

Capitola Planning Commission

Agenda Report



Meeting: March 31, 2022

From: Community Development Department

Topic: Ordinance for Objective Design Standards

Permit Number: 22-0126

Location: All zones with multifamily and mixed-use residential, excluding the mixed use village

Project Description: Ordinance for new objective standards for multifamily and mixed-use residential development

Environmental Determination: Categorically Exempt

Property Owner: Citywide

Representative: Ben Noble, Ben Noble Planning

Background: In 2021, the city began an effort to prepare objective standards for multifamily dwellings and mixed-use residential development. These standards are needed to protect the city and ensure quality development in light of new state housing laws. The City is using part of its SB2 grant funds for this project and is working with consultants Ben Noble and Bottomley Design and Planning on the project.

The city has held the following prior meetings for the Objective Standards project:

- Planning Commission Study Session (February 3, 2021) to present project goals and approach
- City Council Study Session (April 8, 2021) to present project goals and approach
- Stakeholder Meeting #1 (July 21, 2021) to receive preliminary input from developers, architects, and residents on potential draft standards
- Stakeholder Meeting #2 (February 16, 2021) to receive feedback on draft standards

At the February and April 2021 study sessions, the Planning Commission and City Council reviewed a memorandum with project background and approach information. This memorandum is included as attachment 2.

Discussion: City staff seeks Planning Commission feedback on the draft objective standards for multifamily and mixed-use residential development (Attachment 1). The new standards would apply to all new multifamily and mixed-use residential development in the RM, MU-N, C-C, and C-R districts. The standards would not apply in the MU-V district as sufficient standards are already in place for this district. The standards would apply to projects that require Design Review, as well as projects requesting ministerial approval under SB 35.

Standards Categories

The standards are divided into six categories:

- Circulation and Streetscape

- Parking and Vehicle Access
- Building Placement, Orientation, and Entries
- Building Massing
- Facade and Roof Design
- Other Site Features

Each category includes an intent statement to explain the purpose of the standards.

Deviations

A proposed project would be permitted to request deviation from one or more standard. The Planning Commission could approve deviation upon finding that the project successfully incorporates an alternative method achieve the intent of the standard. A project requesting a deviation would not be eligible for streamlined review under SB 35.

Requested Feedback

In addition to general comments on the proposed standards, staff requests Planning Commission feedback on the following topics.

Parking Placement

Standard B.1 prohibits parking in a required front or street side setback area or between a primary structure and a front or street side property line. The Director may administratively approve an exception to this requirement for age-restricted senior housing developments or when necessary to provide ADA-compliant parking. Staff received feedback from some stakeholders that this requirement may not be appropriate for all types of projects in all locations.

- **Requested Feedback:** *Are there project types or locations (in addition to senior housing) where surface parking should be allowed in a street-facing sidewalk or between a building and a street?*

Entry Orientation

Standard C.3 requires ground-floor residence adjacent to a street to face the street rather than the interior of the lot. An exception to this rule applies to residential-only projects in the C-C zone that front Bay Avenue, Capitola Road, and 41st Avenue north of Jade Street. Stakeholders expressed concern with an earlier version of this requirement, which prompted staff to add exceptions for residential-only projects facing high-volume roadways. Exceptions do not apply in the C-R district as residential uses are allowed only in a mixed-use development.

- **Requested Feedback:** *Are there project types or locations (in addition to proposed exceptions) where street-facing building entrances should not be required?*

Privacy

Standard E.4 includes options to address neighbor privacy. One option is to prohibit balconies, roof decks and other usable outdoor building space on upper-story facades abutting R-1 zoning district. Another option is to require an increased setback and landscaping screening for these features. Staff received feedback from stakeholders that outdoor spaces such as balconies are an important amenity for infill multifamily housing and should not be prohibited when adjacent to an R-1 zoning district.

- **Requested Feedback:** *What standards, if any, should address privacy impacts from balconies and other outdoor building space?*

Recommendation: Provide direction on the draft standards and direct staff to return with a draft ordinance for objective standards at the special meeting on April 21, 2022.