HERNANDO COUNTY

GREEN EDGES, SMART GROWTH

Landscaping for Livability with Buffers that Protect and Preserve Character at the Edges

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Roundtable Discussion

TODAY'S DISCUSSION

- Why We're Here
- Who We Heard From (Survey Method)
- Top Community Stats
- From Input to Objectives
- Hernando's Proposed Standards
- How Adjacency Works
- Peer Benchmark (Method + Sources)
- Peer Snapshot vs. Hernando
- What It Means + Next Steps

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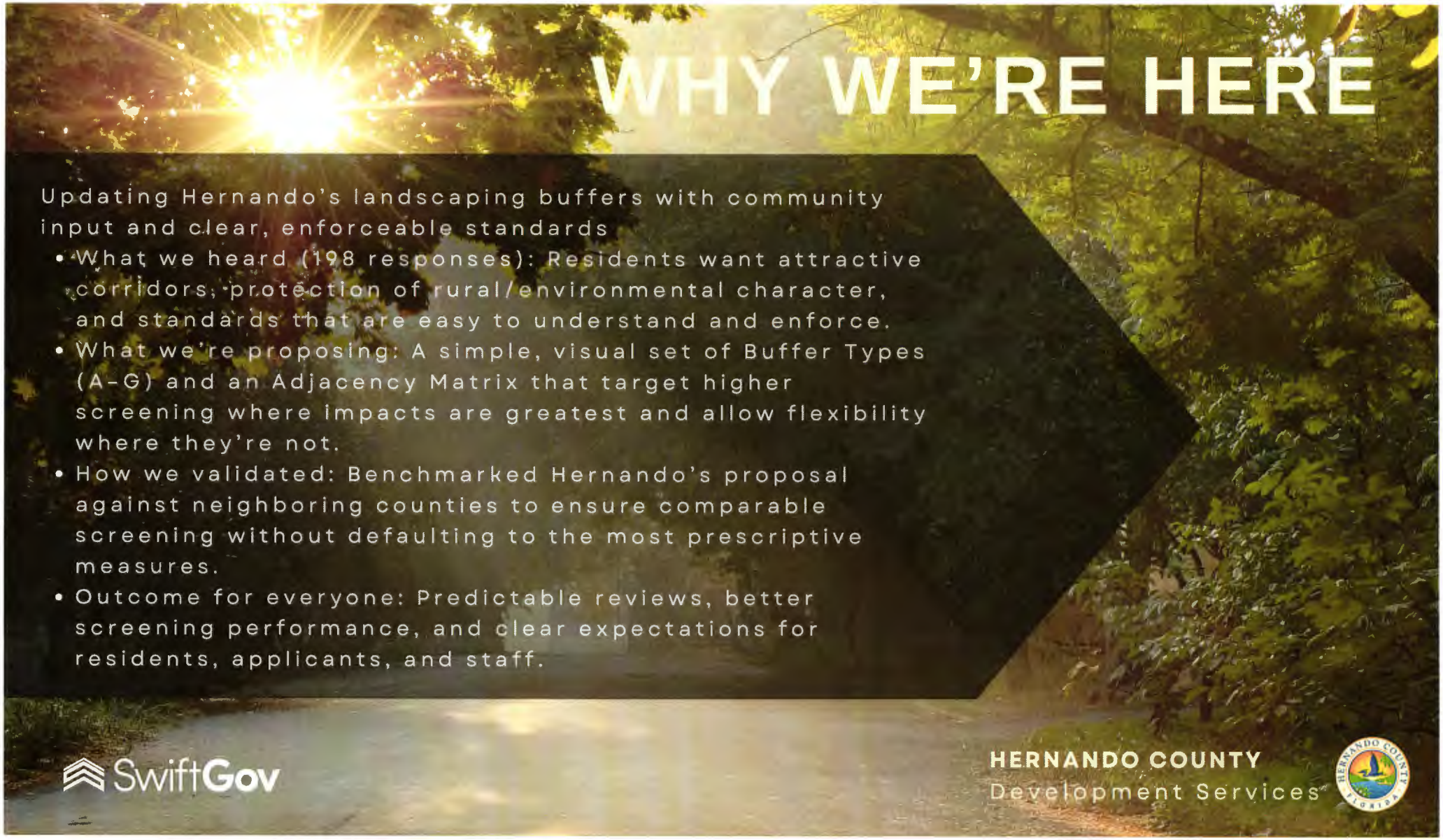
WHY WE'RE HERE
Updating Hernando's landscaping buffers with community input and clear, enforceable standards
• What we heard (198 responses): Residents want attractive corridors, protection of rural/environmental character, and standards that are easy to understand and enforce.
• What we're proposing: A simple, visual set of Buffer Types (A-G) and an Adjacency Matrix that target higher screening where impacts are greatest and allow flexibility where they're not.
• How we validated: Benchmarked Hernando's proposal against neighboring counties to ensure comparable screening without defaulting to the most prescriptive measures.
• Outcome for everyone: Predictable reviews, better screening performance, and clear expectations for residents, applicants, and staff.
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WHO WE'VE HEARD FROM

Hernando County's Landscaping Code update is grounded in what our community told us across 198 survey responses: residents most often prioritized community appearance (77%), rural protection (67%), and environmental protection (66%), with additional emphasis on neighborhood character (39%) and public safety (38%). To make the code easier to use, respondents asked for clearer presentation–especially examples (55%), standardized language (53%), and graphics/pictures (49%), with support for tables (27%). Familiarity with the current code varies–27% very familiar, 41% somewhat familiar, 28% not familiar–underscoring the need for straightforward, visual standards. These insights directly shaped our proposed landscaping buffers and adjacency matrix, balancing strong screening and preservation with practical flexibility for applicants.

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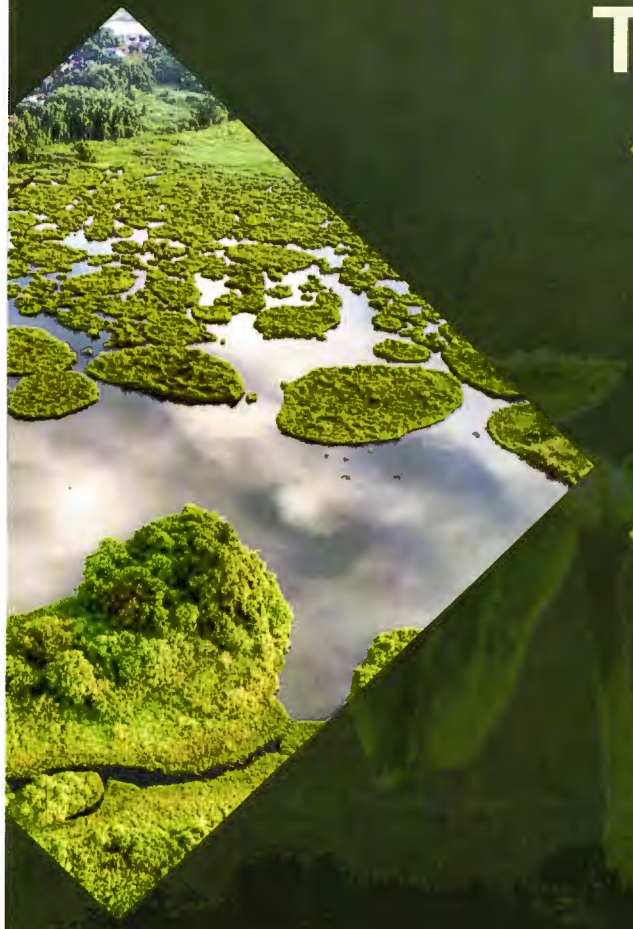

TOP COMMUNITY STATS

Quantitative

- Top priorities: Community appearance 77%, Rural protection 67%, Environmental protection 66%, Neighborhood character 39%, Public safety 38%
- Make it easier to use: Examples 55%, Standardized language 53%, Graphics/pictures 49%, Tables 27%
- Code familiarity: Very familiar 27%, Somewhat familiar 41%, Not familiar 28%

Qualitative

- Requests to enforce screening/buffer requirements on new development (recurring theme in open responses)
- Emphasis on native trees/vegetation and wildlife/habitat protection (multiple mentions, incl. Florida Wildlife Corridor)
- Concern about nonconforming edges—especially industrial or highway commercial next to residential
- Desire for clear visuals and "show me" examples so applicants and neighbors know what to expect

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FROM INPUT TO OBJECTIVES

We turned community input into clear standards: buffer types and adjacency rules that balance preservation and flexibility.

Objective 1 — Preserve character & environment

Input: Appearance 77%, Rural 67%, Environmental 66%
Response (code levers):

- Targeted Buffer Types A–G with F/G for scenic/rural corridors
- Native canopy + shrub density at higher tiers
- Opacity timelines (e.g., 80% at planting / within 1 year where impacts are highest)

Objective 2 — Target impacts at edges

Input: Concern about nonconforming adjacencies (open-ended feedback)
Response:

- Adjacency Matrix: higher buffer types for Industrial/Highway Commercial → Residential
- Performance options: berms or walls by context; avoid one-size-fits-all

Objective 3 — Clarity & enforceability

Input: Examples 55%, Standardized language 53%, Graphics 49%, Tables 27%
Response:

- Two simple, visual tables (Buffer Types + Adjacency)
- Counts per 100 LF, widths in feet, and plain-language timelines
- Illustrated examples for compliance checks

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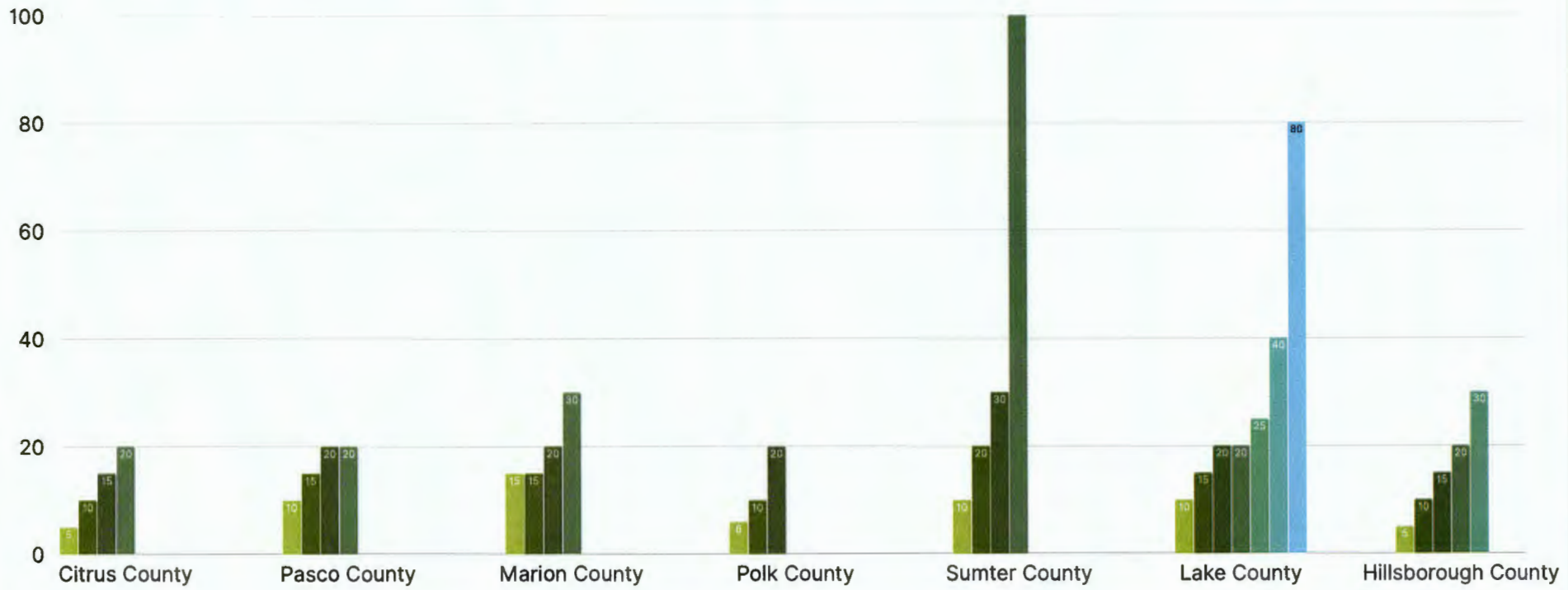
NEIGHBORING BUFFER REQUIREMENTS



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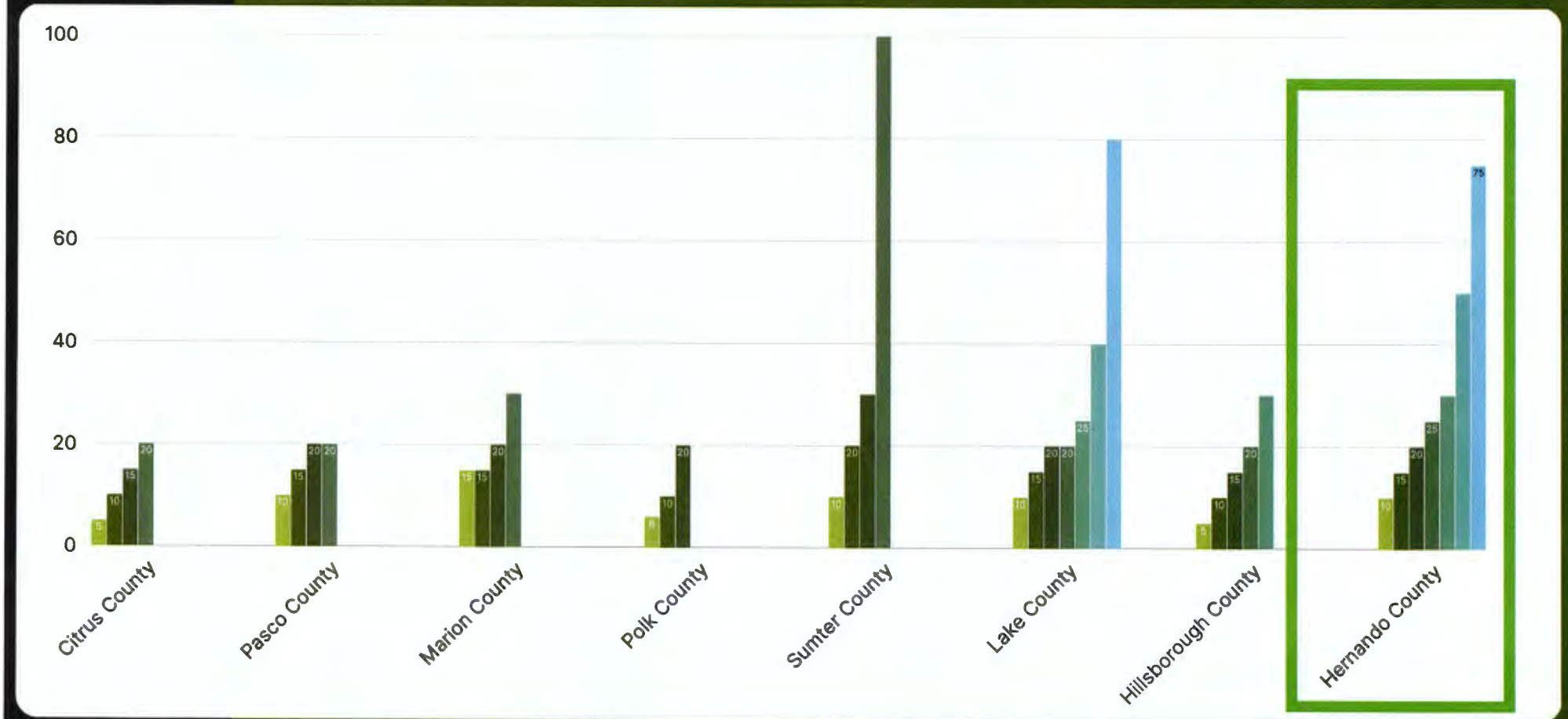
PROPOSED HERNANDO BUFFER REQUIREMENT



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HERNANDO COUNTY PROPOSED LANDSCAPING BUFFERS

Buffer Type	Minimum Width	Overstory Trees per 100 LF	Understory Trees per 100 LF	Shrubs per 100 LF	Structural Elements	Opacity / Screening
A (Low)	10 ft	2	2	20	None	36" continuous hedge or shrub mass within 2 year
B (Moderate)	15 ft	2	4	20	Optional berm (2–3 ft)	48" hedge/screen within 2 year
C (High)	20 ft	2	6	24	Berm (3–4 ft) or 6-ft wall	60" hedge/screen within 2 year
D (High)	25 ft	4	10	24	6–8 ft opaque wall with berm	60% opacity at planting; full screening within 2 year
E (Intense)	30 ft	6	12	30	6–8 ft opaque wall with berm	80% opacity at planting; full screening within 2 year
F (Intense)	50 ft	6	12	36	6–8 ft opaque wall with berm	80% opacity at planting; full screening within 2 year
G (Scenic Highway, undisturbed)	75ft	8	12	48	6–8 ft opaque wall with berm	80% opacity at planting; full screening within 2 year

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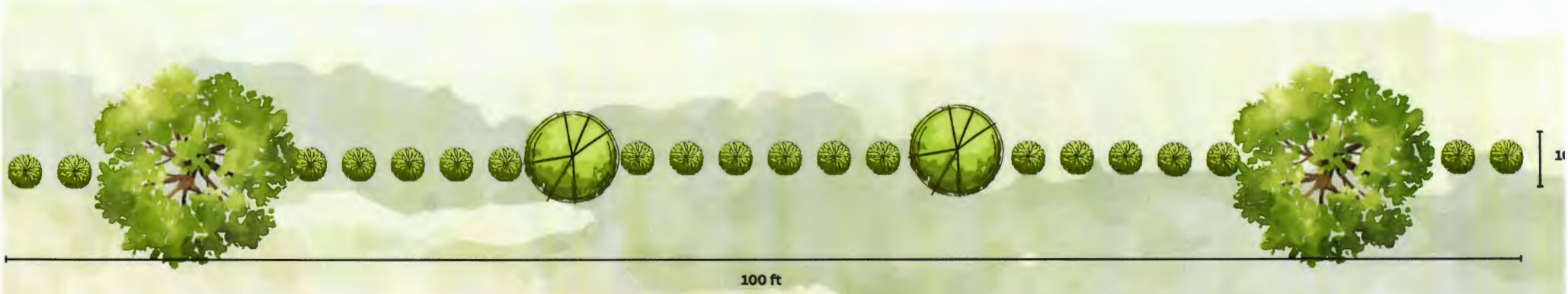
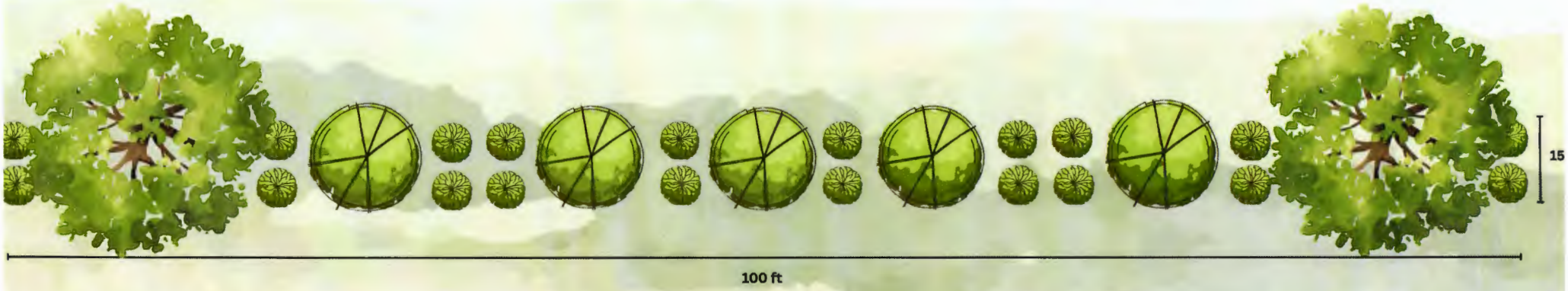
Landscape Buffer Type A



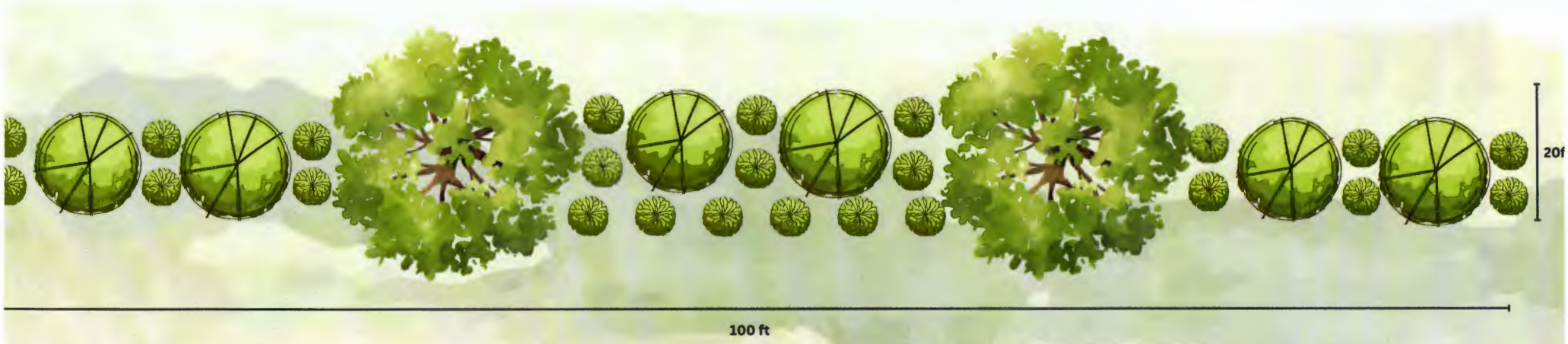
Buffer Type	Minimum Width	Overstory Trees per 100 LF	Understory Trees per 100 LF	Shrubs per 100 LF	Structural Elements	Opacity / Screening
A (Low)	10 ft	2	2	20	None	36" continuous hedge or shrub mass within 2 year

Landscape Buffer Type B



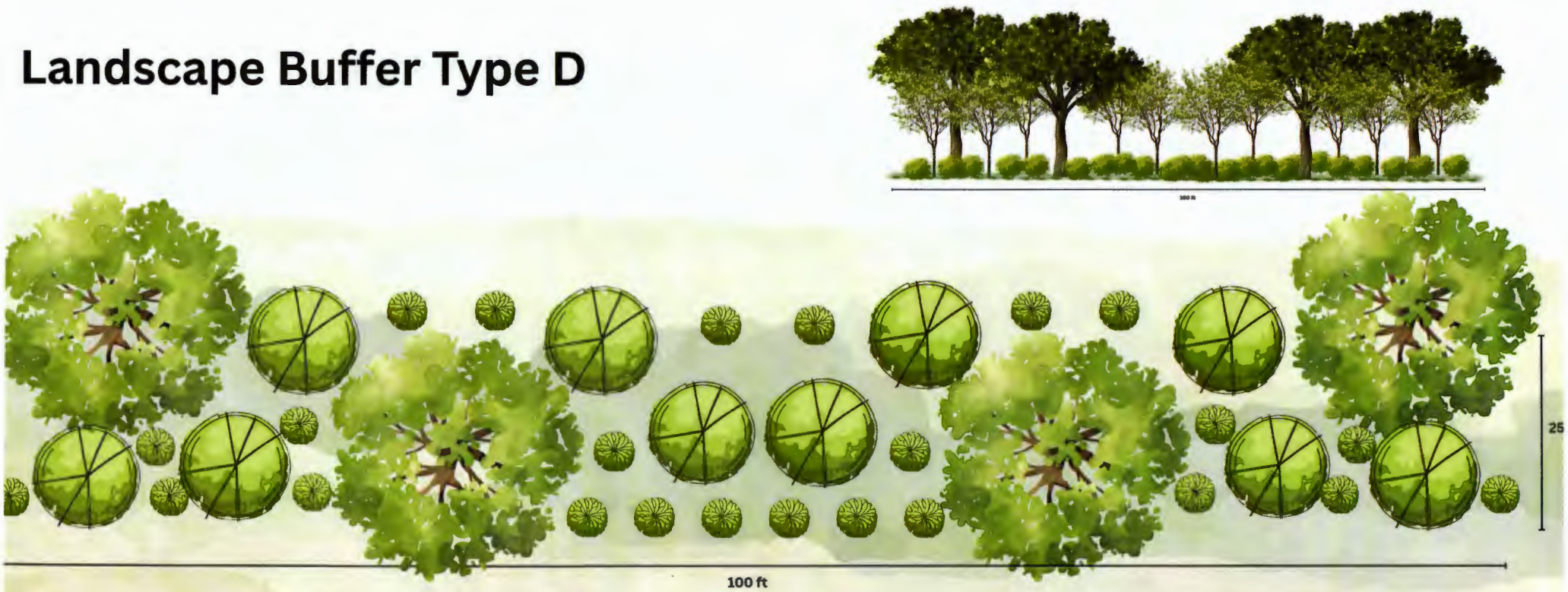
Buffer Type	Minimum Width	Overstory Trees per 100 LF	Understory Trees per 100 LF	Shrubs per 100 LF	Structural Elements	Opacity / Screening
B (Moderate)	15 ft	2	5	20	Optional berm (2–3 ft)	48" hedge/screen within 2 year

Landscape Buffer Type C



Buffer Type	Minimum Width	Overstory Trees per 100 LF	Understory Trees per 100 LF	Shrubs per 100 LF	Structural Elements	Opacity / Screening
C (High)	20 ft	2	6	24	Berm (3–4 ft) or 6-ft wall	60" hedge/screen within 2 year

Landscape Buffer Type D



Buffer Type	Minimum Width	Overstory Trees per 100 LF	Understory Trees per 100 LF	Shrubs per 100 LF	Structural Elements	Opacity / Screening
D (High)	25 ft	4	10	24	6–8 ft opaque wall with berm	60% opacity at planting; full screening within 2 year

HERNANDO COUNTY PROPOSED OPACITY PLANTING MATRIX

Purpose. Minimum vegetative planting standards to achieve required opacity from ground to 6 ft above finished grade.

Opacity Target	Shrubs (qty / rows / spacing / size)	Overstory/Understory Trees (qty / size / spacing)	Evergreen Content	Canopy Trees	Optional Berm Trade-off
60% — at planting	24 shrubs • 3 ft O.C. • 36–42" or 7–10 gal	9 understory trees • 3" cal • ≈ 33 ft O.C.	≥30% (shrubs + understory combined)	4	—
80%— within 12 months	30–48 shrubs • 3 staggered rows • 3 ft O.C. • 36–42" at install; gap-fill at 6 months	12 understory trees • 3" cal • 20–25 ft O.C.	≥50% (shrubs + understory combined)	6	2–3 ft berm → reduce shrub qty by up to 20% if opacity is met

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Opacity Planting Matrix: — at planting

Opacity Target	Shrubs (qty / rows / spacing / size)	Understory Trees (qty / size / spacing)	Evergreen Content	Canopy Trees	Optional Berm Trade-off
60% — at planting	24 shrubs • 3 ft O.C. • 36–42" or 7–10 gal	10 understory trees • 3" cal • ≈ 33 ft O.C.	≥30% (shrubs + understory combined)	4	—