

Hi Planning Staff,

Thanks for the thoughtful discussion this evening with the Planning Commission. I caught most of the discussion about my comments and just wanted to make a few subsequent comments on the Commission discussion

First of all, my intent was not to hold up the process or create more work for you guys. I think underlying most of my comments below is a concern that the Site Standards of the Draft Objective Standards seem to be written as geared toward larger multi-family and mixed-use developments (like the North 40 or some of the sites on Los Gatos Boulevard that are in the Housing Element Site Inventory) and could potentially hinder smaller infill and "missing middle" type of multi-family housing.

This runs the risk of Los Gatos having a "barbell" distribution of housing types in the future - either detached single-family houses or apartment/condo units in large (20+ units) multi-family developments and nothing in-between.

With that said, see my comments based on the Planning Commission discussion below in **red**

On Wed, Sep 7, 2022 at 11:53 PM Adam Mayer <[REDACTED]> wrote:
Hello Los Gatos Planning Staff,

This is Adam Mayer, local architect and current member of the Housing Element Advisory Board.

I just wanted to make a few comments piggybacking on the issues brought up by the group of architects represented by Ms. Bess Wiersema at the last Planning Commission meeting. Although I am not part of that group, I too have some overlapping concerns about the Objective Standards as they are currently drafted.

Generally I agree with the intent of the Objective Standards and think that the State is doing the right thing by trying to streamline housing development. The potential downside, as was noted by the group of architects in the previous meeting, is that these standards could end up stifling the architect's creativity by being overly prescriptive, resulting in mediocre cookie-cutter design.

To be sure, this is a delicate balance to walk and I think Town Staff has done a fairly good job of walking this tight-rope so far.

For instance, one point of discussion in the last Planning Commission meeting was about including pictures of real-life examples, but my personal opinion here is that I prefer the more abstract line drawings that are currently used in the Draft document. For Design Guidelines, real world photo examples might make sense but I think the abstract line drawings are better (and potentially less restricting from a design point-of-view) for the Objective Standards.

Now onto the specific parts of the Draft Objective Standards where I have some comments (primarily on the Site Standards, the Building Design Standards look fine for the most part):

Section A5.1

Any automobile entry gate to a parking structure shall be located to allow a minimum of 25 feet between the gate and the back of the sidewalk to minimize conflicts between sidewalks and vehicle queuing.

Comment: Imagine a scenario where there is a new multi-story, multi-family residential building on a tight lot with an underground parking garage. There is no way you are going to fit a ramp on the site that starts 25' away from the sidewalk that has enough run to get a full story below grade. Furthermore, on a project where you have only residential (no commercial) you are very unlikely to ever have a scenario where vehicles are going to be backed up in a queue. I'd remove this section or amend it to be much less than 25' **I would be ok with changing this to the current zoning requirement of 18'-0" rather than 25'-0"**

Section A8.3

Vehicular entry gates and pedestrian entry gates shall have a maximum height of six feet.

Comment: Does this include entry gates that enter into a below-grade parking garage? Typically these are full height (because the retract up into the ceiling) with a minimum height clearance of 6'-8"

Section A10.1a

Landscaped space: A minimum of 20 percent of the site area shall be landscaped.

Comment: 20% seem unnecessarily high for an infill building. Can a landscaped roof count toward the 20%? **I think if landscaped roof space and landscape within the setbacks can count toward the 20% then it is reasonable.**

Section A10.1b

Private recreation space: The minimum horizontal dimensions are 10 feet by six feet. The minimum vertical clearance required is eight feet. Private recreation space shall be directly accessible from the residential unit.

Comment: 6 ft. x 10 ft. is a gigantic balcony for a multi-family unit, even for luxury condos. 120 square feet is absurd. **Perhpas there is a sliding scale here. Maybe a smaller requiriement for units under 500 sq. ft., another slightly larger for units that are 500 sq. ft. - 800 sq. ft., another slightly larger for 800 sq. ft. - 1,200 sq. ft and then one for units above 1,200 sq. ft.**

Section A10.1c

Community recreation space shall be provided in multi-family residential development projects at a minimum of 200 square feet per residential unit.

Comment: Like the private recreation space, this is way too much. For smaller multi-family residential buildings under a certain size (say 10-12 units) I would say that "community recreation space" is unnecessary and would be a huge obstacle in getting these sort of mid-tier boutique multi-family projects built. "Community Recreation Space" makes more sense in larger multi-family developments (like 20 - 100 units) **I do think there should be a minimum unit count for a project to be required to provide Community Recreation space. It really doesn't make sense for a development that is 10-12 units or under and especially doesn't make sense for missing middle.**

Thanks for considering my comments and happy to answer any questions.

Best,
Adam

Joel,

I wanted to follow up with you regarding a particular item that was discussed at the Planning Commission meeting. It was late and towards the end of the meeting when commissioners were discussing community, private and landscape areas. I appreciated the discussion as I think it yielded some necessary clarification. We would like to see where we are with the standards and if there is an updated version.

Just to clarify, our letter from our architects group objects to the 120SF & 200SF of required private space. We do not object to the 6' or 10' dimensions. If more units and density is what the Town is looking for, than the 120/200SF is far, far too much. Palo Alto code required only 50SF (5' x 10'), that's it.

We realize that this is something that is written into town code right now, but this should be changed and is completely out of step from other jurisdictions and just about every example of currently built apartment buildings. Has anyone ever lived in an apartment with a private balcony that big?

We are happy to participate in any further conversations, and help Mr. Barnett with flushing out the last items left to be refined per planning commission's recommendation.

Jaclyn Greenmyer

KOHLSAAT & ASSOCIATES
ARCHITECTURE

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