



## ***Memorandum***

**To:** Planning Commission  
**From:** Thomas Dansie, Director of Community Development  
**Date:** November 26, 2025  
**Re:** Ordinance Revision: Adding Buffer Yard Requirements for Commercial Properties Adjacent to Residential Properties

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### ***Introduction and Background***

Land Use and Town Appearance Sub-Goal F1 of the General Plan directs the Planning Commission to develop enhanced screening and buffering standards for new commercial development adjacent to residential uses. The Commission has discussed this topic in previous work meetings and has developed proposed ordinance language to add to the Town Code.

The proposed ordinance would add a requirement for “buffer yards” where commercial property is developed adjacent to residential properties. A buffer yard is a requirement for enhanced setback plus landscaping intended to mitigate the negative impacts of commercial uses adjacent to residential uses. They are a common element in many land use codes from communities across the nation. The Commission used examples from other communities as well as best practices currently observed in Springdale to develop the proposed buffer yard ordinance.

The Commission should review the proposed ordinance language, hold a public hearing to accept public comment, then make a recommendation to the Town Council whether or not to adopt the proposed ordinance.

### ***Summary of Proposed Changes***

The landscape ordinance currently has minimal standards that require use of landscape to screen certain components of a development (e.g. parking, mechanical equipment, etc.). However, there are no quantifiable standards for such screening. Additionally, there are other more general impacts associated with commercial uses (noise, light, general activity, etc.) that are not addressed by the Town’s current landscape screening standards. The proposed ordinance will add specific requirements to use a combination of enhanced landscape and setbacks to help mitigate the general impacts of commercial uses adjacent to residential properties.

The proposed ordinance contains three options a property owner can choose from to satisfy the buffer yard requirement on the property. 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.

These three options are described in detail below.

#### Buffer Yard Option 1

This buffer yard is the narrowest concept. It is intended to allow development flexibility on smaller lots 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 option 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.

The three buffer yard options are presented in conceptual sketches intended to accompany the written ordinance language.

The proposed ordinance allows a property owner to choose which buffer yard option to develop. However, the ordinance also requires the owner of the commercial property where the buffer yard is located to consult with the owner of the adjacent residential property regarding the buffer yard style. The adjacent residential property owner cannot dictate which buffer yard to use. But a requirement to consult with the adjacent residential property owner will allow for more open communication and hopefully result in better buffer yard design.

#### **General Plan Direction**

The General Plan emphasizes the primacy of the residential character of the Town. The General Plan also contains multiple statements about promoting village atmosphere. One of the fundamental tenants of the Plan is to guide new development to preserve the Town's village character and residential feel.

Specifically, the Land Use and Town Appearance General Goal states:

*The Town will manage the type, size, scale, intensity (e.g., density), and appearance of new growth and development to enhance the unique character of Springdale's built environment, preserve views of the natural landscape, **reduce impacts on existing residents and businesses**, and protect natural and cultural resources. (emphasis added)*

Adding a buffer yard requirement to the Town Code is one strategy to help reduce the impact of new commercial development on the Town's existing residents.

Land Use and Town Appearance Sub-Goal F is even more direct regarding the need to protect residential neighborhoods from the impacts of commercial development. One of the strategies suggested in this Sub-Goal is:

*The Planning Commission will require enhanced screening and buffering on commercial properties adjacent to residential uses as a condition of development approval for new commercial development.*

The proposed buffer yard requirement is a direct implementation of this General Plan directive.

***Planning Commission Action***

The Planning Commission should consider whether or not requiring enhanced buffering on commercial properties will promote the goals and objectives of the land use ordinance and the General Plan. If so, the Commission should recommend approval of the proposed ordinance revision to the Town Council.

The Commission may wish to use the following sample language when making a motion on this item.

*The Planning Commission recommends **Approval / Denial** of the proposed ordinance revision to add buffer yard requirements for new commercial development adjacent to residential properties, as discussed in the Commission's December 3, 2025 meeting. This meeting is based on the following findings:*

[LIST FINDINGS]

## 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. Recreation and leisure 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.
        - 3. Wood.
    - c. A minimum of five 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, unless as provided below:
        - 1. If in the consultation and communication process established in section 10-18-6.5(B) the owner of an adjacent property requests

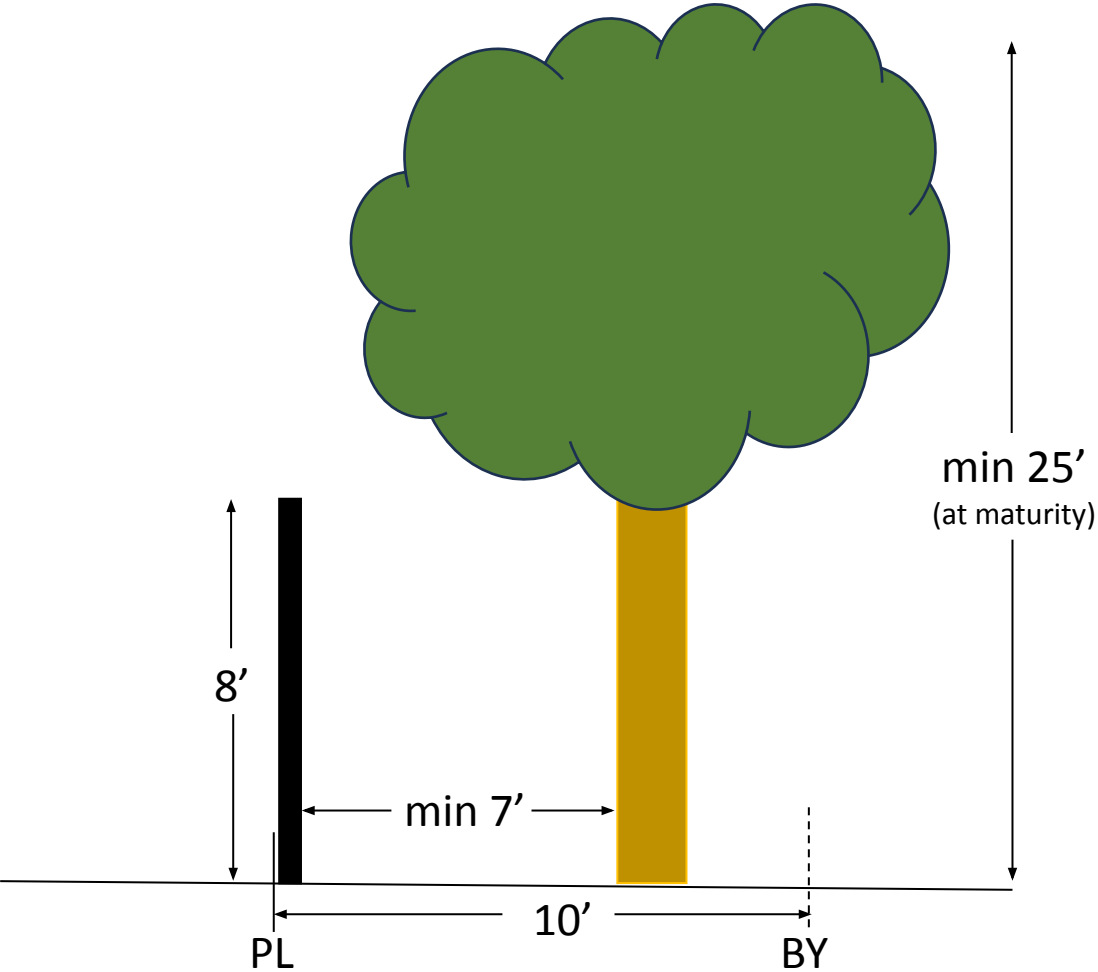
trees with a mature height less than 25 feet, the trees required in the buffer yard may have a reduced height. Written evidence of the residential property owner's request for a tree of lower height must be submitted as part of the landscape plan.

2. Option 2 - Berm and fence.

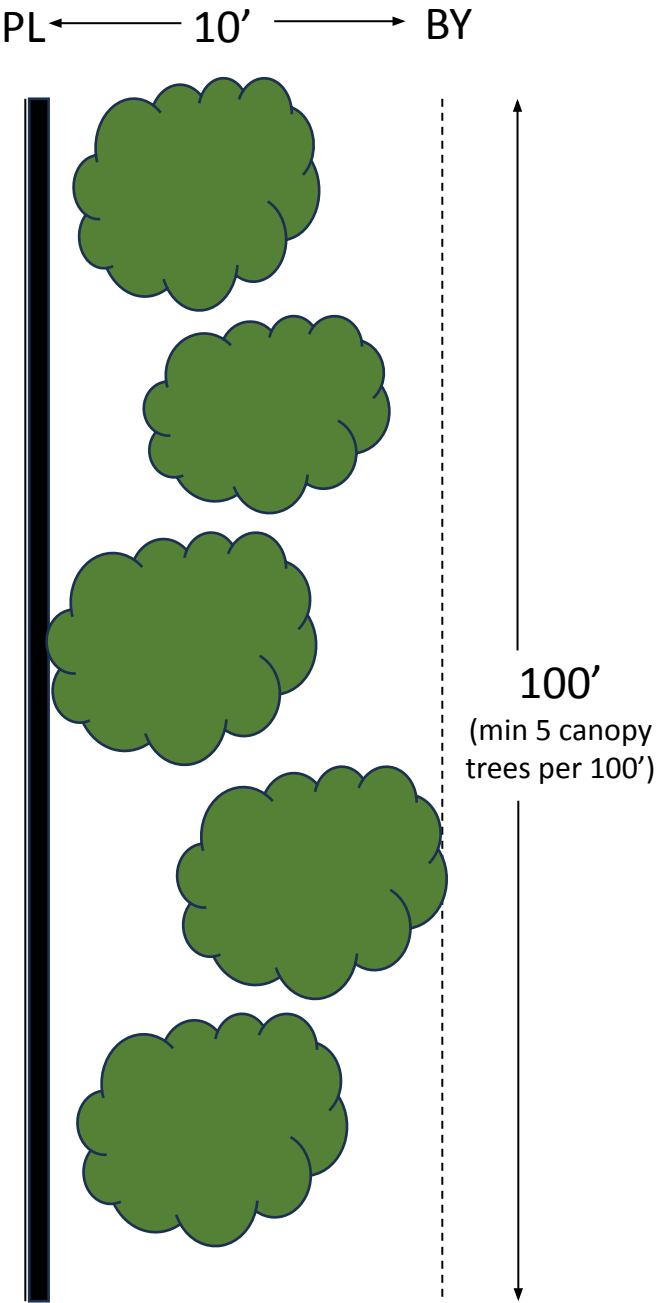
- a. Landscape buffer yard width must average a minimum of 20 feet within every 100 feet of landscape buffer yard length.
  - i. The landscape buffer yard may vary in width to better accommodate the natural or topographic nature of the property, or to provide more effective buffering to adjacent property.
  - 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, wood fence

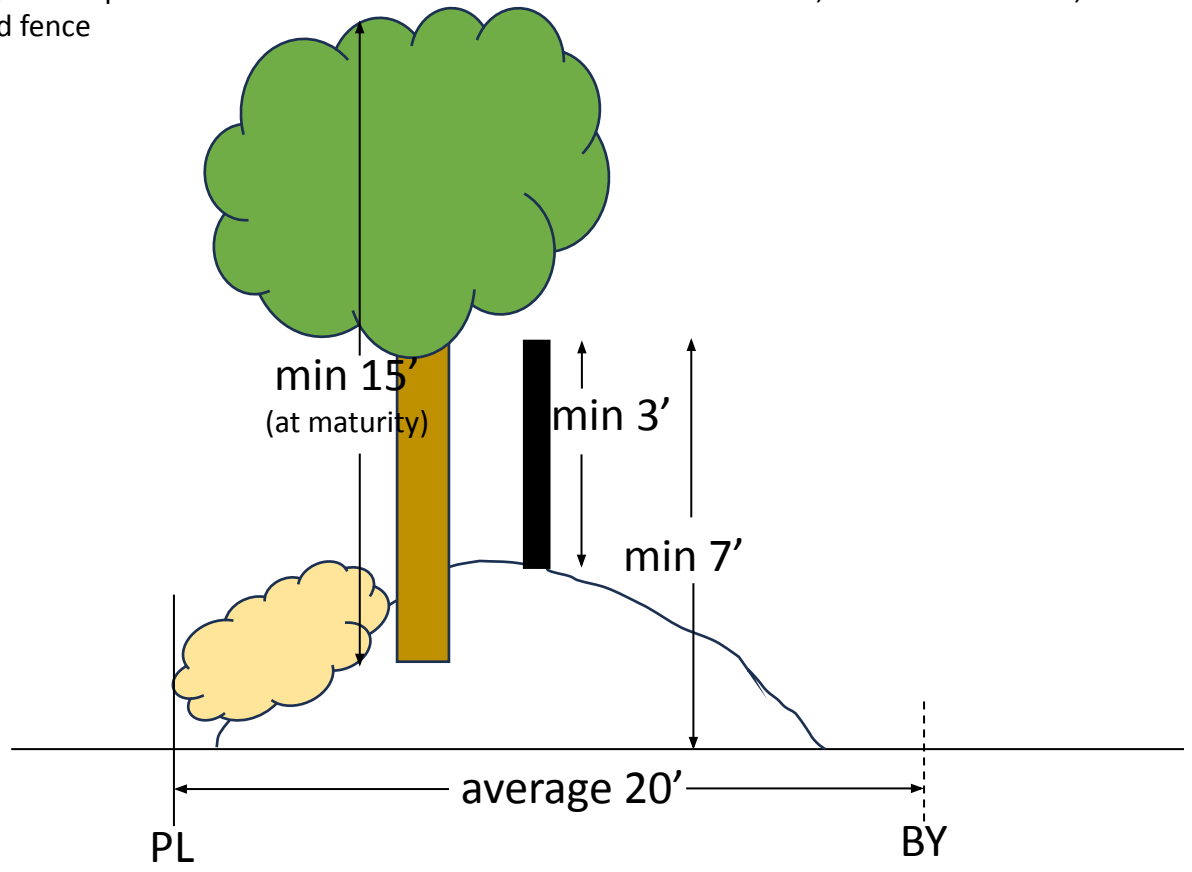


**OPTION 1**

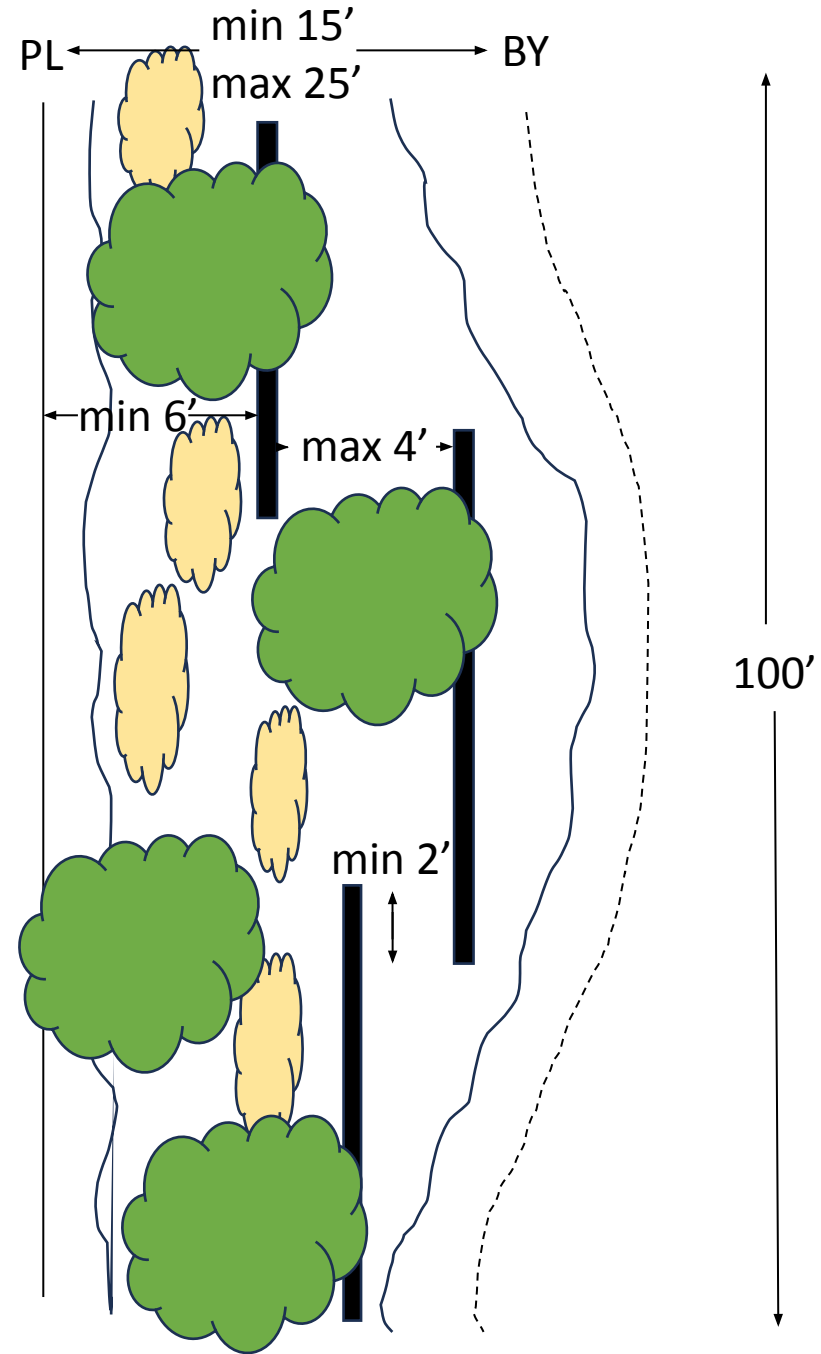




- Min 4 medium trees per 100'
- Trees must be placed on the berm, and on the exterior side of the wall/fence (relative to the subject property)
- Buffer yard width must average min 20' in every 100' length
- Min 40% of area on exterior of wall/fence covered with low maintenance, drought tolerant shrubs/flowers
- 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

