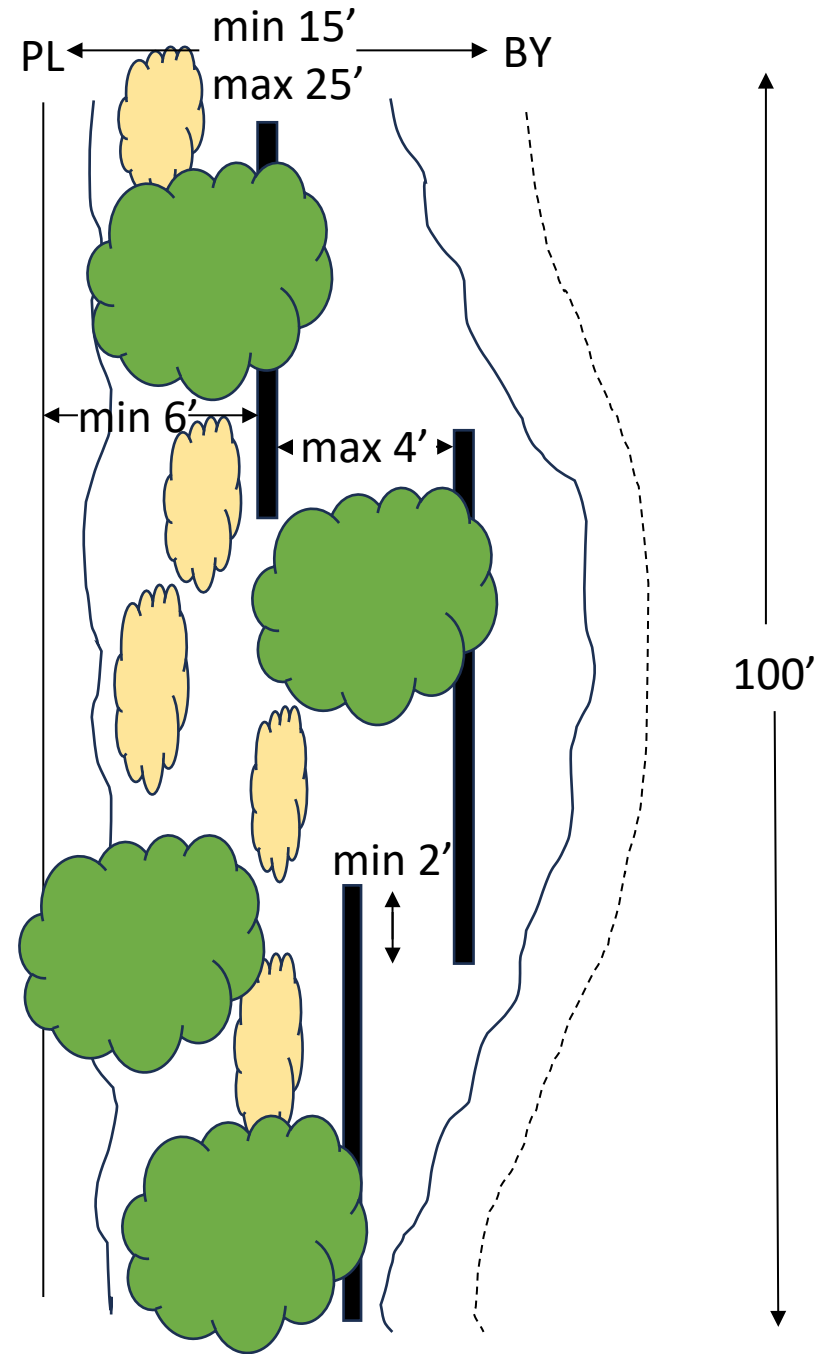
OPTION 1



- 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 must be discontinuous. Discontinuous sections must have min 2' overlap and may not be separated from other sections 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 14 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

