



STAFF REPORT
6/21/2023

TO: Planning Commission Chair and Commissioners

FROM: Gabriel Perez, Development Services Director

SUBJECT: City of Coachella Objective Design Standards for Multi-family Residential and Mixed-Use development - Zoning Ordinance Amendment No. 22-04 is a proposal to amend Coachella Municipal Code Title 17, Zoning, adopting objective design standards for multi-family residential development to apply to G-N General Neighborhood, U-N Urban Neighborhood, DT-PV Downtown Pueblo Viejo, DT-PV Transition, U-E Urban Employment and Neighborhood Commercial zones.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends that the Planning Commission:

1. Find and determine that that Zoning Ordinance Amendment No. 22-04 is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15060(c)(2 and 3) and 16061(b)(3);
2. Adopt Resolution No. PC2023-16 recommending that the City Council adopt an Ordinance approving Zoning Ordinance Amendment No. 22-04 amending Municipal Code Title 17 (Zoning) to require objective design standards for multi-family residential and mixed-use developments.

BACKGROUND:

The State of California adopted Senate Bill (SB) 35 and SB 330 to address the State housing crisis and reduce barriers to housing production. The laws require cities to review new multi-family residential development administratively in compliance with objective design standards. Objective design standards are considered objective if they are measurable and verifiable and involve no subjective judgement by a City official.

Housing Accountability Act

The Housing Accountability Act (HAA) was first passed as California state law in 1982 identifying a lack of housing as a statewide problem and allows the State to limit local governments from denying, reducing density of, or make infeasible housing development project, emergency shelters or farmworker housing that are consistent with a city's objective development standards then the project approval authority must approve the application and issue permits within 90 to 180 days.

Senate Bill 35

Senate Bill 35 passed as California state law in 2017 to increase housing supply and allows developers of affordable multi-family residential and mixed-use development projects to submit an application under a streamlined ministerial review process for cities that have not met their share of the Regional Housing Needs Assessment (RHNA). Projects pursuing streamlined review under SB 35 must include:

- 10 percent of units as affordable to lower-income households making at or below 80 percent of the Average Median Income.
- Project sites zoned for residential use, mixed-use development or have a general plan designation that allows for residential use or a mixed-use development.

If the development meets all state criteria then the project must be approved in 90 days for development with less than 150 units and 180 days for development with more than 150 units. Only objective design standards may be applied in the design review of SB 35 eligible projects.

Senate Bill 330

Senate Bill 330, Housing Crisis Act, was effective January 2, 2020 and sunsets January 1, 2025 with the intent of increasing production of housing and further limiting the ability of cities to apply regulations that limit housing production. SB 330 applies to residential projects and mixed-use projects with two-thirds square footage for residential units. SB 330 limits the ability of cities to:

- Change the land use designation or zoning of sites that reduces capacity of housing units below what was allowed under the land use designation as of January 1, 2018, except with a concurrent increase capacity for housing units in land use designation or zoning of sites elsewhere.
- Adopt a moratorium on housing development.
- Apply subjective design standards in the design review of residential development.

The City of Coachella has not adopted objective design standards and there are only residential design guidelines in the Pueblo Viejo Implementation Strategy Plan and Single Family Residential design guidelines that are not considered standards and many of the guidelines would be considered objective in nature. In order to develop objective design standards to apply to new residential development, the City of Coachella staff submitted a proposal for the development of Objective Design Standards to SCAG's Sustainable Communities Program Housing and Sustainable Development Call for Applications and was awarded along with the cities of Grand Terrace, Newport Beach, and Westminster in 2021. The tasks under the program include study sessions, comprehensive and user-friendly housing development applications, online interactive calculator, objective development standards toolkit, objective development standards toolkit fact sheet, public outreach, and project webpage, project branding, presentation to deliberative body, and final report. Crandall Arambula is the consulting firm awarded the RFP for SCAG's Objective Development Standards Bundle and they worked with City staff in the development of the draft objective development standards for multi-family residential development as presented in this staff report.

DISCUSSION/ANALYSIS:

The draft objective development standards presented in this report would apply citywide to multi-family residential development and mixed-use development. The draft Ordinance would amend the City of Coachella Municipal Code (C.M.C.), Title 17, Zoning, and would be consistent with the development standards identified in the G-N General Neighborhood, U-N Urban Neighborhood, DT-PV Downtown Pueblo Viejo, DT-PV Transition, U-E Urban Employment and Neighborhood Commercial zones. The City Council is scheduled to consider revised zoning and development standards under the Zoning Consistency Update that would adopt the G-N General Neighborhood, U-N Urban Neighborhood, DT-PV Downtown Pueblo Viejo, DT-PV Transition, and U-E Urban Employment zones at their regular City Council meeting on June 21, 2023.

The draft objective design standards are organized into site planning and building design standards for multi-family housing. Figures are included in the design standards to identify visually how building form and site design are to be implemented. The *Multi-family Site Planning Development and Design Standards* are intended to ensure minimum standards for aesthetics, walkability, and safety for a multi-family project's site design that includes:

- Public Realm Standards. These standards apply to street rights-of-way and any necessary easement and include a parkway zone, sidewalk zone, and transition area zone. These standards define the function and character of the perimeter right-of-way areas and are organized according to three street types. (Street Type A – Narrower streets with lower traffic volumes of 15,000 average daily trips, Street B – Wider streets with higher traffic volumes of more than 15,000 average daily trips, Street Type C – private streets less than 5,000 average daily trips).
- Public Realm Transition Standards. These standards establish requirements for required building setback behind the public realm line along Street Type A and B.
- Site Landscaping Standards. These standards require drought tolerant landscaping and minimum common area landscaping standards.
- Site Outdoor Illumination Standards. These standards establish minimum illumination requirements to ensure nighttime safety for residents and other users.
- Site and Public Realm Utilities Standards. These standards are intended to ensure utilities do not detract from visual quality of the public realm or building facades.
- Site Freestanding Walls, Fences, and Gates Standards
- Site Solid Waste Container Enclosure Standards. These standards are intended to ensure garbage areas are properly located and screened from view of the public realm.

The *Multi-family Building Design Standards* are intended to ensure minimum design standards that ensure quality in the form and character of the building environment which includes:

- Building Modulation These standards establish minimum design standards for the form and character of proposed building that includes: horizontal and vertical modulation, roof form and materials, façade color, façade materials, and fenestration.
- Residential entry standards. These standards apply to first floor residential entries to encourage street-oriented pedestrian activity that includes both lobby entries and individual

residential unit entries. A minimum of 5 feet is required behind the public realm line and the first floor entrances.

- First floor transparency standards. These standards are intended to ensure engagement with the public realm and providing transparency between the pedestrian realm and first floor uses.

Other Considerations

Staff reviewed the objective design standards in other cities and observed that standards were established for site and building design that includes:

- Design of faux shutters
- Regulations for treatment and type of roof tile (example: clay, boosted design)
- Smooth stucco finishing
- Bull nose corners
- Divided lite windows for Spanish style architecture
- Exposed rafter tails
- Cornice trim design
- Electric charging facility design and placement
- Regulation of architectural types

The Planning Commission could consider other site and building design standards that are not identified in the draft Objective Design Standards.

Public Review and Comments

The draft Objective Design Standards were published on the City website beginning May 8, 2023. The City of Coachella with Crandall Arambulla hosted a community open house at the Coachella Library on Monday, May 15, 2023 and a stakeholder meeting on Tuesday, May 16, 2023 to share information about the draft Objective Design Standards. Interpretation services were available in Spanish for the outreach meetings. The comment letters received by Planning staff are listed in Attachment 2.

General Plan Consistency

The proposed amendment is consistent with the General Plan in that it promotes the public health, safety and welfare by imposing objective design standards for the public realm, site and building design. The table below summarizes how the proposed amendment is consistent with the General Plan.

Table 1 – General Plan Consistency

Policies and Objectives	Consistency Finding
<p>Land Use and Community Character Policy Implementation Action #1: Zoning Ordinance Update - Establish minimum tree planting requirements and guidelines for different sub areas, development types, street trees and parking lot landscaping to ensure the City’s urban forest/tree canopy is extensive and well maintained. These requirements should also address drought tolerant and native plants and landscaping to reduce overall water usage.</p>	<p>The Objective Design Standards (ODS) established standards for landscaping in the public realm that ensures street trees are planted a maximum 25 feet on-center and have a minimum canopy radius of 15 feet and cover a minimum of 20 percent of paved areas at maturity.</p>
<p>Land Use and Community Character Policy Implementation Action #2: Design guidelines update. Update the City’s design guidelines to encourage human-scale urban design at the neighborhood-, block-, and building-scale to promote walkability and social interaction. Elaborate and expand upon the contents of the Land Use + Community Design and Mobility Elements. Guidelines should specify how development along existing and planned transit lines should provide convenient, direct and safe connections to nearby transit stops and integrate transit stops into public space designs.</p>	<p>The ODS establish design standards that promote walkability and social interaction with high quality public realm design that ensures sufficient sufficient sidewalk width, street furniture, and landscaping that ensures shade and reduction in heat island effect.</p>
<p>Land Use and Community Character Policy 2.3 Urban Design and Identity. Recognize the City can differentiate itself from other Coachella Valley cities through urban design practices such as the development of complete neighborhoods, preservation of agriculture and open space, pedestrian-oriented design and sustainable development practices.</p>	<p>The ODS establishes design standards that ensure quality architectural design for multi-family residential and mixed-use projects. The OSD also ensures quality public realm design that encourages pedestrian activity.</p>
<p>Land Use and Community Character Policy 2.5 High quality construction and architecture. Require high-quality and long-lasting building materials on all new development projects in the City. Encourage innovative and quality architecture in the City with all new public and private projects.</p>	<p>The ODS established building modulation, fenestration, and architectural accent standards that ensure quality architecture for multi-family residential and mixed-use projects.</p>

Policies and Objectives	Consistency Finding
<p>Land Use and Community Character Policy 2.7 Climate-appropriate design. Require architecture, building materials and landscape design to respect and relate to the local climate, topography, history, and building practices.</p>	<p>The ODS requires that all landscaping for multi-family residential and mixed-use projects incorporate desert appropriate landscaping.</p>
<p>Land Use and Community Character Policy 3.1 Physical plan. Facilitate the construction of a built environment that supports a healthy physical and social environment for new and existing neighborhoods.</p> <p>Land Use and Community Character Policy 3.2: Walkable streets. Regulate new development to ensure new blocks encourage walkability by maximizing connectivity and route choice, create reasonable block lengths to encourage more walking and physical activity and improve the walkability of existing neighborhood streets.</p>	<p>The ODS establishes physical design of the public realm that is safe and aesthetically pleasing that further encourages pedestrian activity and quality social environment.</p>

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW:

The Planning Division completed an initial environmental assessment of the project per the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The Planning Division completed an initial environmental assessment of the project per the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). Staff recommends the Planning Commission recommend to the City Council that the draft Objective Design Standards are exempt from further review of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) because it is an administrative activity which will not result in a direct or reasonably foreseeable indirect physical change to the environment and is not a "project" as defined by section 15378 pursuant to State CEQA Guidelines 15060(c)(2 and 3) and 15061(b)(3). The Ordinance will not result in any increase in the intensity or density of any land use above what is currently allowed in the Coachella General Plan 2035 and the Zoning Ordinance.

ALTERNATIVES:

- 1) Find and determine that that Zoning Ordinance Amendment No. 22-04 is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15060(c)(2 and 3) and 16061(b)(3); Adopt Resolution No. PC2023-16 recommending that the City Council adopt an Ordinance approving Zoning Ordinance Amendment No. 22-04 amending Municipal Code Title 17 (Zoning) to require objective design standards for multi-family residential and mixed-use developments.

- 2) Find and determine that that Zoning Ordinance Amendment No. 22-04 is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section

15060(c)(2 and 3) and 16061(b)(3); Adopt Resolution No. PC2023-16 recommending that the City Council adopt an Ordinance approving Zoning Ordinance Amendment No. 22-04 amending Municipal Code Title 17 (Zoning) to require objective design standards for multi-family residential and mixed-use developments *with amendments*.

- 3) Recommend denial of Zoning Ordinance Amendment No. 22-04.
- 4) Continue this item and provide staff with direction.

RECOMMENDED ALTERNATIVE(S):

Staff recommends Alternative #1 as noted above.

Attachment:

1. Resolution No. PC2023-16, Zoning Ordinance Amendment No. 23-04
Exhibit A – Draft Ordinance
Exhibit A.1 – Objective Design Standards Multi-family Residential Project
Modifications to Title 17, Zoning Ordinance
2. Letters Received (2)
3. Presentation to the Planning Commission