

Request:

This is a County-initiated LDC Text Amendment to Chapter 3, Section 303, Solar Electric-Power Generation Facility, to modify landscaping requirements; amending Chapter 7, Section 720, Landscaping and Buffering, to include a Utility Buffer.

- SECTION 2: Chapter 3, Section 303, Solar Electric-Power Generation Facility

- e. Visual impacts of the solar panels, solar arrays and any solar energy system shall be minimized in accordance with the following:
- A ~~Type A Landscape~~ **Utility** buffer shall be required along the frontage of all public rights-of-way. If this buffer is determined to affect the functionality of the solar arrays and system, the applicant may apply for a waiver to this requirement in accordance with Section 932 of this Code
 - Clearing of natural vegetation for the installation of a Solar Electric-Power Generation Facility shall be limited to that which is necessary for the construction, operation, and maintenance of the Facility and as otherwise prescribed by applicable state and federal laws, rules, and regulations.

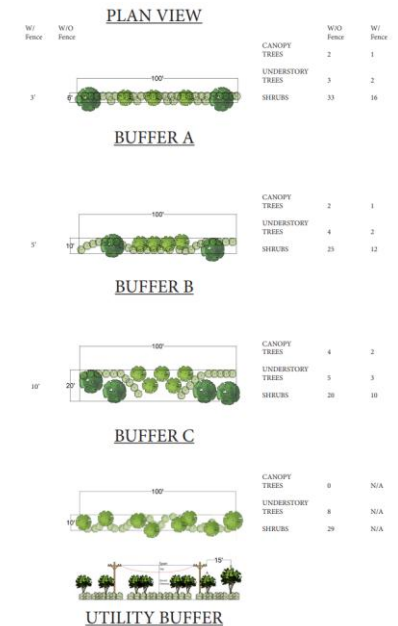
- SECTION 3: Chapter 7, Section 720, Landscaping and Buffering

H. Buffering (Revised. 03/18/09 - Ord. 09-006; 12/12/08 - Ord. 08-052; 03/25/03 - Ord. 03-22; 9/26/01 - Ord. 01-70)

Landscape buffers are required between certain abutting land uses to mitigate or minimize potential nuisances such as noise, light, glare, dirt and litter, signs, parking or storage areas.

- The Buffer Matrix, Table 7.12 outlines the requirements for buffers which is based on the intensity of the proposed development or use, and the uses which are developed or intended on all adjacent properties. The letters A, B, C on Table 7.12 refer to specific types of buffers which are illustrated in Figure 7.3. "N" means no buffer is required by this Code. Where an abutting property is vacant, the land use designation of the abutting property shall determine the type of buffer required on that side of the property...

**Figure 7.3 Buffer Types and Requirements
(Rev. 9-26-01 - Ord. 01-70)**

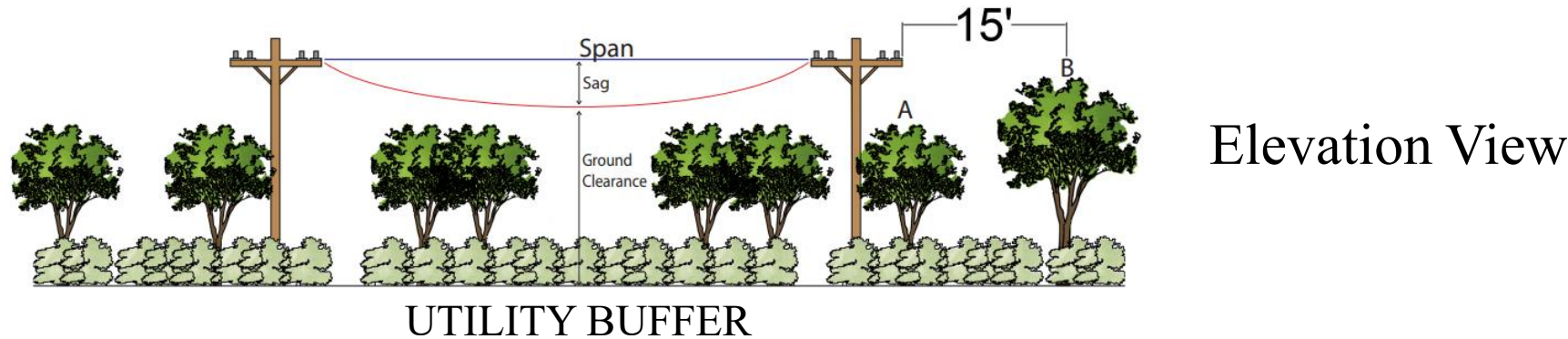
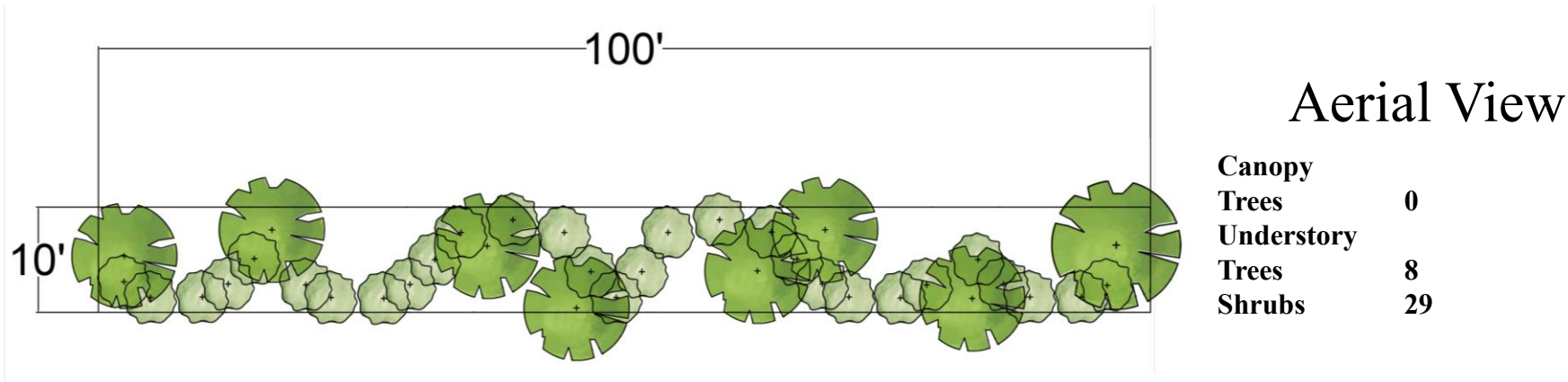
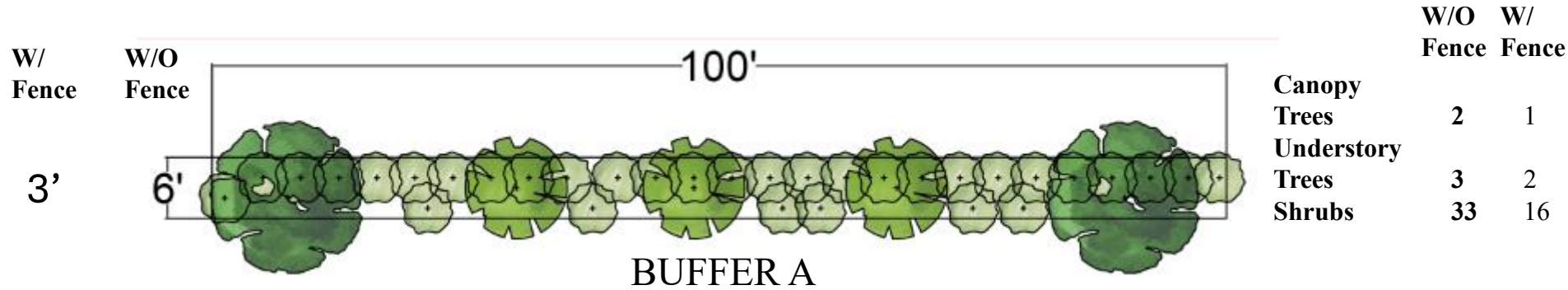


Legal Ad Published 11/19 – No Response.

BoCC Dates: 1/6 & 1/20

DRC Recommends Approval

Existing Type “A” Buffer vs Proposed Utility Buffer



Section 303, Solar Electric-Power Generation Facility

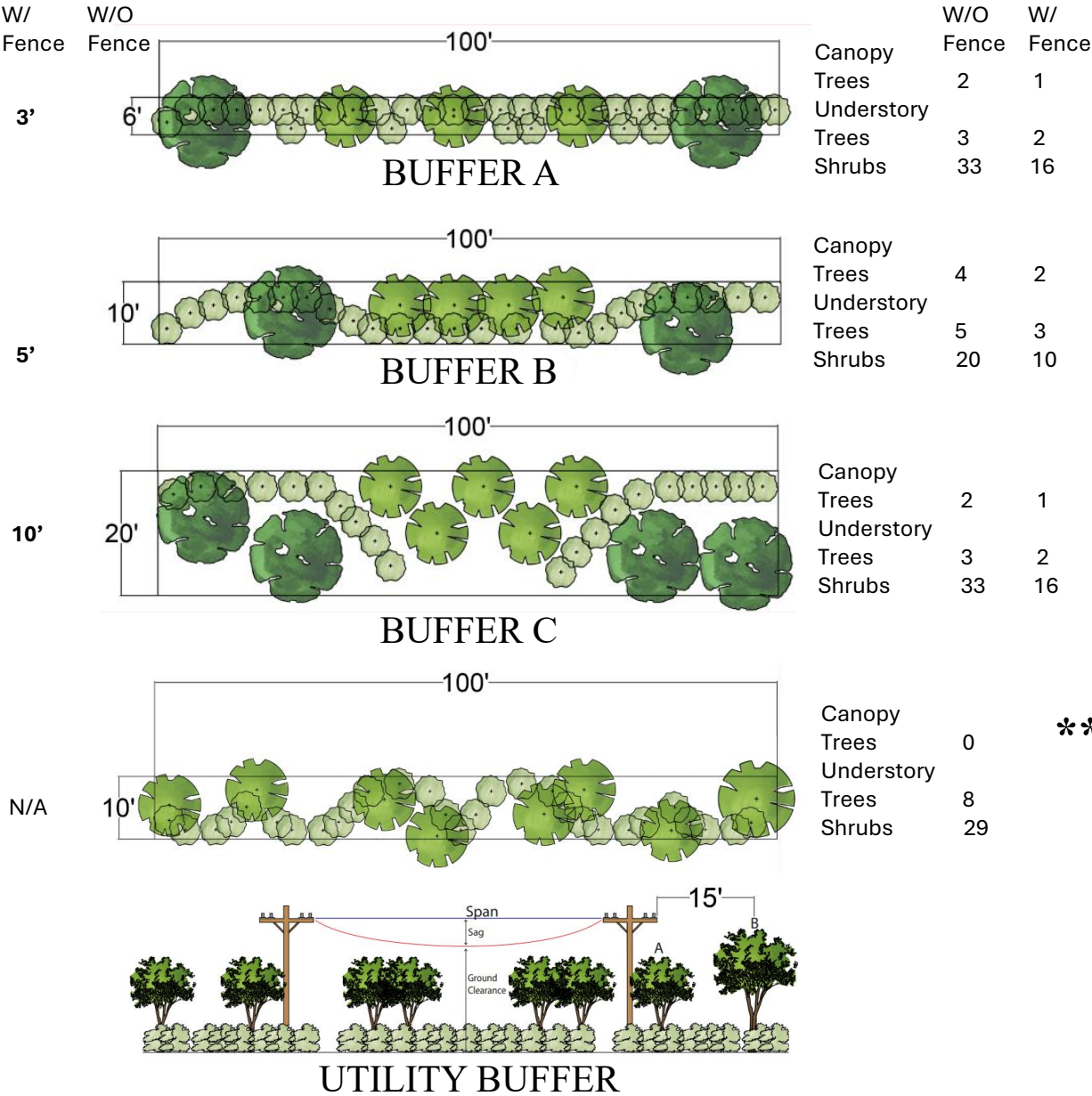
- a. Visual impacts of the solar panels, solar arrays and any solar energy system shall be minimized in accordance with the following:
 - i. A ~~Type A Landscape~~ Utility buffer shall be required along the frontage of all public rights-of-way. If this buffer is determined to affect the functionality of the solar arrays and system, the applicant may apply for a waiver to this requirement in accordance with Section 932 of this Code.
 - ii. Clearing of natural vegetation for the installation of a Solar Electric-Power Generation Facility shall be limited to that which is necessary for the construction, operation, and maintenance of the Facility and as otherwise prescribed by applicable state and federal laws, rules, and regulations.



*****The Proposal:**

- *Eliminates canopy tree requirements in areas constrained by solar facilities.*
- *Allows only understory trees, large shrubs, or compatible species that meet Appendix B height restrictions.*
- *Maintains the visual screening intent while avoiding shading of solar arrays.*
- *Reduces or eliminates the need for waivers under Section 932 by creating a buffer standard inherently compatible with the constraints of Solar Electric-Power Generation Facilities.*

Section 720, Landscaping and Buffering



Development adjacent to roadways with overhead power lines face operational and safety constraints:

- Canopy tree requirements within the Type “A” buffer conflict with power line clearance, creating safety risks and potential utility violations.
- The current standard does not differentiate between areas with and without overhead utilities, leading to routine requests for waivers under Section 932 to modify plant types or densities.



- ***The Proposal:
- **New Utility Buffer:**
 - Applied along roadway frontages where overhead power lines exist
 - Maintains appropriate visual screening and aesthetics
 - Allows only understory trees, large shrubs, or species compatible with utility height restrictions (per Appendix B)
 - Eliminate canopy trees to avoid utility conflicts
 - **Retention of Type “A” Buffer:**
 - In areas not affected by overhead utilities, the standard Type “A” buffer continues to apply, preserving the landscape character and the benefits outlined in the Code.

Jurisdiction <i>(Code citation)</i>	Provide power line/overhead utility buffer?	Planting requirements? <i>Canopy trees prohibited, consultation or substitution?</i>	Tree Separation Requirement?
Alachua County <i>Sec. 407.43</i> <i>Sec. 407.70</i> <i>Table 407.50.1</i>	Yes. <i>Width: 10’</i> <i>Length: 100 LF</i> <i>Canopy: N/A</i> <i>Understory: 4</i> <i>Shrubs: Depends on required</i> <i>opacity</i>	No.	Yes. <i>Overhead or underground utility service facilities shall provide</i> <i>utility providers' separations from all trees and landscaping.</i>
Brevard County <i>Sec. 62-4341-42</i>	No.	No. <i>To not interfere with utility services or create an unsafe visual clearance or other safety or</i> <i>maintenance hazard. This does not prohibit the appropriate plantings within utility</i> <i>easements.</i>	No.
Duval County <i>Sec. 656.1215</i>	No.	No.	Yes. <i>Required trees reaching a mature height greater than 25 feet</i> <i>shall be located at least 20 feet away from the power line.</i>
Hardee County <i>Sec. 5.13.07.03</i> <i>Sec. 5.13.07.08</i> <i>Table 5.13.07.C</i> <i>Figure 5.3.11.A</i>	No.	Prohibit. <i>Easements for overhead wires only prohibit the planting of large trees, so understory trees</i> <i>are allowed in narrow buffer yards under power lines.</i>	Yes. <i>Large and medium sized trees should not be planted closer</i> <i>than 15 feet.</i>
Highlands County <i>Sec. 12.11.105.2</i> <i>Sec. 12.11.105.5</i> <i>Figure 12.11.105.5.A</i>	No.	Prohibit. <i>No shade tree that exceeds 40 feet in height at maturity shall be placed within 15 feet of any</i> <i>overhead utility.</i>	Yes. <i>Large and medium sized trees should not be planted closer than</i> <i>15 feet.</i>
Hillsborough County <i>Sec. 6.06.06</i>	No.	Consultation. <i>Consultation with the local utility representative should occur for assistance on selecting</i> <i>suitable vegetative species.</i>	Yes. <i>Vegetation that exceeds 25 feet in height at maturity shall not be</i> <i>planted closer than 30 feet of the vertical plane of an existing</i> <i>power line, excluding service wires.</i>
Lake County <i>Sec. 9.01.05</i> <i>Sec. 901.06</i>	No.	Prohibit. <i>Special precautions Shall be taken to not locate canopy trees under or near utility</i> <i>easements</i>	No.

Jurisdiction <i>(Code citation)</i>	Provide power line/overhead utility buffer?	Planting requirements? <i>Canopy trees prohibited or substitution?</i>	Tree Separation Requirement?
Manatee County <i>Sec. 701.4 Sec. 902.7 Figure 7-2</i>	Yes. <i>Width: 10’ Length: 100 LF Canopy: N/A Understory: 5 Shrubs: 50</i>	Substitution. <i>For roadway buffers that contain overhead power lines, the requirement for canopy trees may be reduced to allow understory trees.</i>	No.
Orange County <i>Sec. 24-4 Sec. 24-5</i>	No.	Substitution. <i>When a required buffer lies within 10 feet of an above ground power or other utility line, understory trees may be planted in the affected buffer in lieu of shade trees.</i>	No.
Osceola County <i>Sec. 4.8.3 Sec. 4.8.5</i>	No.	Substitution. <i>For local streets, where overhead utilities exist and would be in conflict with required plantings, small trees may be planted in lieu of large trees at a 2:1 ratio.</i>	Yes. <i>Overhead or underground utility service facilities shall be designed to provide clearance from the mature height of trees and landscaping proposed on the landscape plan.</i>
Pasco County <i>Sec. 905.2</i>	No.	Consultation. <i>Consultation with the affected utility should occur for assistance with the selection of suitable vegetative species.</i>	Yes. <i>Where interference with overhead utility lines is probable, ornamental trees shall be planted with a maximum spacing of 20 feet on center</i>
Seminole County <i>Sec. 30.14.3 Sec. 30.14.4 Sec. 30.14.5 Sec. 30.14.7</i>	Yes. <i>Width: Depends on required opacity Length: 100 LF Canopy: N/A Understory: 6 Shrubs: 16</i>	Substitution. <i>Substitution of 3:1 ratio in the event where canopy trees are required.</i>	No.
Volusia County <i>Sec. 72-284</i>	No.	Substitution. <i>Tree selection shall be limited to those trees that will not, at mature height, conflict with overhead utilities. Substitution of understory trees or shrubs for required canopy and/or mid-story trees.</i>	Yes. <i>Canopy (height at maturity of greater than 30 feet): 30’ Mid-story (height at maturity between 20 and 30 feet): 20’ Understory trees (height at maturity of less than 20 feet): No offset.</i>



LDCT-2025-24

Powerline Landscaping Buffers LDC Text Amendment

Agenda Item 9

DRC Recommendation:
Approval

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Staff Recommends Approval

Given the frequency and predictability of these waivers, the County is pursuing a new landscape requirement specifically for sites with power lines along road frontages. The intent is to establish a buffer standard that is compatible with both solar facility operations and utility clearance requirements, eliminating the need for routine waivers that can cause uncertainty in design and delays in project completion. The proposed amendment would therefore:

- **Reduce or eliminate the need for waivers under Section 932 by creating a buffer standard inherently compatible with the constraints of Solar Electric-Power Generation Facilities.***
- **Remove canopy tree requirements where overhead utility lines exist allowing only understory trees, shrubs, or utility-compatible species.***
- **Ensure compliance with Appendix B height restrictions while still maintaining the effective visual screen.***