



**TOWN OF LOS GATOS
PLANNING COMMISSION
REPORT**

MEETING DATE: 06/24/2026

ITEM NO: 4

DATE: June 18, 2026
TO: Planning Commission
FROM: Joel Paulson, Community Development Director
SUBJECT: Forward a Recommendation to the Town Council on Proposed Changes and Additions to the Town's Object Design Standards for Multi-Family and Mixed-Use Projects. Not Subject to CEQA Review Under Pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15061 (b)(3) Because it can be seen with Certainty that there is No Possibility that the Changes and Additions to the Town's Object Design Standards for Multi-Family and Mixed-Use Projects Would Have a Significant Effect on the Environment. All Projects for which the Object Design Standards for Multi-Family and Mixed-Use Projects will Apply will Undergo Separate CEQA Review and Approval. **Location: Town Wide.** Project Planner: Sean Mullin.

RECOMMENDATION:

Forward a recommendation to the Town Council on proposed changes and additions to the Town's Object Design Standards for Multi-Family and Mixed-Use Projects.

CEQA:

The project is not subject to review under the CEQA Pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15061 (b)(3) because it can be seen with certainty that there is no possibility that the changes and additions to the Town's Object Design Standards for Multi-Family and Mixed-Use Projects would have a significant effect on the environment. All projects for which the Object Design Standards for Multi-Family and Mixed-Use Projects will apply will undergo separate CEQA review and approval.

BACKGROUND:

On November 15, 2022, the Town Council adopted Objective Design Standards for Qualifying Multi-Family and Mixed-Use Residential Development (ODS). Adoption of the ODS was the

PREPARED BY: Sean Mullin, AICP
Planning Manager

Reviewed by: Community Development Director

culmination of a three-year effort involving the Town Council, Planning Commission, Planning Commission Subcommittee, and the Los Gatos community. Planning staff led the effort and worked with a consultant, M-Group, to write the ODS.

The preparation of the ODS was in response to State legislation [Senate Bill (SB) 167, SB 35, and SB 330] requiring jurisdictions to adopt objective standards and to implement them in a streamlined review of qualifying housing development applications, such as multi-family and residential mixed-use developments. Objective standards are defined under State law as, “standards that involve no personal or subjective judgement by a public official and are uniformly verifiable by reference to an external and uniform benchmark or criterion available and knowable by both the development applicant or proponent and the public official prior to submittal” (California Government Code, Section 65913.4).

The purpose of the ODS is to:

- Comply with State housing legislation;
- Implement the State-required streamlined and ministerial review processes for qualifying housing proposals;
- Ensure that qualifying proposals align with the Town’s expectations and vision to maintain and support the character of the Town;
- Provide a set of clear criteria to guide development; and
- Establish an objective framework by which a qualifying project is evaluated.

Since their adoption, the Town’s ODS have been implemented in the review of many qualifying Planning applications.

On May 7, 2024, the Town Council voted to direct staff to approach M-Group, the consultant that assisted in drafting the Town’s current ODS and ask for a proposal to work on additional standards related to view standards, architectural styles, and high-quality building design. Further, the Town Council asked that M-Group speak to their experience developing ODS for these topics.

On August 6, 2024, staff and M-Group provided feedback on additional standards. The Council requested that staff issue a Request for Proposals (RFP) to qualified providers to address the development of additional ODS in the following areas:

- High-quality building design: ODS are to focus on façade materials to ensure high-quality building design that reflects the existing character of the Town.
- Architectural style: ODS must evaluate the architecture within the immediate neighborhood to determine the architectural styles that are consistent and appropriate for the neighborhood.

- Height transitions: ODS shall provide effective strategies for appropriate massing transitions between zones/densities (i.e., from new multi-story buildings to single-family neighborhoods). Consideration of solar access impacts are also to be evaluated.
- All new ODS should also consider small, multi-family housing.

The Town distributed an RFP in September 2024 and received three proposals. Staff interviewed each candidate since all submissions met the qualifications provided in the RFP. After interviewing the three qualified candidates, staff selected Lisa Wise Consulting, Inc. based on their experience, timeline, and qualifications provided in their proposal. Through an existing partnership with Lisa Wise Consulting, the consultant team also includes staff from Urban Planning Partners, who provide many opportunities for community engagement and collaboration to ensure all voices are heard.

In April 2025, staff and the consultant initiated the ODS project. Initial timelines and an engagement plan were established to guide the development of updated and additional ODS.

On September 9, 2025, the consultant conducted focus groups where participants provided observations and suggestions to help identify trends and patterns in existing and recent development. A summary of the findings from the focus groups is included as Exhibit 3.

On October 22, 2025, the consultant delivered a Technical Analysis and Evaluation Memo examining the regulatory framework, input collected, example projects, and initial analysis for revisions (Exhibit 4). The analysis and evaluation helped set the direction for the development of the updated and additional ODS. The consultant also prepared a Recommendations Memo providing recommendations on specific text, graphics, and implementation updates (Exhibit 5).

On December 4, 2025, staff and the consultant conducted a Community Open House at the Los Gatos Adult Recreation Center. Attendees provided thoughts and insights on the ODS project objectives: high quality building design and site design; building massing and height transitions; and architectural character and details. A Summary Memo for the Community Open House is included as Exhibit 6.

On March 17, 2026, the Town Council and Planning Commission held a Joint Study Session to provide the consultant with Town Council, Planning Commission, and community input and direction prior to the preparation of the Administrative Draft ODS. During the Study Session, the consultant, led by Lisa Wise Consulting, introduced the ODS project; provided an overview of community outreach and feedback; and presented several topics for consideration by the Council, Commission, and community. The feedback and direction from the Study Session was essential in shaping the Administrative Draft ODS. A Summary Memo for the Joint Study Session is included as Exhibit 7.

On June 18, 2026, the Draft Objective Design Standards for Qualifying Multi-Family and Mixed-Use Residential Development was posted on the Town's website (Exhibit 1). Staff notified the public through social media outlets and direct email to architects and designers.

DISCUSSION:

The updated Draft ODS document is included as Exhibit 1; a track changes version is included as Exhibit 2. The Draft ODS continues to be organized into two sections: Site Standards (Section A) and Building Standards (Section B). The Site Standards section includes objective standards for site layout and building placement; vehicular access and parking; and outdoor spaces and amenities. The Building Standards section includes objective standards for building form and massing; façade articulation; materials; roof design; windows and doors; and materials and architectural details. Many of the objective standards have corresponding figures to help visualize the standards.

An updated recommendations memo is included as Exhibit 8, providing details of the revisions recommended to address the Council's direction and respond to feedback from the Council, Planning Commission, and community. These changes are reflected in the Draft ODS document (Exhibit 1).

Exhibit 9 includes a summary of how the Draft ODS responds to the Council's direction to update the existing ODS to address high-quality building design, architectural style, and height transitions; as well as consideration for small, multi-family housing.

Lastly, the consultant's slide presentation prepared for the Planning Commission meeting is included as Exhibit 10.

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

Throughout the process and prior to the June 24, 2026, Planning Commission meeting, staff and the consultant conducted several outreach opportunities to solicit feedback on the project from the community and stakeholders. Additionally, staff contacted professional organizations, design professionals, developers, and residents to inform them about the Planning Commission meeting and encourage participation and written comment on the Draft ODS. In addition to the direct contact summarized above, staff notified the public of the June 24, 2026, Planning Commission meeting and that the Draft ODS were available on the Town's website through the following media and social media resources:

- On the Town's website home page, What's New;
- On the Town's webpage dedicated to objective standards; and
- On the Town's social media accounts.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW:

The project is not subject to review under the CEQA pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15061 (b)(3) because it can be seen with certainty that there is no possibility that the changes and additions to the Town's Object Design Standards for Multi-Family and Mixed-Use Projects would have a significant effect on the environment. All projects for which the Object Design Standards for Multi-Family and Mixed-Use Projects will apply will undergo separate CEQA review and approval.

CONCLUSION:

A. Summary

At the Council's direction, staff and the consultant developed Draft ODS that address high-quality building design, architectural style, and height transitions; as well as consideration for small, multi-family housing. The updated Draft ODS also includes revisions to existing standards to improve effectiveness and increase clarity. The update efforts incorporated significant public engagement, including: Town Council meetings for project initiation; six consultant-lead focus groups; a community open house; Town Council/Planning Commission joint study session; and public outreach through direct emails, the Town's website, and social media channels.

B. Recommendation

The Draft ODS have been forwarded to the Planning Commission for review. Staff recommends that the Planning Commission:

- Receive and consider public comments;
- Complete the review of the Draft ODS;
- Provide input on any recommended modifications to the Draft ODS; and
- Forward a recommendation to the Town Council to approve the Draft ODS.

C. Alternatives

Alternatively, the Commission can:

1. Forward a recommendation of approval to the Town Council with additional and/or modified standards; or
2. Continue the matter to a date certain with specific direction to staff.

NEXT STEPS:

Following review and recommendation by the Planning Commission, the Town Council will consider the updated Draft ODS, the Planning Commission recommendation, and any additional public comments.

EXHIBITS:

1. Draft Objective Design Standards for Qualifying Multi-Family and Mixed-Use Residential Development
2. Draft Objective Design Standards for Qualifying Multi-Family and Mixed-Use Residential Development in Track Changes
3. Focus Groups Summary Memo
4. Technical Analysis and Evaluation Memo
5. Recommendations Memo, dated October 22, 2025
6. Community Open House Summary Memo
7. TC-PC Joint Study Session Summary Memo
8. Recommendations Memo, dated June 18, 2026
9. Project Objectives Memo
10. LWC Presentation Slides

**TOWN OF LOS GATOS
OBJECTIVE DESIGN STANDARDS FOR
QUALIFYING MULTI-FAMILY AND MIXED-USE RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT
Updated June 18, 2026**

PURPOSE AND APPLICABILITY

The purpose of the Objective Design Standards is to ensure that new qualifying projects in Los Gatos provide high-quality architecture, integrate with surrounding development, and include well-designed amenities and outdoor areas to enhance community character. These standards are intended to guide property owners, applicants, developers, and design professionals by providing clear design direction that enhances the Town's unique character and ensures a high-quality living environment.

California Government Code Section 65559.5 identifies Qualifying Housing Development Projects to include:

- Multi-family housing developments;
- Residential Mixed-Use Housing developments with a minimum of two-thirds of the square footage designated for residential use; or
- Supportive and transitional housing development.

A Qualifying Housing Development Project shall be approved through a streamlined, ministerial review process when the project complies with these Objective Design Standards as well as complying with all existing objective development regulations in the Town, including but not limited to the following:

- General Plan;
- Town Code;
- Guidelines and Standards for Land Use Near Streams;
- Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan;
- Parks and Public Works Standards; and
- Santa Clara County Fire Department Requirements.

These standards are only to be used for review of qualifying projects where Town review, approval, and/or denial is limited to only objective design standards. Many projects will proceed through the standard review process, in which case the objective design standards included herein would not apply.

ORGANIZATION

The Objective Design Standards are organized into two primary sections: Site Standards; and Building Design. The Site Standards section includes objective design standards for pedestrian and vehicle access; site layout and building placement; vehicular and bicycle parking; utilities design; and outdoor areas and amenities. The Building Design section includes objective design standards for building form and massing; façade articulation; materials; roof design; entrance design; and windows and doors.

PREPARATION OF DEVELOPMENT PLANS

Development plans will require additional dimensions and exhibits to demonstrate compliance with the Objective Design Standards. It is the applicant's responsibility to adequately demonstrate how each applicable standard is addressed.

KEY TERMS

Community recreation space in Residential Mixed-Use developments means public gathering spaces, such as: plazas, outdoor dining areas, squares, pocket parks, or other community areas for the use of all residents and the business patrons and tenants.

Community recreation space in multi-family developments means gathering spaces, such as: play areas, pool areas, patios, rooftop decks, or other community areas for the use of all residents.

Façade articulation means the division of a building façade into distinct sections; including the materials, patterns, textures, and colors that add visual interest to a building or façade.

Fenestration means the design, construction, and presence of any openings in a building, such as: windows, doors, vents, wall panels, skylights, curtain walls, and louvers.

Landscaping means an area devoted to plantings, lawn, ground cover, gardens, trees, shrubs, and other plant materials; excluding driveways, parking, loading, or storage areas.

Multi-family use means the use of a site for three or more dwelling units on the same site.

Objective Design Standards means development regulations that are measurable, verifiable, and knowable to all parties prior to submittal of a qualifying project. A planning review process based on objective design standards involves streamlined ministerial review with no personal or subjective judgement by a public official.

Primary building means a building within which the principal or main use on a lot or parcel is conducted. Where a permissible use involves more than one building designed or used for the primary purpose on the subject property, each such building on the parcel shall be construed as constituting a primary building.

Private recreation space at ground level means an outdoor enclosed patio or deck accessible from a single dwelling unit.

Private recreation space above ground level means an outdoor balcony, terrace, or rooftop deck, accessible from a single dwelling unit.

Residential Mixed-Use means a development project where a variety of uses such as office, commercial, and institutional, are combined with residential use(s) in a single building or on a single site in an integrated project. Two thirds of the project square footage must be residential uses.

Transitional and supportive housing means a type of housing used to facilitate the movement of people experiencing homelessness into permanent housing and independent living.

A. SITE STANDARDS

A.1. Pedestrian Access

- 1.1 All on-site buildings, entries, facilities, amenities, and vehicular and bicycle parking areas must be internally connected with a minimum four-foot-wide pedestrian pathway network. Where the most direct connection between two buildings or amenities is a public sidewalk, the sidewalk may serve as the required pedestrian pathway. The pedestrian pathway network shall connect to the public sidewalk along all abutting streets.
- 1.2 Pedestrian pathways within internal parking areas shall be separated from vehicular circulation by a physical barrier, such as a grade separation or a raised planting strip, of at least six inches in height and at least six feet in width. A pedestrian pathway is exempt from this standard where it crosses a parking vehicular drive aisle and in parking garages, where pedestrian circulation occurs in the drive aisle.

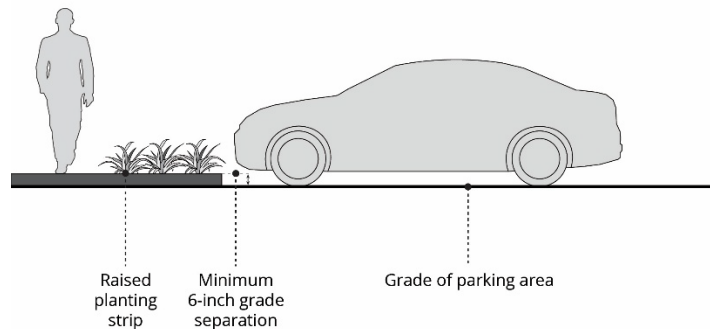


Figure A.1.2a

A.2. Short-Term Bicycle Parking (Class II)

Short-term bicycle parking (Class II bicycle parking facility) consists of racks that support the bicycle frame at two points and allow for the bicycle frame and one wheel to be locked to the rack with a U-lock.

- 2.1 Short-term bicycle parking space shall be located within 50 feet of the primary pedestrian building entrance.
- 2.2 Short-term bicycle parking shall be provided at a rate of one space per 10,000 square feet of residential floor area, with a minimum of two spaces. For non-residential floor area, short-term bicycle parking must be provided at a minimum rate of five percent of new car parking spaces, with a minimum of two spaces.
- 2.3 Each short-term bicycle parking space shall be a minimum of seven feet in length and two feet in width.

A.3. Long-Term Bicycle Parking (Class I)

Long-term bicycle parking facilities (Class I bicycle parking facility) consist of bicycle lockers or bicycle rooms with key access for use by residents.

- 3.1 Long-term bicycle parking facilities shall be located in below-grade levels of parking structures or on the ground floor, and shall not be located between the building and the street.

- 3.2 Multi-family residential and residential mixed-use buildings shall provide one long-term bicycle parking space per dwelling unit. Developments such as townhomes that include individual garages for each unit shall not be required to provide long-term bicycle parking.
- 3.3 Long-term bicycle parking must be provided in one or more of the following facilities:
 - a. An enclosed bicycle locker;
 - b. A fenced, covered, locked or guarded bicycle storage area; or
 - c. A rack or stand inside a building.
- 3.4 Bicycle rooms with key access minimum requirements:
 - a. Bicycle rooms shall have a minimum ceiling height of seven feet.
 - b. Bicycle rooms shall contain racks that support the bicycle frame at two points and allow for the bicycle frame and one wheel to be locked to the rack with a U-lock.

A.4. Vehicular Access

- 4.1 Off-street parking lots shall have vehicular circulation using an internal vehicular network that precludes the use of a public street for aisle-to-aisle internal circulation.

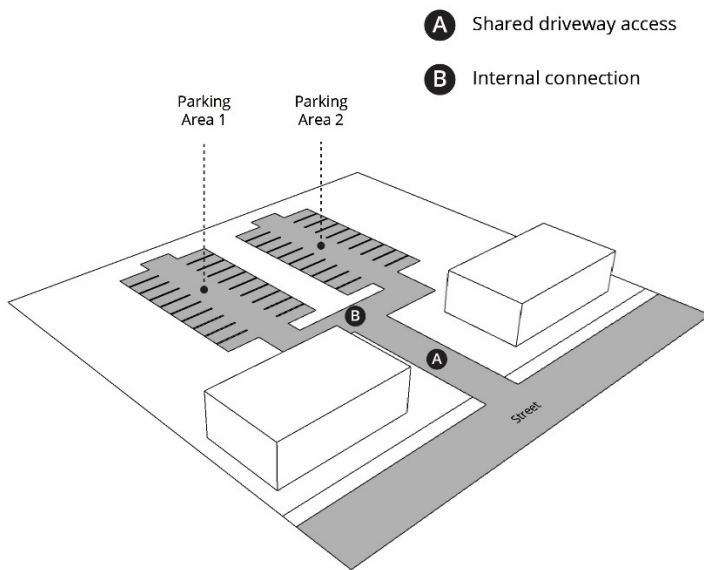


Figure A.4.1a

- 4.2 A maximum of one curb cut is allowed along every 100 feet of primary street frontage.

A.5. Surface Parking Location and Design

- 5.1 Surface parking lots and carports shall not be located between the primary building frontage and the street.
- 5.2 Uncovered parking rows with at least 15 consecutive parking spaces shall include a landscape area of six feet minimum width at intervals of no more than 10 consecutive parking stalls. One tree shall be provided in each landscape area.

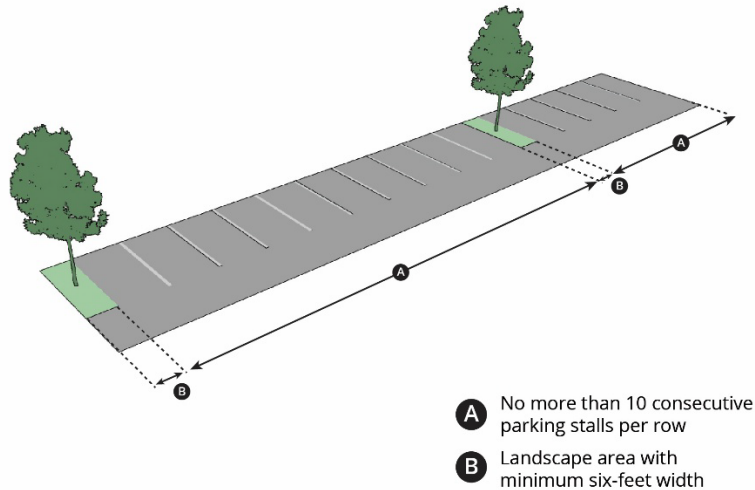


Figure A.5.2

A.6. Parking Structure Access

- 6.1 Any vehicular entry gate to a parking structure shall be located to allow a minimum of 18 feet between the gate and the back of the sidewalk to minimize conflicts between sidewalks and vehicle queuing.
- 6.2 For projects with five or more residential units and that have a vehicle access gate to the parking structure, a pedestrian gate shall also be provided.

A.7. Utilities

- 7.1 Pedestrian-oriented lighting shall be provided to illuminate all pedestrian paths in community open spaces. Exterior lighting fixtures shall be a minimum of three feet and a maximum of 12 feet in height. Fixtures shall be placed along the pedestrian path or on adjacent buildings at a spacing of no more than 30 linear feet unless constrained by the requirements of traffic visibility areas or utilities.
- 7.2 Exterior lighting shall be fully shielded and restrain light to a minimum 30 degrees below the horizontal plane of the light source. Lighting shall be arranged so that the light will not shine directly on lands of adjacent residential zoned properties. Uplighting is prohibited.

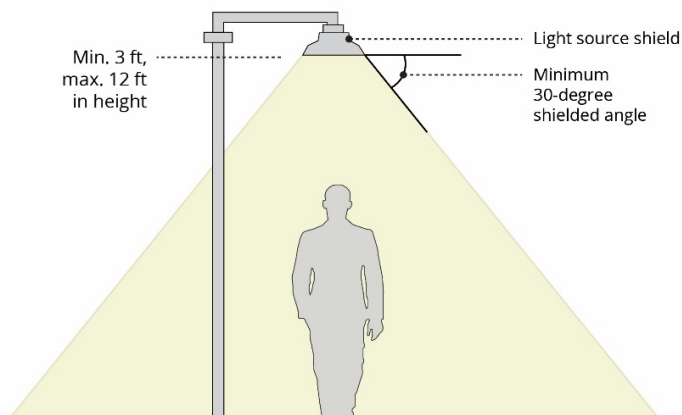


Figure A.7.2

- 7.3 Street-level views of ground level and wall-mounted utility cabinets, mechanical equipment, trash, and service areas shall be screened from sight with landscape planting, fencing, or a wall, provided the screening does not conflict with applicable sight visibility requirements such Town Code Section 29.40.0315. Where not prohibited, screening shall be at least the same height as the item being screened.
- 7.4 Rooftop mechanical equipment shall be screened from view from the street. Solar equipment is exempt from this requirement.

A.8. Landscaping and Screening

- 8.1 At least 50 percent of the required front setback area as established in the base zone standards shall be landscaped.
- 8.2 A minimum 10-foot-wide landscape buffer shall be provided along the full length of the shared property line between multi-family or residential mixed-use development and abutting residential properties. The buffer shall include the following:
 - a. A solid masonry wall with a six-foot height, except within a street-facing setback where walls are not permitted; and

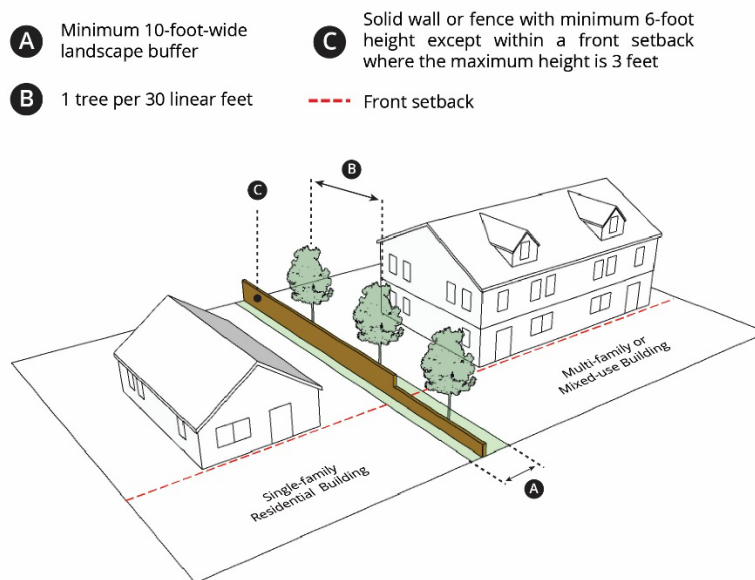


Figure A.8.2

- b. Trees must be planted at a rate of at least one tree per 30 linear feet along the shared property line. Tree species shall be selected from the [Town of Los Gatos Master Street Tree List](#) and shall be a minimum 15-gallon size.
- 8.3 Surface parking lots shall be screened from view of the street with landscaping or a wall with a minimum three-foot height to screen the parking lot when not already screened by a primary building. When located in a street-facing setback, screening may not exceed a height of three feet.

A.9. Fencing

- 9.1 Chain link fencing is prohibited.
- 9.2 Perimeter barrier gates for vehicles and pedestrian entry gates shall have a maximum height of six feet.
- 9.3 Solid vehicular and pedestrian entry gates are prohibited. Entry gates shall be a minimum 50 percent open view.

A.10. Retaining Walls

- 10.1 Retaining walls may not exceed five feet in height. Where an additional retained portion is necessary, multiple-terraced walls shall be used. Terraced walls shall be set back at least three feet from the lower segment.
- 10.2 Retaining walls shall not run in a straight continuous direction for more than 50 feet without including the following:
 - a. A break, offset, or landscape pocket in the wall plane of at least three feet in length and two feet in depth; and
 - b. Landscaping at a minimum height of three feet at the time of installation along a minimum of 60 percent of the total length of the retaining wall.

A.11. Landscaped, Private, and Community Recreation Spaces

- 11.1 The landscaped, private, and community recreation spaces listed below are required for all qualifying projects. Community recreation spaces and private recreation spaces are calculated independent of each other. Landscaped areas within community recreation spaces can contribute to required minimums for both landscaped area and community recreation space.
 - a. Landscaped space: A minimum of 20 percent of all project site areas shall be landscaped.
 - b. Private recreation space: The minimum horizontal dimension is six feet in any direction and a minimum area of 60 square feet. The minimum vertical clearance required is eight feet. Private recreation space shall be directly accessible from the residential unit. Landscaped sections of private recreation space shall not count towards required landscaping requirements.
 - i. Each dwelling unit shall provide usable private recreation space in accordance with the development standards of the underlying zoning district.
 - ii. Where multiple balconies are provided for a single unit, the 60-square foot minimum usable private recreation space for each dwelling unit above the ground floor can be an aggregate of all balconies, provided each balcony meets the requirements for minimum horizontal dimensions.
 - c. Community recreation space: The minimum dimension is 10 feet. A minimum of 60 percent of the community recreation space shall be open to the sky and free of permanent solid-roofed weather protection structures. Community recreation space shall provide shading for a minimum 15 percent of the community recreation space by either trees or structures, such as awnings, canopies, umbrellas, or a trellis. Tree shading shall be calculated by using the diameter of the tree crown at 15 years maturity. Shading from overhead structures shall be calculated by using the surface area of the horizontal feature.

- i. Community recreation space shall be provided in multi-family and mixed-use residential development projects at a minimum of 100 square feet per residential unit.
- ii. A project with eight or fewer residential units is exempt from community recreation space requirements.
- iii. Rooftop space can satisfy both required landscaping requirements and community recreation space requirements. Rooftop space (not including improved areas on top of a parking podium) may not be used to satisfy more than 50 percent of the required landscaping for the site.
- iv. Community recreation space must include a community recreation building or multi-purpose room at least 750 square feet for projects with 50 or more dwelling units.

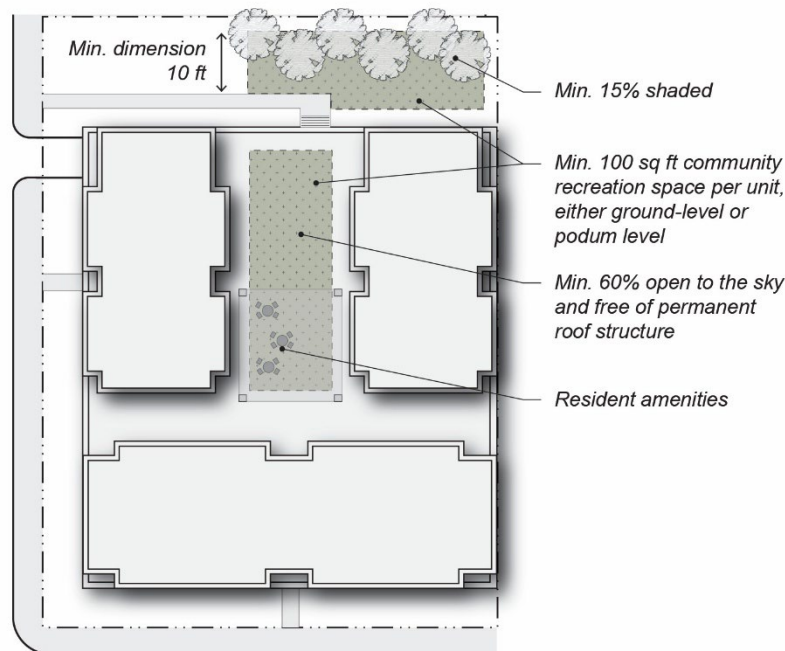


Figure A.11.1

11.2 Elevated Open Space

- a. A minimum of 40 percent of the area resulting from required upper-story building step-back must be designed to be usable open space. This space may take the form of a deck, terrace, or roof garden and may be either private open space or community recreation space.
- b. All upper-story step-back areas space must comply with subsection B.1.3 Adjacency Requirements.

A.12. Building Placement

- 12.1 To ensure buildings provide a continuous frontage along sidewalks, at minimum 75 percent of all street-facing elevations in commercial zones shall be located on or within five feet of the setback line designated in the Town Code. For the remaining street-facing frontage, which may be up to 25 percent of the building width, the front yard area (required setback plus additional yard area) must:

- a. Be at least 10 feet in depth as measured from the setback line and either landscaped, designed as usable space, or a combination of the two; or
- b. Be a usable open space, designed in accordance with the standards of A.11.

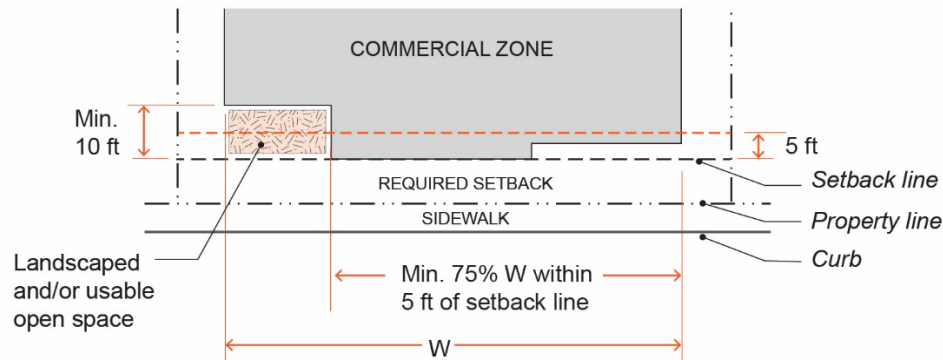


Figure A.12.1

- 12.2 Residential mixed-use projects with ground-floor non-residential uses shall provide site amenities or landscaping over a minimum of 30 percent of the area between the building and the front or street-side property line. The site amenities shall be comprised of any of the following elements:

- a. Landscaping or raised planters;
- b. Walls designed to accommodate pedestrian seating, no higher than 36 inches;
- c. Site furnishings, including fountains, sculptures, and other public art; or
- d. Tables and chairs associated with the ground floor use.

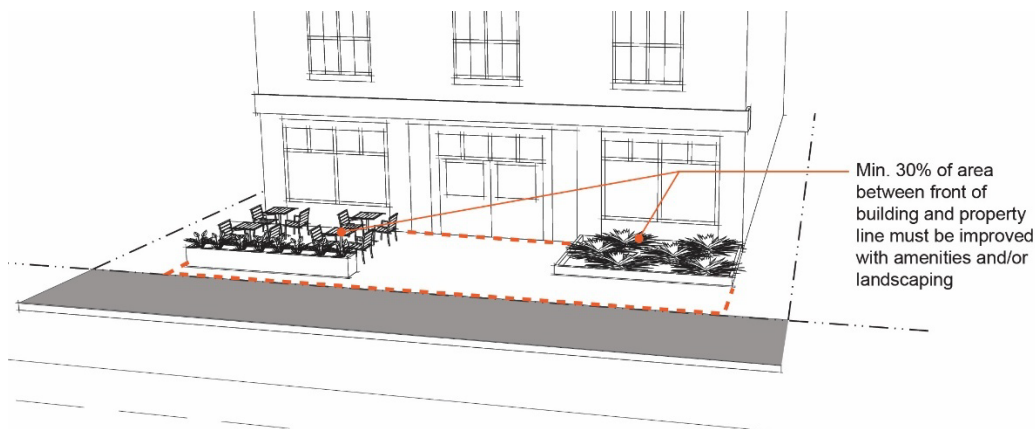


Figure A.12.2

- 12.3 In a multi-family residential project, all primary building entrances must face a public right-of-way, a private roadway, or a community open space that complies with the standards of A.11.

B. BUILDING STANDARDS

B.1. Building Massing and Scale

- 1.1 Multi-family buildings. All multi-family buildings must incorporate a minimum of one of the following massing changes along all street-facing elevations:
- A minimum of 40 percent of the length of upper stories is stepped-back from the ground floor or building base by at least five feet. Upper stories are stories above the ground floor.



Figure B.1.1a

- The front of the building incorporates ground level or podium-level community recreation space that is a minimum of 900 square feet, has a minimum dimension of 30 feet, is enclosed by a minimum of two walls, and is designed with landscaping elements visible from the right-of-way.

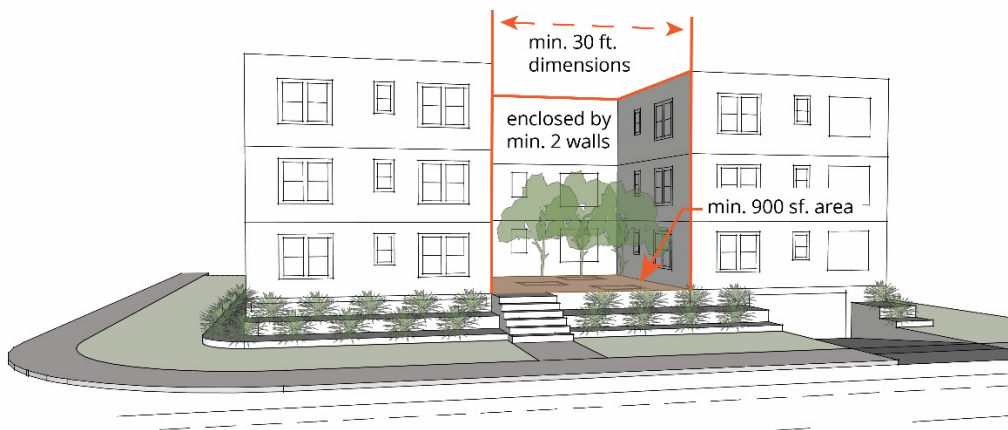


Figure B.1.1b

- c. The front of the building does not exceed 65 feet in width.



Figure B.1.1c

- 1.2 Townhomes must provide wall plane shifts of two feet minimum between each townhome for the entire height of the building.

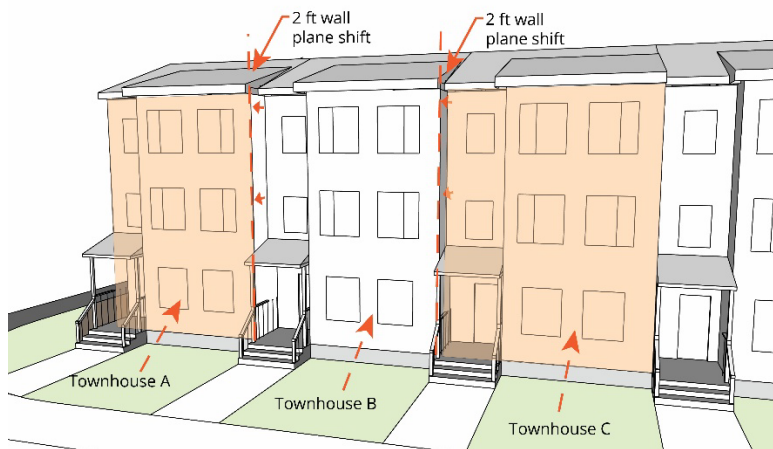


Figure B.1.2a

- 1.3 Adjacency Requirements. Where a multi-family building or townhome development abuts a single-family residential district:
- The building height is limited to 25 feet or 2 stories within 40 feet of the property line shared with the single-family district.
 - At 40 feet away from the shared property line, the building may increase to the maximum height allowed per zone.

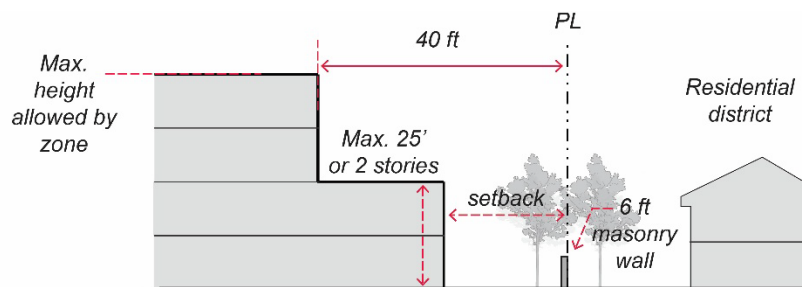


Figure B.1.3a

- c. No part of a rooftop or upper floor terrace or deck shall be closer than five feet from the plane of the lower floor facing the shared property line, to prevent views into adjacent residential uses.

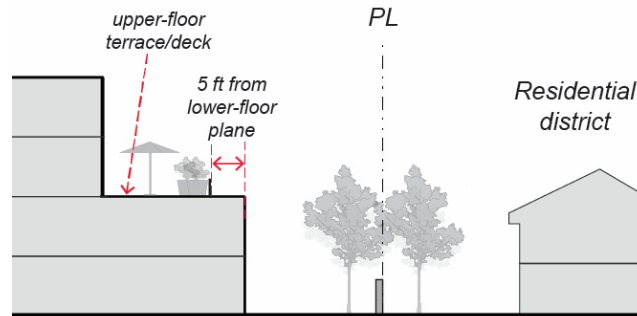


Figure B.1.3b

B.2. Parking Structure Design

- 2.1 Where structured parking is provided in mixed-use buildings, the parking must be “lined” with ground-floor non-residential uses at least 30 feet deep as measured from the front elevation.
- 2.2 The portion of the above-ground parking structure visible from any abutting public right-of-way, including entrances, may not exceed 50 percent of the length of the building elevation at the setback line or 60 feet, whichever is greater.

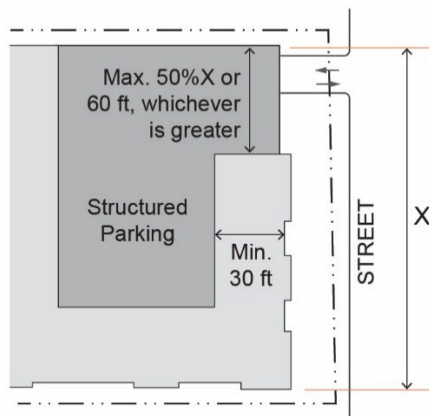


Figure B.2.1

- 2.3 Above-ground parking structures must be designed with:
 - a. Punched openings in width-to-height proportions the same as those of the primary structure. Ribbon openings are not allowed.
 - b. At least one of the following architectural features: cut metal screens, railings, trellises, vertical plantings, louvers, or decorative security grills.

B.3. Roof Design

- 3.1 At intervals of no more than 75 feet along the building façade, horizontal eaves shall be broken using at least one of the following strategies:

- a. Gables;
 - b. Building projection;
 - c. Change in façade or roof height;
 - d. Change in roof pitch or form; or
 - e. Inclusion of dormers, parapets, and/or varying cornices.
- 3.2 Skylights shall have a flat profile rather than domed.
- 3.3 The total width of a single dormer or multiple dormers shall not exceed 50 percent of the total roof length at the street-facing façade. The dormer width shall be measured at dormer roof fascia, or widest part of the dormer.
- 3.4 Carport roof materials shall be the same as the primary building.
- 3.5 All sloped roofs must include eaves at the roof line and fascia/bargeboard at gable ends.
- 3.6 Flat roofs must include either a parapet with a cornice or an overhang.
- 3.7 Where used, applied pitched roofs must be applied along all street-facing sides of the building. Applied pitched roofs refer to a non-structural pitched roof form at the building perimeter that obscures the flat portion of the roof, or mechanical well, from view from the right-of-way. Applied pitched roofs may not exceed a slope of 6:12.

B.4. Façade Design and Articulation

- 4.1 Buildings greater than two stories shall be designed with a differentiated base, middle, and top on any street-facing elevation by incorporating a minimum of two of the following design strategies:
- a. The first floor is distinguished by a material change between the first floor and upper floors along at least 70 percent of the total of all street-facing elevations.



Figure B.4.1a

- b. For all stories except the first story, street-facing elevation design incorporates a projection or a recess a minimum of five feet in depth every 35 linear feet.

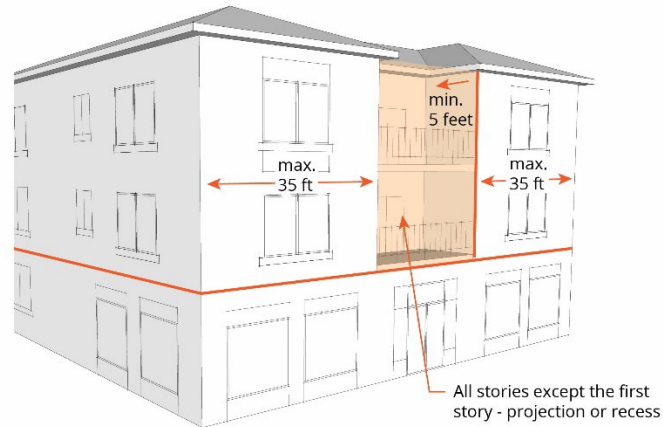


Figure B.4.1b

- c. For all stories except the first story, street-facing elevations incorporate balconies or habitable projections a minimum depth of two feet for a minimum of 25 percent of the length of any street-facing façade.



Figure B.4.1c

- d. Two-foot deep eaves with regularly spaced supporting corbels or brackets.

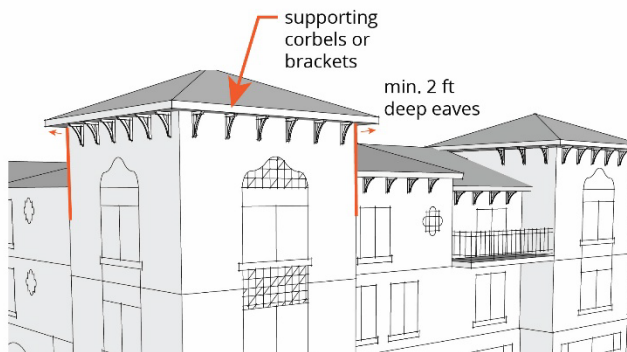


Figure B.4.1d

- e. Window boxes or plant shelves under least 60 percent of all upper-story fenestration.

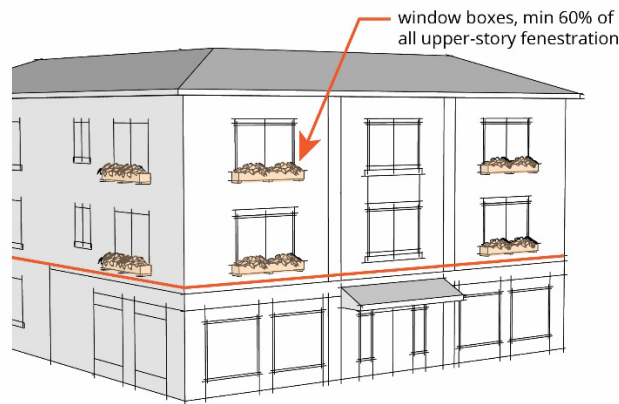


Figure B.4.1e

- 4.2 All building materials, such as siding, window types, and materials in architectural details, must be incorporated on all building elevations.
- 4.3 Changes in building materials shall occur at inside corners.
- 4.4 Balcony locations.
 - a. Balconies facing single-family residential zones must be recessed and no part of the balcony may project more than one foot from the façade.
 - b. Balconies may not be located above shared residential entries.
- 4.5 For ground-floor commercial uses, façades facing a street shall include windows, doors, or openings for at least 60 percent of the building façade that is between two and 10 feet above the level of the sidewalk.
- 4.6 Continuous blank façades.
 - a. The maximum street-facing ground floor elevation without a window or door is 12 feet.
 - b. The maximum street-facing upper level elevation without a window or door is 24 feet.

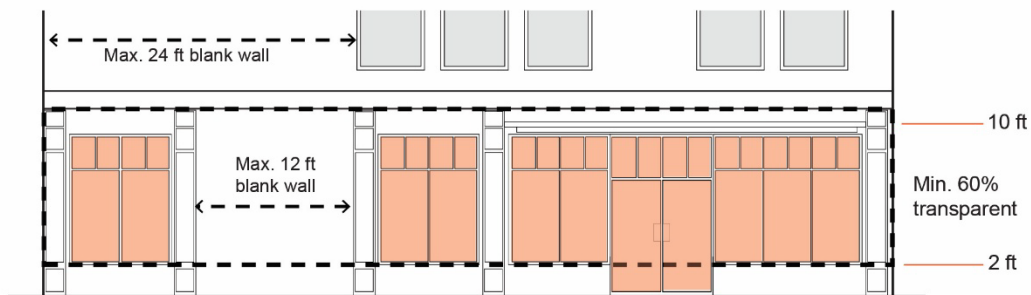


Figure B.4.4

- 4.7 Awnings shall be subject to the following requirements:
 - a. Shall not cover transom windows or architectural elements such as belt courses, decorative trim, and similar features;
 - b. Shall not extend beyond individual storefront bays;

- c. Shall not be patterned or striped; and
- d. Shall have a minimum vertical clearance of eight feet measured from the pedestrian pathway.

B.5. Entrance Design and Ground Floor Design

5.1 Residential Entries.

- a. All residential entrances, individual or shared, must have a roofed projection or recess or combination thereof with a minimum depth of five feet (e.g. two-foot recess and three-foot projection).
- b. Residential entries must be a minimum five feet in width for individual entrances and eight feet in width for shared entrances.
- c. Projections covering building entrances must be designed with columns or other structural supports. Entries with shed-roof or flat overhangs without supports at the outer edge are prohibited.

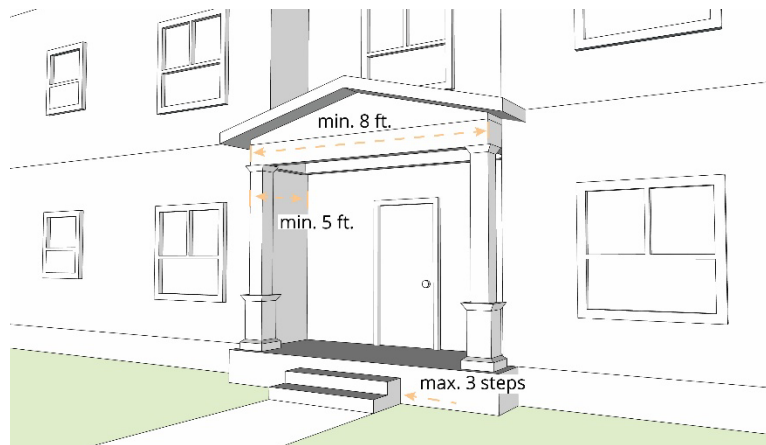


Figure B.5.2

5.2 Non-residential Entries and Storefront Bays.

- a. Pedestrian entries to ground-floor and upper-floor non-residential uses shall meet at least one of the following standards:
 - i. The entrance shall be recessed in the façade plane at least three feet in depth and 6 feet in width; or
 - ii. The entrance shall be covered by an awning, portico, or other architectural element projecting from the façade a minimum of three feet.
- b. Entrances and storefront bays must be framed by architectural elements. This may include columns, pilasters, belt courses, an articulated building base, transom windows, a trellis with climbing plants, and/or plant boxes.

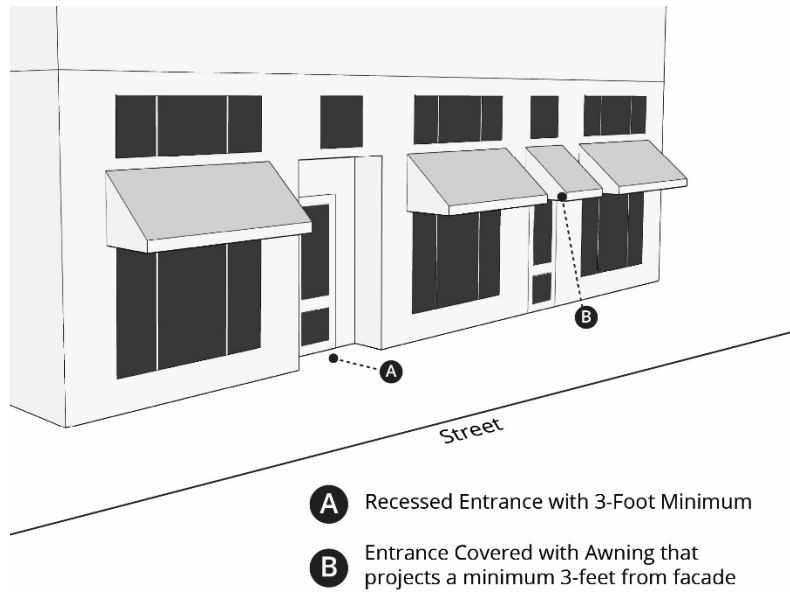


Figure B.5.3

B.6. Windows and Doors

- 6.1 Fenestration size. Upper floor fenestrations may not exceed 18 square feet without framing or division into smaller panes.
- 6.2 All windows must be designed with one of the following:
 - a. Trim around entire window;
 - b. Recessed window frame; or
 - c. Lintels.

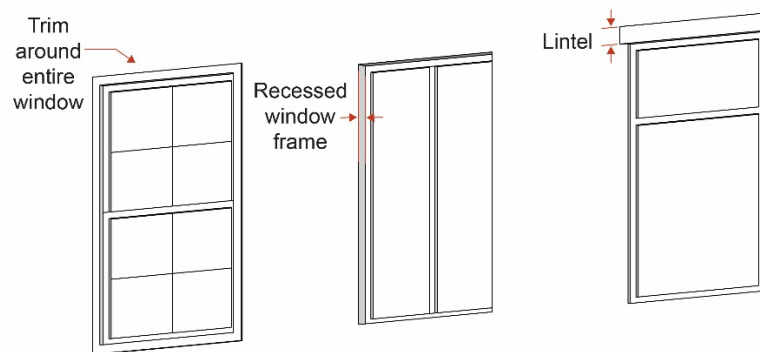


Figure B.6.2

- 6.3 Materials
 - a. Window materials, color, and style shall be consistent on all elevations.
 - b. Prohibited Materials.

- i. Mirrored windows are prohibited.
 - ii. Flat window frames, or window frames flush with the building façade, are prohibited.
 - iii. Stucco window trims are prohibited.
- 6.4 Upper-story window glazing must wrap building corners or be a minimum of 30 inches from a corner.

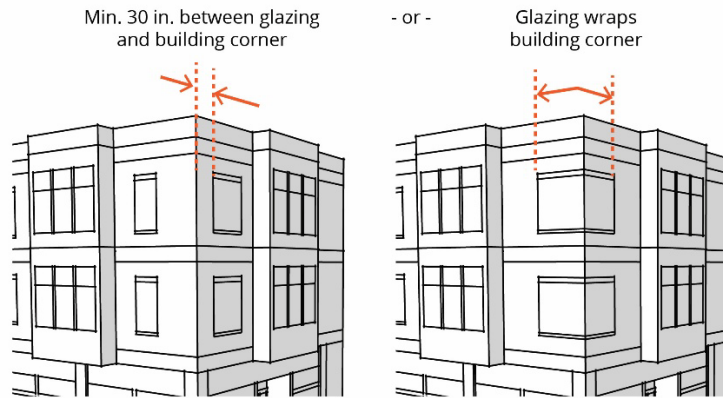


Figure B.6.4

B.7. Materials and Architectural Details

- 7.1 Primary, secondary, and accent building materials. All buildings must incorporate a primary building material and a secondary building material. Any number of tertiary/accent materials may be used.
- a. Primary materials. Primary materials must be applied to 50 percent or more of a façade surface area, excluding transparent surfaces.
 - b. Secondary materials. Secondary materials must be applied to less than 45 percent of a façade surface area, excluding transparent surfaces. Secondary materials must be different from primary materials.
 - c. Accent materials. All additional materials are limited to 25 percent of a façade surface area. Trim for windows, doors, and openings do not count towards the maximum 25 percent area.
- 7.2 Material durability/protection.
- a. All materials must be fire resistant. Wood, engineered wood, or other wood-based products, even those labeled “ignition-resistant,” are prohibited as primary building materials.
 - b. Exterior finish materials shall have an expected lifespan of no less than 30 years per manufacturer’s specifications.
 - c. Exterior ferrous metals shall be protected from corrosion either through the use of galvanized, stainless, or weathering steel.

TOWN OF LOS GATOS
OBJECTIVE DESIGN STANDARDS FOR
QUALIFYING MULTI-FAMILY AND MIXED-USE RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT
Updated ~~June 17, 2026~~[January 31, 2023](#)

PURPOSE AND APPLICABILITY

The purpose of the Objective Design Standards is to ensure that new qualifying projects in Los Gatos provide high-quality architecture, integrate with surrounding development, and include well-designed amenities and outdoor areas to enhance community character. These standards are intended to guide property owners, applicants, developers, and design professionals by providing clear design direction that enhances the Town's unique character and ensures a high-quality living environment.

California Government Code Section 65559.5 identifies Qualifying Housing Development Projects to include:

- Multi-family housing developments;
- Residential Mixed-Use Housing developments with a minimum of two-thirds of the square footage designated for residential use; or
- Supportive and transitional housing development.

A Qualifying Housing Development Project shall be approved through a streamlined, ministerial review process when the project complies with these Objective Design Standards as well as complying with all existing objective development regulations in the Town, including but not limited to the following:

- General Plan;
- Town Code;
- Guidelines and Standards for Land Use Near Streams;
- Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan;
- Parks and Public Works Standards; and
- Santa Clara County Fire Department Requirements.

These standards are only to be used for review of qualifying projects where Town review, approval, and/or denial is limited to only objective design standards. Many projects will proceed through the standard review process, in which case the objective design standards included herein would not apply.

ORGANIZATION

The Objective Design Standards are organized into two primary sections: Site Standards; and Building Design. The Site Standards section includes objective design standards for [pedestrian and vehicle access](#); site layout and building placement; vehicular [access](#) and [bicycle](#) parking;

[utilities design](#); and outdoor areas and amenities. The Building Design section includes objective design standards for building form and massing; façade articulation; materials; ~~and~~ roof design; [entrance design](#); and [windows and doors](#).

PREPARATION OF DEVELOPMENT PLANS

[Development plans will require additional dimensions and exhibits to demonstrate compliance with the Objective Design Standards. It is the applicant's responsibility to adequately demonstrate how each applicable standard is addressed.](#)

KEY TERMS

Community recreation space in Residential Mixed-Use developments means public gathering spaces, such as: plazas, outdoor dining areas, squares, pocket parks, or other community areas for the use of all residents and the business patrons and tenants.

Community recreation space in multi-family developments means gathering spaces, such as: play areas, pool areas, patios, rooftop decks, or other community areas for the use of all residents.

Façade articulation means the division of a building façade into distinct sections; including the materials, patterns, textures, and colors that add visual interest to a building or façade.

Fenestration means the design, construction, and presence of any openings in a building, such as: windows, doors, vents, wall panels, skylights, curtain walls, and louvers.

Landscaping means an area devoted to plantings, lawn, ground cover, gardens, trees, shrubs, and other plant materials; excluding driveways, parking, loading, or storage areas.

Multi-family use means the use of a site for three or more dwelling units on the same site.

Objective Design Standards means development regulations that are measurable, verifiable, and knowable to all parties prior to submittal of a qualifying project. A planning review process based on objective design standards involves streamlined ministerial review with no personal or subjective judgement by a public official.

Primary building means a building within which the principal or main use on a lot or parcel is conducted. Where a permissible use involves more than one building designed or used for the primary purpose on the subject property, each such building on the parcel shall be construed as constituting a primary building.

Private recreation space at ground level means an outdoor enclosed patio or deck accessible from a single dwelling unit.

Private recreation space above ground level means an outdoor balcony, terrace, or rooftop deck, accessible from a single dwelling unit.

Residential Mixed-Use means a development project where a variety of uses such as office, commercial, and institutional, are combined with residential use(s) in a single building or on a

single site in an integrated project. Two thirds of the project square footage must be residential uses.

Transitional and supportive housing means a type of housing used to facilitate the movement of people experiencing homelessness into permanent housing and independent living.

A. SITE STANDARDS

A.1. Pedestrian Access

- 1.1 All on-site buildings, entries, facilities, amenities, and vehicular and bicycle parking areas must be internally connected with a minimum four-foot-wide pedestrian pathway or pathway network. Where that may include use of the most direct connection between two buildings or amenities is a public sidewalk, the sidewalk may serve as the required pedestrian pathway. The pedestrian pathway network shall connect to the public sidewalk along all abutting streets ~~each street~~.
- 1.2 Pedestrian pathways within internal parking areas shall be separated from vehicular circulation by a physical barrier, such as a grade separation or a raised planting strip, of at least six inches in height and at least six feet in width. A pedestrian pathway is exempt from this standard where it crosses a parking vehicular drive aisle and in parking garages, where pedestrian circulation occurs in the drive aisle.

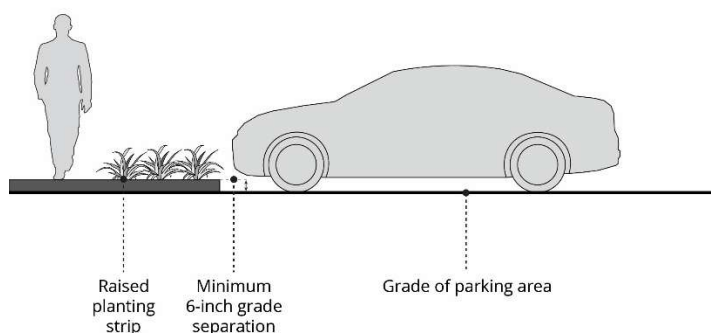


Figure A.1.2a

A.2. Short-Term Bicycle Parking (Class II)

Short-term bicycle parking (Class II bicycle parking facility) consists of racks that support the bicycle frame at two points and allow for the bicycle frame and one wheel to be locked to the rack with a U-lock.

- 2.1 Short-term bicycle parking space shall be located within 50 feet of the primary pedestrian building entrance.
- 2.2 Short-term bicycle parking shall be provided at a rate of one space per 10 dwelling unit and one space per 2,000 square feet of residential floor area, with a minimum of two spaces. For non-residential floor area, short-term bicycle parking must be provided at a minimum rate of five percent of new car parking spaces, with a minimum of two spaces.
- 2.3 Each short-term bicycle parking space shall be a minimum of seven feet in length and two feet in width.

~~2.4 If more than 20 short-term bicycle spaces are provided, at least 50 percent of the spaces shall be covered by a permanent solid-roofed weather protection structure.~~

A.3. Long-Term Bicycle Parking (Class I)

Long-term bicycle parking facilities (Class I bicycle parking facility) ~~consist~~consists of bicycle lockers or bicycle rooms with key access for use by residents.

- 3.1 Long-term bicycle parking facilities shall be located in below-grade levels of parking structures or on the ground floor, and shall not be located between the building and the street.
- 3.2 Multi-family residential and residential mixed-use buildings shall provide one long-term bicycle parking space per dwelling unit. Developments such as townhomes that include individual garages for each unit shall not be required to provide long-term bicycle parking.

3.3 Long-term bicycle parking must be provided in one or more of the following facilities:

~~3.3a. An enclosed Bicycle bicycle locker; minimum requirements:~~

~~b. A fenced, covered, locked or guarded bicycle storage area; or~~

~~c. A rack or stand inside a building.~~

~~a. Dimensions of 42 inches wide, 75 inches deep, and 54 inches high.~~

~~b. Must withstand a load of 200 pounds per square foot.~~

~~c. Opened door must withstand 500-pound vertical load.~~

3.4 Bicycle rooms with key access minimum requirements:

- a. Bicycle rooms shall have a minimum ceiling height of seven feet.
- b. Bicycle rooms shall contain racks that support the bicycle frame at two points and allow for the bicycle frame and one wheel to be locked to the rack with a U-lock.
- ~~c. Long-term bicycle parking spaces shall be served by an aisle with a minimum width of six feet.~~
- ~~d. Maneuverability space of at least two feet shall be provided between the aisle and long-term bicycle parking spaces~~
- ~~e. Each horizontal long-term bicycle parking space shall be a minimum of seven feet in length, two feet in width, four and one-half feet in height. Each vertical long-term bicycle parking space shall be a minimum of three and one-half feet in length, two feet in width, and seven feet in height.~~

A.4. Vehicular Access

- 4.1 Off-street parking lots shall have vehicular circulation using an internal vehicular network that precludes the use of a public street for aisle-to-aisle internal circulation.

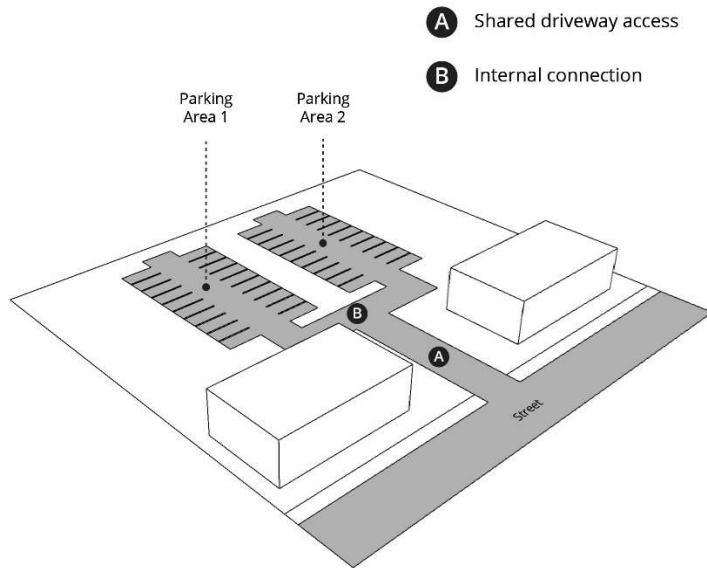
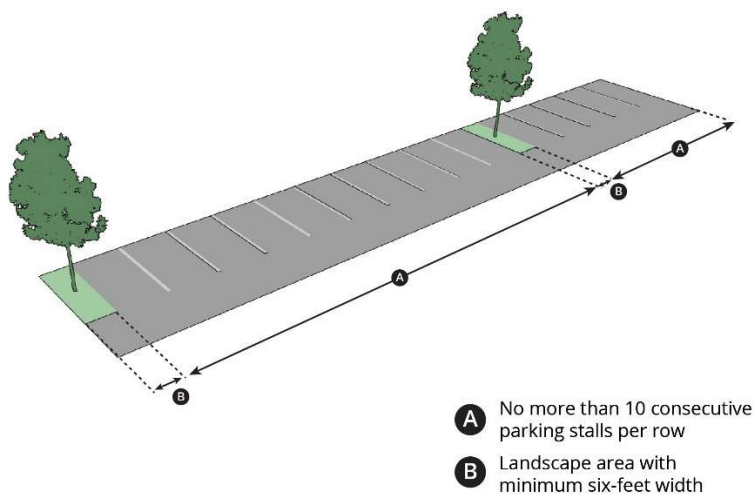


Figure A.4.1a

4.2 A maximum of one curb cut is allowed along every 100 feet of primary street frontage.

A.5. Surface Parking Location and Design

- 5.1 Surface parking lots and carports shall not be located between the primary building frontage and the street.
- 5.2 Uncovered parking rows with at least 15 consecutive parking spaces shall include a landscape area of six feet minimum width at intervals of no more than 10 consecutive parking stalls. One tree shall be provided in each landscape area.



- A No more than 10 consecutive parking stalls per row
- B Landscape area with minimum six-foot width

Figure A.5.2

A.6. Parking Structure Access

- 6.1 Any vehicular entry gate to a parking structure shall be located to allow a minimum of 18 feet between the gate and the back of the sidewalk to minimize conflicts between sidewalks and vehicle queuing.

~~6.2 A parking structure shall not occupy more than 50 percent of the building width of any street-facing façade, and it shall be recessed a minimum of five feet from the street-facing façade of the building.~~

~~6.36.2~~ For projects with five or more residential units and that have a vehicle access gate to the parking structure, a pedestrian gate shall also be provided.

A.7. Utilities

- 7.1 Pedestrian-oriented lighting shall be provided ~~to illuminate along~~ all pedestrian paths in community ~~open~~recreation spaces. Exterior lighting fixtures shall be a minimum of three feet and a maximum of 12 feet in height. ~~Light~~ fixtures shall be placed along the pedestrian path ~~or on adjacent buildings~~ at a spacing of no more than 30 linear feet ~~unless constrained by the requirements of traffic visibility areas or utilities~~.
- 7.2 Exterior lighting shall be fully shielded and restrain light to a minimum 30 degrees below the horizontal plane of the light source. Lighting shall be arranged so that the light will not shine directly on lands of adjacent residential zoned properties. Uplighting is prohibited.

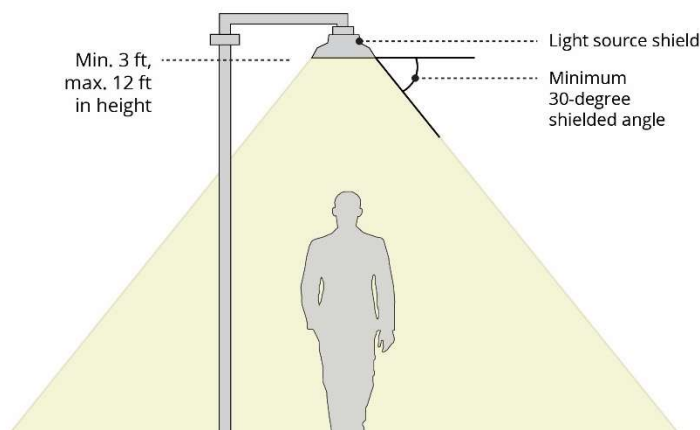


Figure A.7.2

- 7.3 Street-level views of ground level ~~and wall-mounted~~ utility cabinets, mechanical equipment, trash, and service areas shall be screened from sight with landscape planting, fencing, or a wall, ~~provided as allowed by the Town Code~~. The screening ~~does not conflict with applicable sight visibility requirements such Town Code Section 29.40.0315~~. Where not prohibited, screening shall be at least the same height as the item being screened ~~and screening that is not landscape material shall be constructed with one or more of the materials used on the primary building~~.
- 7.4 Rooftop mechanical equipment shall be screened from view from the street. Solar equipment is exempt from this requirement.

A.8. Landscaping and Screening

- 8.1 At least 50 percent of the ~~required~~ front setback area ~~as established in the base zone standards~~ shall be landscaped.

- 8.2 A minimum 10-foot-wide landscape buffer shall be provided along the full length of the shared property line between multi-family or Residential Mixed-Use development and abutting residential properties. The buffer shall include the following:
- a. A solid masonry wall with a six-foot height, except within a street-facing setback where walls are not permitted; and

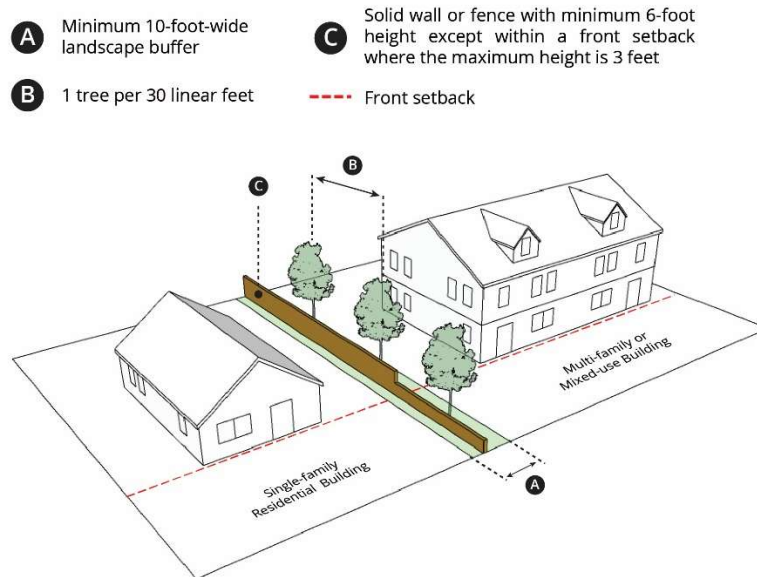


Figure A.8.2

- b. Trees must be planted at a rate of at least one tree per 30 linear feet along the shared property line. Tree species shall be selected from the Town of Los Gatos Master Street Tree List and shall be a minimum 15-gallon size.
- 8.3 Surface parking lots shall be screened from view of the street with landscaping or a wall with a minimum three-foot height to screen the parking lot when not already screened by a primary building. When located in a street-facing setback, screening may not exceed a height of three feet.

A.9. Fencing

~~9.1 Fences, walls, and gates within required setbacks along all street frontages are prohibited unless used to screen on-site parking spaces from view from the street.~~

~~9.29.1~~ Chain link fencing is prohibited.

~~9.39.2~~ Perimeter barrier gates for vehicles and pedestrian entry gates shall have a maximum height of six feet.

~~9.49.3~~ Solid vehicular and pedestrian entry gates are prohibited. Entry gates shall be a minimum 50 percent open view.

A.10. Retaining Walls

- 10.1 Retaining walls may shall not exceed five feet in height. Where an additional retained portion is necessary, multiple-terraced walls shall be used. Terraced walls shall be set back at least three feet from the lower segment.

- 10.2 Retaining walls shall not run in a straight continuous direction for more than 50 feet without including the following:
- a. A break, offset, or landscape pocket in the wall plane of at least three feet in length and two feet in depth; and
 - b. Landscaping at a minimum height of three feet at the time of installation along a minimum of 60 percent of the total length of the retaining wall.

A.11. Landscaped, Private, and Community Recreation Spaces

- 11.1 The landscaped, private, and community recreation spaces listed below are required for all qualifying projects. Community recreation spaces and private recreation spaces are calculated independent of each other. Landscaped areas within community recreation spaces can contribute to required minimums for both landscaped area and community recreation space.
- a. Landscaped space: A minimum of 20 percent of ~~all project~~the site ~~areas~~area shall be landscaped.
 - b. Private recreation space: The minimum horizontal dimension is six feet in any direction and a minimum area of 60 square feet. The minimum vertical clearance required is eight feet. Private recreation space shall be directly accessible from the residential unit. Landscaped sections of private recreation space shall not count towards required landscaping requirements.
 - i. Each ~~ground floor~~dwelling unit shall ~~provide have a minimum of 120 square feet of~~usable private recreation space in accordance with the development standards of the underlying zoning district.
 - ii. ~~Each dwelling unit above the ground floor shall have a minimum of 60 square feet of usable private recreation space.~~Where multiple balconies are provided for a single unit, the 60 square-foot minimum usable private recreation space for each dwelling unit above the ground floor can be an aggregate of all balconies, ~~provided~~provide each balcony meets the requirements for minimum horizontal dimensions.
 - c. Community recreation space: The minimum ~~dimension is~~dimensions are 10 feet, ~~by six feet.~~A minimum of 60 percent of the community recreation space shall be open to the sky and free of permanent solid-roofed weather protection structures. Community recreation space shall provide shading for a minimum 15 percent of the community recreation space by either trees or structures, such as awnings, canopies, umbrellas, or a trellis. Tree shading shall be calculated by using the diameter of the tree crown at 15 years maturity. Shading from ~~overhead~~other built structures shall be calculated by using the surface area of the ~~horizontal~~overhead feature.

- ~~i. Community recreation space shall be provided in Residential Mixed-Use developments at a minimum of 100 square feet per residential unit plus a minimum of two percent of the non-residential square footage.~~
- ~~ii.i. Community recreation space shall be provided in multi-family and mixed-use residential development projects at a minimum of 100 square feet per residential unit.~~
- ~~iii.ii. A project with four-eight or fewer-less residential units is exempt from community recreation space requirements.~~
- ~~iv.iii. RooftopLandscaped roof space can satisfy both required landscaping requirements and community recreation space requirements. Rooftop space (not including improved areas on top of a parking podium)Landscaped roof space may not be used to satisfy more than 50 percent of the required landscaping for the site.~~
- iv. Community recreation space must include a community recreation building or multi-purpose room at least 750 square feet for projects with 50 or more dwelling units.

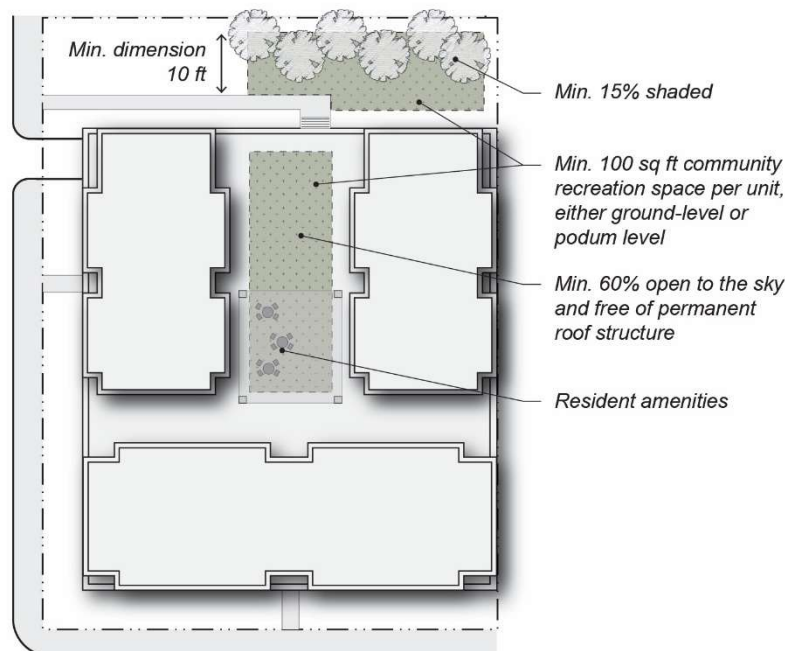


Figure A.11.1

11.2 Elevated Open Space

- a. A minimum of 40 percent of the area resulting from required upper-story building step-back must be designed to be usable open space. This space may take the form of a deck, terrace, or roof garden and may be either private open space or community recreation space.
- b. All upper-story step-back areas space must comply with subsection B.1.3 Adjacency Requirements.

A.12. Building Placement

- 12.1 To ensure buildings provide a continuous frontage along sidewalks, at minimum development in commercial zones shall place at least 75 percent of all any ground floor street-facing

elevations in commercial zones shall be located on or within five feet of the setback line designated in the Town Code. For the remaining street-facing frontage, which may be up to 25 percent of the building width, the front yard area (required setback plus additional yard area) must:

- a. Be at least 10 feet in depth as measured from the setback line and either landscaped, designed as usable space, or a combination of the two; or
- b. Be a usable open space, designed in accordance with the standards of A.11.

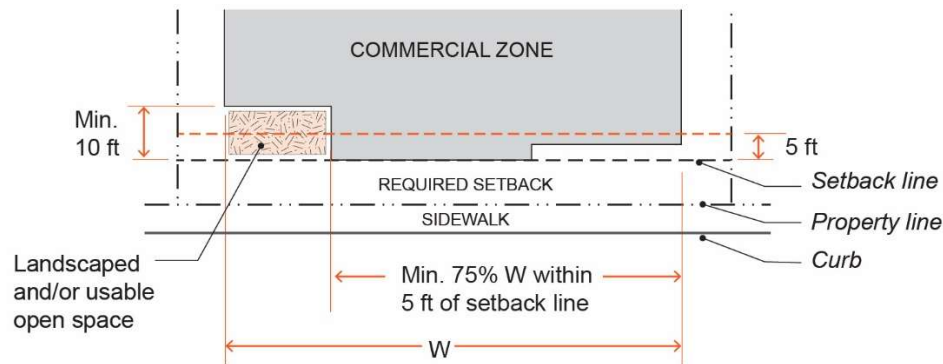


Figure A.12.1

12.2 Residential Mixed-Use projectsproject with a ground-floor non-residential usesuse shall provide site amenities or landscaping over a minimum of 3015 percent of the areaground plane between the building and the front or street-side property line. The site amenities shall be comprised of any of the following elements:

- a. LandscapingLandscape materials or raised planters;
- b. Walls designed to accommodate pedestrian seating, no higher than 36 inches;
- c. Site furnishings, including fountains, sculptures, and other public art; or
- d. Tables and chairs associated with the ground floor use.

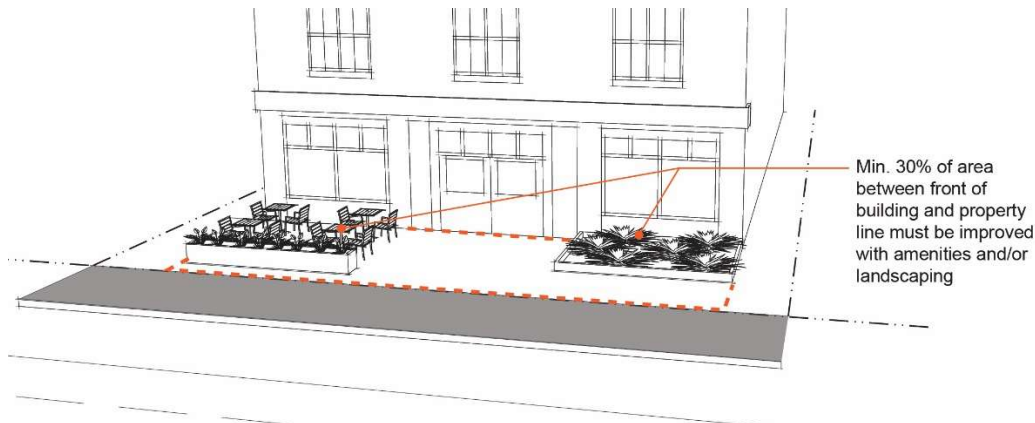


Figure A.12.2

12.3 In a multi-family residential project, all primary building entrances must face a public right-of-way, a private roadway, or a community open space that complies with the standards of A.11.

B. BUILDING STANDARDS

B.1. Building Massing and Scale

- 1.1 Multiple-story building façades that face a street shall incorporate breaks in the building mass by implementing a minimum of three of the following solutions along the combined façade area of all primary buildings facing the street: Multi-family buildings. All multi-family buildings must incorporate a minimum of one of the following massing changes along all street-facing elevations:

- a. A minimum of 40 percent of the upper floor façade length shall step back from the plane of the ground-floor façade by at least five feet; A minimum of 40 percent of the length of upper stories is stepped-back from the ground floor or building base by at least five feet. Upper stories are stories above the ground floor.



Figure B.1.1a

- a.b. Changes in the façade plane with a minimum change in depth of two feet for a minimum length along the façade of two feet at intervals of no more than 30 feet; The front of the building incorporates ground level or podium-level community recreation space that is a minimum of 900 square feet, has a minimum dimension of 30 feet, is enclosed by a minimum of two walls, and is designed with landscaping elements visible from the right-of-way.

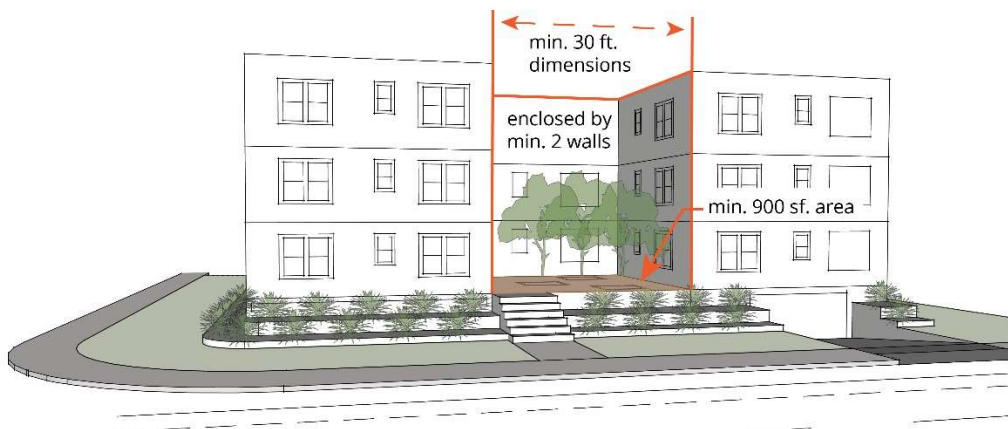


Figure B.1.1b

~~b.c. Recessed façade plane to accommodate a building entry with a minimum ground plane area of 24 square feet. Where an awning or entry covering is provided, it can extend beyond the wall plane; The front of the building does not exceed 65 feet in width.~~



Figure B.1.1c

~~c.d. An exterior arcade that provides a sheltered walkway within the building footprint with a minimum depth of eight feet. For a façade 50 feet or greater, the arcade must be a minimum length of 65 percent of the full building façade; for a façade less than 50 feet, the arcade must be a minimum of 80 percent of the full building façade.~~

~~d.e. Ground floor open area abutting street-facing façade with a minimum area of 60 square feet; or~~

~~f. Vertical elements, such as pilasters or columns, that protrude a minimum of one foot from the façade and extend the full height of the building base or ground floor, whichever is greater.~~

~~1.2 Upper floors above two stories shall be set back by a minimum of five feet from the ground-floor façade.~~

~~1.2 Townhomes must provide wall plane shifts of two feet minimum between each townhome for the entire height of the building.~~

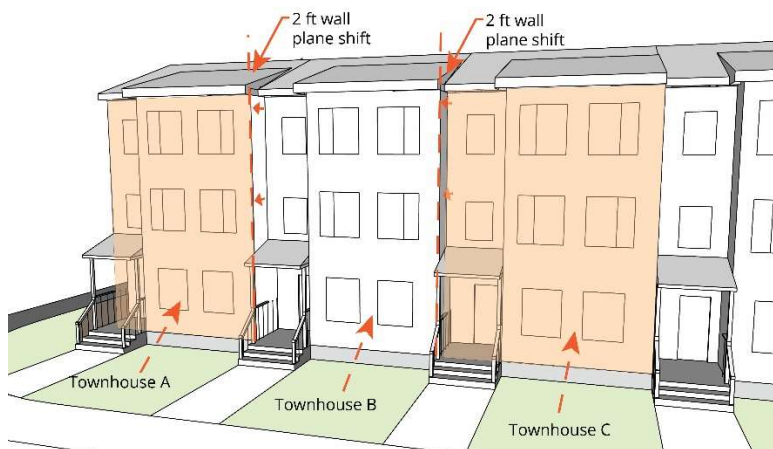


Figure B.1.2a

~~1.3 Adjacency Requirements. Where a multi-family building or townhome development abuts a single-family residential district:~~

- a. The building height is limited to 25 feet or two stories within 40 feet of the property line shared with the single-family district.
- b. At 40 feet away from the shared property line, the building may increase to the maximum height allowed per zone.

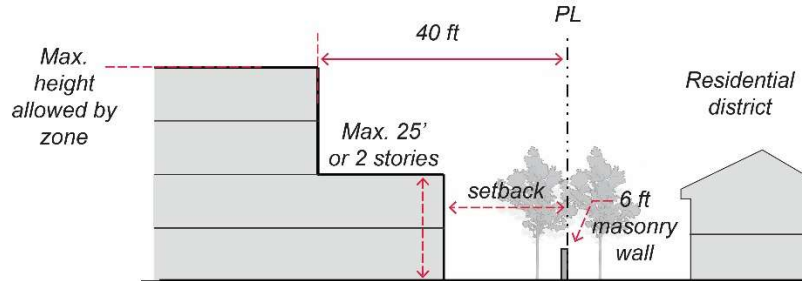


Figure B.1.3a

- 1.3.1.4 No part of a rooftop or upper floor terrace or deck shall be closer than five feet from the plane of the lower floor facing the shared property line, to prevent views into adjacent residential uses. For buildings abutting a single-family zoning district or existing single-family use, no part of a rooftop or upper floor terrace or deck shall be closer than five feet from the facade plane of the lower floor, to prevent views into adjacent residential uses.

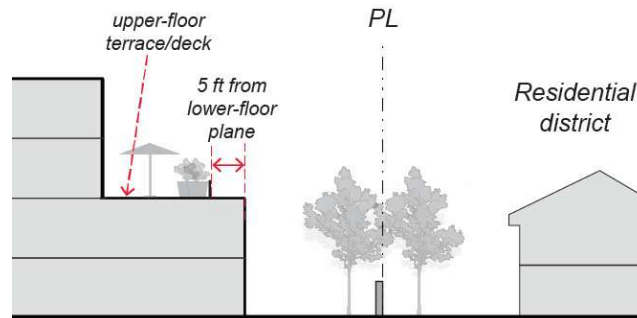


Figure B.1.3b

B.2. Parking Structure Design

- 2.1 The ground-floor façade of a parking structure facing a street or pedestrian walkway shall be fenestrated on a minimum of 40 percent of the façade. Where structured parking is provided in mixed-use buildings, the parking must be "lined" with ground-floor non-residential uses at least 30 feet deep as measured from the front elevation.
- 2.2 Façade openings on upper levels of a parking structure shall be screened at a minimum 10 percent and up to 30 percent of the opening to prevent full transparency into the structure. The portion of the above-ground parking structure visible from any abutting public right-of-way, including entrances, may not exceed 50 percent of the length of the building elevation at the setback line or 60 feet, whichever is greater.

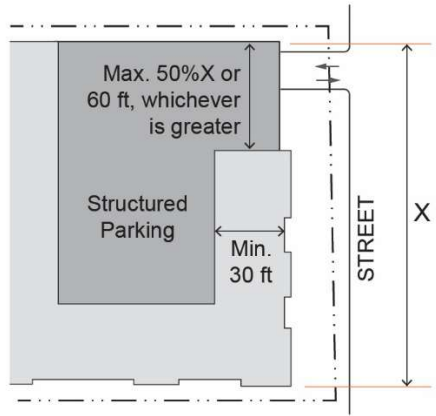


Figure B.2.1

- 2.1 ~~Parking structures facing a street and greater than 40 feet in length shall include landscaping between the building façade and the street, or façade articulation of at least 25 percent of the façade length. The façade articulation shall be implemented by one of the following solutions:~~
- ~~a. An offset of the façade plane with a depth of at least 18 inches for a minimum of eight feet in horizontal length; or~~
 - ~~b. A different building material covering the entire façade articulation.~~
- 2.3 ~~Above-ground parking structures must be designed with:~~
- ~~a. Punched openings in width-to-height proportions the same as those of the primary structure. Ribbon openings are not allowed.~~
 - ~~b. At least one of the following architectural features: cut metal screens, railings, trellises, vertical plantings, louvers, or decorative security grills.~~

B.3. Roof Design

- 3.1 At intervals of no more than ~~75~~40 feet along the building façade, horizontal eaves shall be broken using at least one of the following strategies:
- a. Gables;
 - b. Building projection ~~with a depth of a minimum of two feet;~~
 - c. Change in façade or roof height ~~of a minimum of two feet;~~
 - d. Change in roof pitch or form; or
 - e. Inclusion of dormers, parapets, and/or varying cornices.
- 3.2 Skylights shall have a flat profile rather than domed.
- 3.3 The total width of a single dormer or multiple dormers shall not exceed 50 percent of the total roof length at the street-facing façade. The dormer width shall be measured at dormer roof fascia, or widest part of the dormer.
- 3.4 Carport roof materials shall be the same as the primary building.
- 3.5 All sloped roofs must include eaves at the roof line and fascia/argeboard at gable ends.
- 3.6 Flat roofs must include either a parapet with a cornice or an overhang.

3.7 Where used, applied pitched roofs must be applied along all street-facing sides of the building. Applied pitched roofs refer to a non-structural pitched roof form at the building perimeter that obscures the flat portion of the roof, or mechanical well, from view from the right-of-way. Applied pitched roofs may not exceed a slope of 6:12.

B.4. Façade Design and Articulation

4.1 Buildings greater than two stories shall be designed to ~~with a~~ differentiated ~~the~~ base, middle, and top ~~of the building~~ on any street-facing elevation ~~façade by incorporating a minimum of.~~ Each of these elements shall be distinguished from one another using at least two of the following ~~design strategies~~ solutions:

- a. The first floor is distinguished by a material change between the first floor and upper floors along at least 70 percent of the total of all street-facing elevations.



Figure B.4.1a

- b. Variation in building mass for a minimum of 60 percent of the length of the street-facing façade through changes in the façade plane that protrude or recess with a minimum dimension of two feet; For all stories except the first story, street-facing elevation design incorporates a projection or a recess a minimum of five feet in depth every 35 linear feet.



Figure B.4.1b

- c. Balconies or habitable projections with a minimum depth of two feet for a minimum of 20 percent length of the street-facing façade; For all stories except the first story, street-facing elevations incorporate balconies or habitable projections a minimum depth of two feet for a minimum of 25 percent of the length of any street-facing façade.



Figure B.4.1c

- d. Two-foot deep eaves with regularly spaced supporting corbels or brackets.

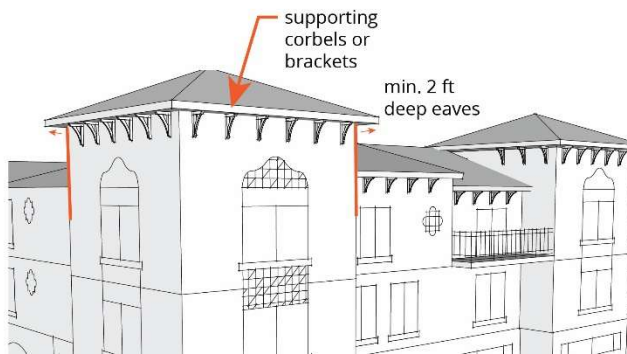


Figure B.4.1d

- e. Window boxes or plant shelves under least 60 percent of all upper-story fenestration.

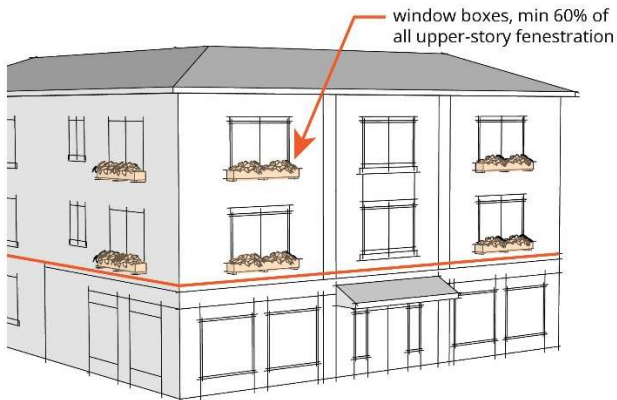


Figure B.4.1e

- a. ~~Variation in façade articulation, using shade and weather protection components, projecting a minimum of three feet for a minimum of 20 percent length from the street-facing façade;~~
 - b. ~~The use of at least two different façade materials, each covering a minimum of 20 percent of the street-facing façade, or~~
 - c. ~~The upper floor shall implement a façade height that is a minimum of two feet greater than the façade height of the floor immediately below. The greater façade height shall be made evident by taller windows or arrangement of combined windows.~~
- 4.2 All building~~façade~~ materials, such as siding, window types, and materials in architectural details, must be incorporated~~used on the street-facing façade shall be used on all other~~ building elevations~~façades~~.
- 4.3 ~~Variation in the street-facing façade planes shall be provided for buildings greater than one story by incorporating any combination of the following architectural solutions to achieve a minimum of 16 points:~~
- a. ~~Architectural features, such as:~~
 - i. ~~Arcade or gallery along the ground floor;~~
 - ii. ~~Awnings or canopies on all ground floor windows of commercial space;~~
 - iii. ~~Building cornice;~~
 - iv. ~~Façade sconce lighting at a minimum of one light fixture per 15 linear feet.~~
 - b. ~~Bay or box windows projecting a minimum of 18 inches from the façade plane and comprising a minimum of 20 percent of the fenestration on the upper floors of the facade;~~
 - c. ~~Balconies or Juliet balconies provided on a minimum of 40 percent of the fenestration on the upper floors of the facade;~~
 - d. ~~Landscaped trellises or lattices extending across a minimum of 65 percent of any level of the facade;~~
 - e. ~~Materials and color changes;~~
 - f. ~~Eaves that overhang a minimum of two feet from the facade with supporting brackets;~~
 - g. ~~Window boxes or plant shelves under a minimum of 60 percent of the fenestration on the upper floors of the facade; or~~
 - h. ~~Decorative elements such as molding, brackets, or corbels.~~
- 4.4 ~~Garage doors shall be recessed a minimum of 12 inches from the façade plane and along the street-facing façade shall not exceed 40 percent of the length of the building façade.~~

4.54.3 Changes in building materials shall occur at inside corners.

4.4 Balcony locations.

- a. Balconies facing single-family residential zones must be recessed and no part of the balcony may project more than one foot from the façade.
- b. Balconies may not be located above shared residential entries.

4.5 For ground-floor commercial uses, façades facing a street shall include windows, doors, or openings for at least 60 percent of the building façade that is between two and 10 feet above the level of the sidewalk.

4.6 Continuous blank façades.

a. The maximum street-facing ground floor elevation without a window or door is 12 feet.

b. The maximum street-facing upper level elevation without a window or door is 24 feet.

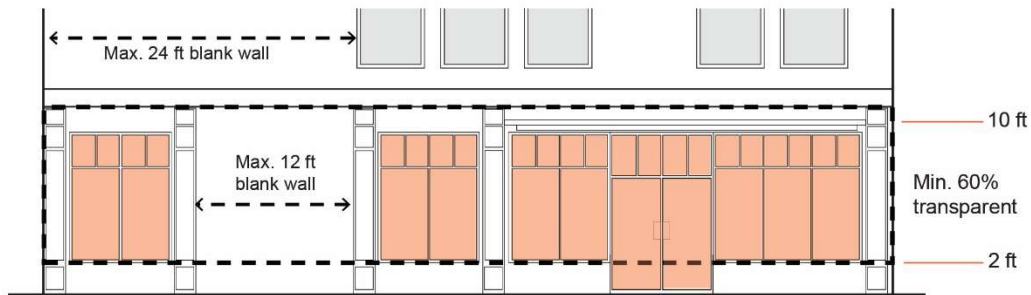


Figure B.4.4

4.64.7 Awnings shall be subject to the following requirements:

a. A minimum vertical clearance of eight feet measured from the pedestrian pathway; Shall not cover transom windows or architectural elements such as belt courses, decorative trim, and similar features;

a.b. Shall not extend beyond individual storefront bays; and

b.c. Shall not be patterned or striped; and

d. Shall have a minimum vertical clearance of eight feet measured from the pedestrian pathway.

B.5. Entrance Design and Ground Floor Design

5.1 Residential Entries.

a. All residential entrances, individual or shared, must have a roofed projection or recess or combination thereof with a minimum depth of five feet (e.g. two-foot recess and three-foot projection).

b. Residential entries must be a minimum five feet in width for individual entrances and eight feet in width for shared entrances.

c. Projections covering building entrances must be designed with columns or other structural supports. Entries with shed-roof or flat overhangs without supports at the outer edge are prohibited.



Figure B.5.2

~~5.2 Non-residential Entries and Storefront Bays. 4.6 A primary building entrance shall be provided facing a street or community recreation space. Additionally, all development shall meet the following requirements:~~

~~c.a.~~ Pedestrian entries to ground-floor and upper-floor non-residential uses shall meet at least one of the following standards:

- i. The entrance shall be recessed in the façade plan at least three feet in depth and six feet in width; or
- ii. The entrance shall be covered by an awning, portico, or other architectural element projecting from the façade a minimum of three feet.

~~d.b.~~ Entrances and storefront bays must be framed by architectural elements. This may include columns, pilasters, belt courses, an articulated building base, transom windows, a trellis with climbing plants, and/or plant boxes.

~~4.7 For ground-floor commercial uses, façades facing a street shall include windows, doors, or openings for at least 60 percent of the building façade that is between two and 10 feet above the level of the sidewalk. **Moved to B.4.5 and B.4.6**~~

~~4.8 Pedestrian entries to buildings shall meet minimum dimensions to ensure adequate access based on use and development intensity. Building entries inclusive of the doorway and the facade plane shall meet the following minimum dimensions:~~

- a. Individual residential entries: five feet in width
- b. Single entry to multiple residential unit building, including Residential Mixed-Use buildings: eight feet in width
- c. Storefront entry: six feet in width

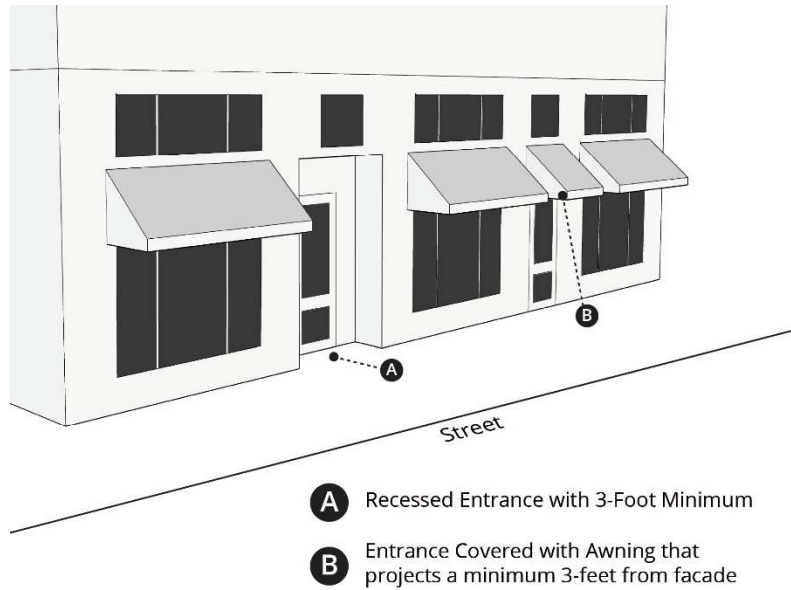


Figure B.5.3

B.6. Windows and Doors

6.1 Fenestration size. Upper floor fenestrations may not exceed 18 square feet without framing or division into smaller panes.

6.2 All windows must be designed with one of the following:

- a. Trim around entire window;
- b. Recessed window frame; or
- c. Lintels.

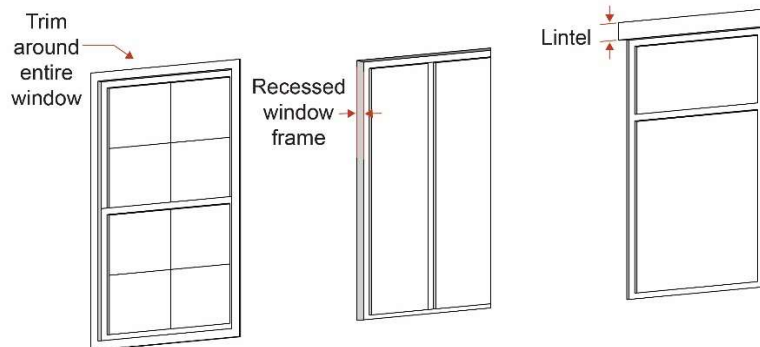


Figure B.6.2

6.3 Materials

- a. Window materials, color, and style shall be consistent on all elevations.
- b. Prohibited Materials.

4.9i. Mirrored windows are prohibited.

i. Flat window frames, or window frames flush with the building façade, are prohibited.

ii. Stucco window trims are prohibited.

6.4 Upper-story window glazing must wrap building corners or be a minimum of 30 inches from a corner.

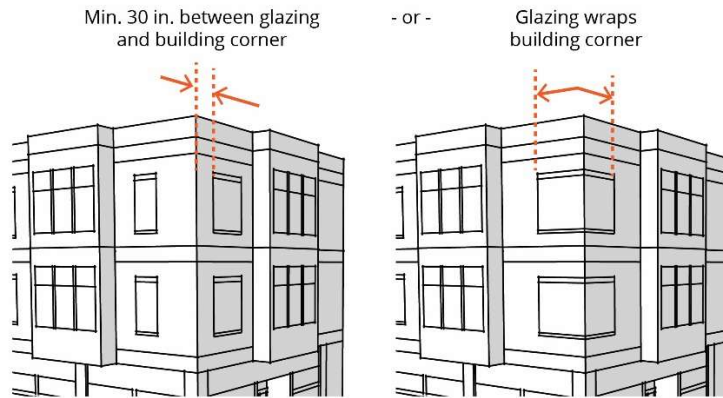


Figure B.6.4

a. ~~Shall not extend beyond individual storefront bays; and~~

b. ~~Shall not be patterned or striped.~~

4.10 ~~Balconies are allowed on facades facing the street and those facades facing existing non-residential uses on abutting parcels. Such balconies shall be without any projections beyond the building footprint.~~ **Moved to B.1.3.c**

4.11 ~~Residential Mixed-Use buildings shall provide at least one of the following features along street-facing façades where the façade exceeds 50 feet in length:~~

a. ~~A minimum five-foot offset from the façade plane for a length of at least 10 feet;~~

b. ~~Multiple pilasters or columns, each with a minimum width of two feet; or~~

c. ~~Common open space, such as a plaza, outdoor dining area, or other spaces.~~

4.12 ~~Continuous blank façades on any floor level shall not exceed 25 percent of the entire façade length along any street.~~

B.7. Materials and Architectural Details

7.1 Primary, secondary, and accent building materials. All buildings must incorporate a primary building material and a secondary building material. Any number of tertiary/accent materials may be used.

a. Primary materials. Primary materials must be applied to 50 percent or more of a façade surface area, excluding transparent surfaces.

b. Secondary materials. Secondary materials must be applied to less than 45 percent of a façade surface area, excluding transparent surfaces. Secondary materials must be different from primary materials.

- c. Accent materials. All additional materials are limited to 25 percent of a façade surface area. Trim for windows, doors, and openings do not count towards the maximum 25 percent area.

7.2 Material durability/protection.

- a. All materials must be fire resistant. Wood, engineered wood, or other wood-based products, even those labeled "ignition-resistant," are prohibited as primary building materials.
- b. Exterior finish materials shall have an expected lifespan of no less than 30 years per manufacturer's specifications.
- c. Exterior ferrous metals shall be protected from corrosion either through the use of galvanized, stainless, or weathering steel.

Memorandum

DATE	September 25, 2025		
TO	Sean Mullin, Planning Manager Town of Los Gatos SMullin@losgatosca.gov	FROM	Urban Planning Partners: Curtis Banks, Project Director Carla Violet, Project Manager Claire Mei, Project Planner Lisa Wise Consulting: Monica Szydlik, AICP, Senior Associate David Bergman, Director Jessica Chilingirian, Associate

RE: Los Gatos Objective Design Standards (ODS) Update Focus Groups Summary

This memo describes our findings from the Los Gatos ODS Update Focus Groups held on September 9, 10, and 11, 2025. Across eight virtual meetings, we engaged three participant groups—architects (1 session), developers (1 session), and residents (6 sessions). The feedback presented here includes responses to two icebreaker questions and perspectives on three key topics: high-quality building design, architectural style, and height transitions. Insights are organized by participant type, with a brief summary of participant feedback included at the top of each topic.

ARCHITECT ATTENDEES

1. Bess Wiersema, Principal + Owner at Studio 3 Design, Inc., residential and interiors
2. Jaclyn Greenmyer, Kohlsaas & Associates, single-family residential, some multi-family and mixed use
3. Jessie Delucchi, Kohlsaas & Associates
4. Jennifer Kretschmer from Kretschmer Architects

DEVELOPER ATTENDEES

1. Annette Seaborn, real estate agent/developer, owns 8 rentals and a 4-unit cottage in Los Gatos
2. Leumas (left the call early)

RESIDENT ATTENDEES

1. David Fradin, Los Gatos resident, has experience in environmental design.
2. Mary Pope-Handy has been a realtor for 20 years. She is concerned about fires and dense housing near the exits; she thinks Los Gatos needs more multi family.
3. Edgardo Laber is a resident of Los Gatos. He doesn't want to see unnecessary requirements that prevent quick building. He wants the Town to be a place where his kids can afford to live.
4. Mitzi Anderson is a resident of Los Gatos. She is somewhat familiar with the guidelines.
5. Linda, resident, multigenerational household with a young person's perspective and a disabled person's perspective.
6. Susan, resident, HPC and Planning Commission member
7. Ryan Rosenberg, GP and HEU advisory committee member.
8. Jeffrey Barnett, Planning Commission member, participated in developing original ODS.
9. Julie Southern, resident, house burned down in 1997 wildfire.
10. Joya Chatterjee, resident, involved in Chamber of Commerce.
11. Reva Cuthbertson, resident.
12. Daniel Snyder, advisory group to North 40
13. Dan Ross, North 40 advisory committee, General Plan advisory committee
14. Ricardo Avila, priest at St. Luke's Church
15. Lee Ann Wade, residential construction company owner
16. Peter Hertan, involved in various commissions
17. Katherine Schmidt, interested in urban design and planning
18. Kathryn, resident, remodeled an 1887 building
19. Carl, resident, lives in a neoclassical revival mansion home
20. Lee, resident, Historic Preservation Committee
21. Kevin Riley, professional planner
22. Bent Jensen, resident, from Denmark
23. Kevin, resident, lives in the historic district overlay

WHAT ARE YOUR FAVORITE BUILDINGS IN LOS GATOS?

- La Cañada
- Buildings at the NE corner of Highway 9 and University
- Former funeral parlor/current Gardenia restaurant
- Beckwith Block on East Main St (built ca.1893)
- Fretwell building
- Condos near Forbes Mill across pedestrian bridge from town. Blends in with the woods, lots of trees.
- Old Victorian homes
- Eichler homes
- Brick building on main street - southern kitchen location. Historic building, maintained well
- St. Lukes Church

- The new Whole Foods at Los Gatos Blvd and Amaden;
- The library
- Former funeral home, current Gardenia restaurant (great Victorian character)
- Corner N Santa Cruz and Main (distinctive roofline)
- Residential development along Grant Bishop Lane (good design, nice attic windows, and good diversity of design)
- Theatre
- Park side restaurant at 145 W Main Street (has the "Old California adobe" look)
- Robson project off Los Gatos Blvd
- Templeton Lane by Kennedy (Craftsman style, exterior articulation, finishes, colors)
- Los Gatos High School (classical design that doesn't get old)

WHAT ARE YOUR LEAST FAVORITE BUILDINGS IN LOS GATOS?

- Market Hall
- High rise apartment on college avenue - ugly
- North 40
 - Materials: poor quality
 - Architecture: Tiny little blocks everywhere, looks like a bunch of shoe boxes, low pitched roofs
 - Not cohesive, not enough articulation, poor quality materials, design exhibits a "coldness," units seem dark, no yard, should've been a 20-story building with open windows and a dog park

GENERAL COMMENTS - SUMMARY

Architects: Found 5-ft frontage rule unworkable; ODS assume single buildings instead of clusters; interpretation inconsistent; planners struggle with drawings; point system encourages low-quality, repetitive design.

Developers: Historic Preservation Committee slows projects; historic rules make buildings unusable.

Residents: Want ODS to be recommendations, not requirements; concerned about costs; standards should vary by neighborhood; need interim solutions for displaced businesses; want designs that create warmth and community.

GENERAL COMMENTS - DETAILED NOTES

Architects

- It's hard to do anything within 5 feet; it doesn't allow for people, decent trees, a bike zone, it's a weird number. (Note, this refers to the required building placement at max. 5 ft from the front setback line for 75% of building frontage.)

- The ODS assume development assume single buildings only. What about when development consists of several small buildings. How do the standards apply, or differ? A few buildings are better than one massive one.
- There are issues with how planners review projects (the writing, the rules, the interpretation). Planners (and Planning Commission) themselves often cannot read drawings.
- Interpreting the standards has been challenging.
- We need different standards for the Downtown proper and the other downtown.
- The current point structure is problematic. Some boxes (e.g., crown molding) are the easiest boxes to check, so those start to dictate the overall style, and that ends up being very limiting. And everyone does it. If everyone is picking the 3 same things, then everyone kind of getting the same style. Plus, some of these “easy points” are not very friendly to smaller buildings, are more tailored to large buildings.
 - Sometimes designers just need the points and end up sacrificing quality.
 - Let the architects explain how they can achieve same goal without the checklist.
 - Attendees are hoping to see the standards become more user friendly and flexible so applicants can actually check the boxes instead of going after waivers.

Developers

- Old and historic things have so many rules, HPC is difficult and if you can't make meeting it takes 3 more months, need their approval they think they know everything.
- Things that make Los Gatos quaint also make them old and unusable.

Residents

- The ODS shouldn't be requirements, only recommendations.
- The ODS should not be cost-prohibitive, require expensive design measures.
- The ODS should require trees between buildings if sidewalks are too small.
- The ODS should create warmth and a feeling of community.
- Need interim solutions for businesses that have to vacate/relocate during construction (e.g., Ace Hardware)
- The standards are not appropriate for all neighborhoods in town.
- There should be a distinction between standards for Los Gatos Blvd vs. the Downtown.
- Consider access. In the new plan for the Lodge site, there is an access issue for route 9. Needs better access, way in/out.
- Should allow developers to develop multiple buildings to make more uniform but different (think of places like Paris, Santana Row, Santa Barbara as good examples)

HIGH QUALITY DESIGN - SUMMARY

Architects: No specific comments.

Developers: Mahogany windows required by the Town were a failure — costly, leaky, impractical; want more durable alternatives.

Residents: Value sustainability, durability, solar access; like traditional styles (Spanish, Victorian, farmhouse) with some modern; want variety in materials/colors, articulation, and porches; dislike boxy, cheap, monotonous designs.

HIGH QUALITY DESIGN - DETAILED NOTES

Architects

NA

Developers

- The Town required mahogany windows, and they leak constantly. It has been 25 years, and the FG participant has redone them 10-15 times and they still leak, are cracked, don't open, and need to be replaced again. Iron clad on the outside and wood on the inside would work better.

Residents

- Likes:
 - **Sustainable design**
 - Energy efficient materials - high ceilings are luxurious but a waste of energy
 - **Durability/longevity**
 - No leaking
 - Attention paid to sunlight access for solar
 - Design
 - Timeless designs: a mix of Spanish styles, Victorian, brick/stone buildings, farmhouse style.
 - There is room for some modern design.
 - Window, door, and porch design are important
 - Materials and Colors
 - **Fire safe materials**
 - Varied use of materials.
 - High-quality stucco
 - **Different colored stucco, brick, wood**
 - Don't like buildings made of steel and glass
 - Materials like wood siding or hardie board, shingles
 - **Don't object to siding materials other than wood**
 - Sturdy railings
 - **Muted, natural colors, earth tones**
 - Articulation
 - Exterior articulation – not just boxes

- Tall windows, especially on the 2nd and 3rd stories, creates a welcoming feel.
 - Buildings over 3 stories should provide more articulation and variety, considering how they relate to the buildings next to them
 - Porches and other projections are important
 - Heights building to building should vary
- Several people enjoy the glass and openness of the library
- Support for the open space and use of stone on the corner of Santa Cruz and Main
- Support for use of decals and other details
- Underground parking or parking in the back
- Dislikes:
 - Design
 - Dislike anything boxy, plain, or with weird shapes/curves.
 - No cheap-looking design
 - design that lacks detail, that is not distinctive
 - Corrugated steel, like on North 40, looks cheap
 - Small windows as they create a closed-off feeling
 - Monotony
 - Flat fenestration
 - Materials and Colors
 - T-1 11 – looks cheap, impermanent, low quality
 - Mismatched colors

ARCHITECTURAL STYLE - SUMMARY

Architects: Dislike prescriptive rules (continuous roof pitch, plate heights); want variation and flexibility; question “fake” frontages when parking is hidden.

Developers: Favor taller, larger, more modern mixed-use projects; appreciate Los Gatos’ eclectic, mixed style.

Residents: Support broad variety of styles if high-quality and compatible; dislike post-modern 70s designs and flat, monotonous facades; mixed feelings about glass/modern buildings; prefer good articulation and authentic details; okay with well-integrated small multiplexes.

ARCHITECTURAL STYLE – DETAILED NOTES

Architects

- If all of the parking is in the back, then what use is the frontage? It is fake, a movie storefront.
- There are challenges with buildings of 400 – 500 units being pedestrian-friendly. Where can you even put a building that massive? Should it be close to road like in downtown San Jose where they have a walkable downtown? Or should we push it back, so the height is not so intimidating?

- Dislike for the ODS that require continuous plate height and continuous roof pitch. We need more variation!
- The ODS are too specific about ways to conform to rules. They don't represent enough variety in ways to comply so that different styles can work. The Town wants variety and interesting architecture, but this pigeonholes us too much.
- Current ODS not friendly to middle housing.
- Some items in the checklist are too traditional (e.g., 8 ft arcade) and no one is doing that anymore.
- There is a need for more contemporary and modern design.

Developers

- There was a time when you could build the house you wanted and be creative with little bit of everything. The beauty of this Town is that it is a mix of everything.
- Need higher stories and to develop bigger and more mixed-use, likes modern and glass designs

Residents

- Setbacks
 - Architectural compatibility means similar setbacks, similar footprints to some of the classic neighborhoods
 - Do not like buildings with a solid flat wall up against the sidewalk in a neighborhood with a 20 ft setback
- Articulation
 - Windows should have some articulation – flat windows, or windows with minimal trim, look cheap
 - Windows and facades need depth, should not be just flat
 - Defining a better roof is more important than the roofing materials. Overhangs under 1' look visually cheap.
- Support for a variety of architectural styles
 - Los Gatos Blvd has lots of different types of buildings. It's different from El Camino Real, and we should keep it that way. Let's prevent development like we see on El Camino Real in Sunnyvale and Mountain View.
 - Accepting variety. Avoiding monotony.
 - Monolithic styles that lack articulation are not good
 - There is a feeling that people want to preserve what makes Los Gatos what it is.
 - Almost every style/design is appropriate: Eichler/mid-cent modern, Victorians, Pueblo style, Craftsman, Spanish, Victorian, Modern farmhouse, Contemporary
 - Architectural style is not as important
 - Compatibility comes down to how it presents at the street and how it relates to the neighbors behind
 - Don't want fake-looking imitations of historic styles

- Buildings should use details and features appropriate and authentic to the architectural
 - Compatibility is more about quality of a style than if it looks like your neighbors. Like variety of architectural styles – no need to look like neighbors. Similar massing is good, but style can be varied.
 - Do not like post-modern design from the 70s.
 - Example addition: Miles & University, raised an old Victorian up and brought it closer to the sidewalk – so now it's visually dominating.
 - Some are not bothered by modern buildings with glass and stone in a setting with a lot of trees while others do not like glass buildings in their town
 - House along Alta a few doors in from Los Gatos Blvd that is modern, doesn't fit. But we like the library, so should an applicant be able to build something more modern.
 - Main Street project is a great example of beautiful design that is compatible with the neighborhood and takes cues from the Los Gatos High School design. The Robson homes on Los Gatos Blvd are also more compatible with a variety of materials.
- Small MF
 - 2, 3, and -4-plexes – When done well, they look nice. When they look nice, with appropriate roofs, courtyards, doorways, etc., as opposed to a motel with a flat roof, they are good.
 - Fourplex Example: south on University Ave before bridal shop, before getting Old town on eastern side of the street. May have been a motel. It's ugly and horrible. Small, older cheap homes. 20 feet wide, u-shaped, poor use of space. One parking space, very tight spaces, added parking issues on the street.
 - Townhouses and small multiplexes should be well integrated into the neighborhood they go into
 - Don't want to be too prescriptive because that will limit new development
 - 6 story condo buildings in San Francisco - all look awful. Something more classic.
 - Support tall mixed-use buildings to enable more walkable environment (residential above commercial)
 - Balconies big enough to be usable
 - Like in Detroit, tall buildings on corridors with single family behind
 - Commercial and restaurant usage on ground floor
 - Design garages so they can convert to housing in the future
 - Specific Design Ideas (Green Building Focused):
 - Energy Efficiency
 - Lighting with motion detectors
 - Reflective paint for roofs
 - Passive cooling; specifically, thicker walls and circulating water through somewhat permeable materials (walls that "sweat" and dispense heat)
 - Water Efficiency

- Rain guards (Big Basin Way and Cupertino have these). Silicon Valley is sinking because of over-pumping of aquifer.
- Water barrels and plumbing from laundry room for water recycling
- Mechanical Equipment
 - Solar
 - Covered parking should have solar panels.
 - Solar electricity-producing windows, locally manufactured
 - Require EV charging
 - Heat pumps
- Landscaping
 - Vertical gardens on side of the building
 - Planting more trees
 - Edible landscaping/herb gardens (like in Northeast)

HEIGHT TRANSITIONS – SUMMARY

Architects: Concern about new multi-family on commercial lots “sticking out” due to mismatched setbacks with neighbors.

Developers: No specific comments.

Residents: Support for step-backs (e.g., 5 ft per story), especially near neighborhoods; landscaping and trees soften tall buildings; want gradual height increases in neighborhoods but accept taller buildings on boulevards/corridors; concerned about looming walls; some examples (Los Gatos Hotel positive, ACE/Whole Foods negative).

HEIGHT TRANSITIONS – DETAILED NOTES

Architects

- If a multi-family or mixed-use building develops on a commercial lot, then you’ll have commercial uses abutting the residential, where the setback is generally deeper. With the building placement standards, the new building will stick out. Especially when there is parking in the front setback of the neighboring commercial buildings.

Developers

NA

Residents

- Step-backs
 - Building should step-back so they don’t appear massive. The building across from Los Gatos high school is huge, it should fit in better.
 - Support for upper-story step-backs
 - Support for 5 feet step-back per story

- Feeling that step-backs create good design and would not limit number of units. Units may get smaller, but developers will still be motivated to get their desired number of units, regardless of the step-back
- There are locations where no set back or step-back is needed – existing context has no setback
- The Los Gatos hotel was controversial, but they nestled it in and transitioned well, with setbacks and green space. But the new ACE development has no transition to the surrounding neighborhood.
- The Whole Foods is too close to the Boulevard – it's a looming building and very modern that would have benefited from greater setbacks.
- Preference to have building setback away from the lower density home.
- Los Gatos Blvd, where more density is needed – shouldn't require transitions. Along major boulevards and freeways, no need for rear step-backs. Maximize density there.
- Landscaping
 - Having tall buildings near single family areas or in general should be accompanied by trees, especially evergreen
 - Example: Chase Bank on Santa Cruz Ave – already have tall trees, so it doesn't matter how tall the building is.
- Concentration
 - Los Gatos Blvd, where more density is needed – shouldn't require transitions. Along major boulevards and freeways, no need for rear step-backs. Maximize density there.
 - Support for slowly going up in height
 - A story beyond what is existing in a neighborhood is fine. If the area is two stories, then new buildings at 3 stories are fine. But going up to 4 or 5 stories in a two-story neighborhood is too much
 - Need transitions for larger homes to smaller homes, as well as taller buildings to shorter buildings
 - Preference to have taller buildings on main corridors
- Visual impact of what you see from those roads doesn't matter.
- Solid walls could feel imposing. Important to break it up.
- Support for varying the roof types allowed by the height of the roof

MEMO

To: Sean Mullin, Town of Los Gatos
From: Lisa Wise Consulting, Inc. (LWC)
Date: October 22, 2025
Re: Technical Analysis and Evaluation, Town of Los Gatos Updated/Additional Objective Design Standards for Qualifying Multi-Family and Mixed-Use Residential Development

The Town of Los Gatos launched an update to its objective design standards for multi-family residential and mixed-use development. The revisions to the standards will focus on codifying the perspective of the community on the elements of high-quality building design, architectural style, and height transitions, as well as edits for clarity and usability. This Memo includes the following sections:

- **Section 1: Regulatory Framework** documents relevant policy and regulatory framework;
- **Section 2: Input to Date** documents Staff feedback on the objective design standards and community input related to design, gathered from the Town's previous public outreach events;
- **Section 3: Example Projects** explores how five current development proposals may inform the revised standards; and
- **Section 4: Initial Analysis** indicates how the existing standards may be revised in light of current regulations, staff and community feedback, and recent project designs.

Together with staff and community input gathered over the course of this Project, the analysis presented in this Memo will set the direction for the development of the updated objective design standards.

1 Regulatory Framework

This section provides an overview of the Town's existing regulatory framework, including General Plan policies, development standards from Chapter 29 (Zoning Regulations) of the Code of the Town of Los Gatos, and the North 40 Specific Plan which includes standards and guidelines for multi-family residential and mixed-use development.

2040 General Plan

Adopted in 2022, the Los Gatos 2040 General Plan provides the long-term vision for the Town's physical form and development. The General Plan consists of policies that govern and guide Town actions on development regulations and decisions. This section documents existing guiding principles and policies related to the design of multi-family residential and mixed-use development.

In April 2024, the Los Gatos Town Council voted to rescind the Land Use and Community Design Elements of the 2040 General Plan. The 2020 Land Use and Community Design Elements, adopted in 2011, are referenced below.

Land Use Element (2020 General Plan)

The Land Use Element guides the location, form, pattern, and character of new development in the Town.

- **Goal LU-1:** To preserve, promote, and protect the existing small-town character and quality of life within Los Gatos.
 - **Policy LU-1.2:** Ensure that new development preserves and promotes existing commercial centers consistent with the maintenance of a small-scale, small-town atmosphere and image.
- **Goal LU-6:** To preserve and enhance the existing character and sense of place in residential neighborhoods.
 - **Policy LU-6.7:** Continue to encourage a variety of housing types and sizes that is balanced throughout the Town and within neighborhoods, and that is also compatible with the character of the surrounding neighborhood.
 - **Policy LU-6.8:** New construction, remodels, and additions shall be compatible and blend with the existing neighborhood.
- **Goal LU-10:** To preserve Downtown Los Gatos as the historic center of the Town, with goods and services for local residents, while maintaining the existing Town identity, environment, and commercial viability.
 - **Policy LU-10.4:** Encourage mixed uses to increase residential opportunities in commercial zones Downtown, taking into consideration potential impacts to loss of commercial opportunities.
- **Goal LU-13:** To promote appropriate and compatible development along Los Gatos Boulevard that complements the whole Town and serves residents and families.
 - **Policy LU-13.4:** New development along Los Gatos Boulevard shall be designed to minimize adverse impacts on adjacent residential areas.

Community Design Element (2020 General Plan)

The Community Design Element aims to preserve the small-town character of Los Gatos through physical design elements.

Town-Wide Design Principles

- **Goal CD-1:** Preserve and enhance Los Gatos's character through exceptional community design.
 - **Policy CD-1.1:** Building elements shall be in proportion with those traditionally in the neighborhood.
 - **Policy CD-1.2:** New structures, remodels, landscapes, and hardscapes shall be designed to harmonize and blend with the scale and rhythm of the neighborhood and natural features in the area.
 - **Policy CD-1.3:** Buildings, landscapes, and hardscapes shall follow the natural contours of the property.
 - **Policy CD-1.4:** Development on all elevations shall be of high quality design and construction, a positive addition to and compatible with the Town's ambiance. Development shall enhance the character and unique identity of existing commercial and/or residential neighborhoods.

- **Goal CD-3:** To require utilities, landscaping and streetscapes to contribute to Los Gatos's high-quality character.
 - o **Policy CD-3.4:** Encourage the use of landscaping such as trees, large shrubs, and trellised vines to mitigate the effects of building mass, lower noise, and reduce heat generation.
 - o **Policy CD-3.5:** All landscaping shall be carefully reviewed to ensure that it is aesthetically pleasing, compatible with its neighborhood and natural environment, and water conserving.
 - o **Policy CD-3.6:** Utility connections and meters shall be visually unobtrusive from the street.
 - o **Policy CD-3.7:** Roof mounted mechanical equipment shall be screened and such screening shall be considered as part of the structure for height limitations.
 - o **Policy CD-3.8:** Solid fencing over 3 feet high shall be designed such that it does not isolate the structures from the street, or shall be set back and landscaped.
 - o **Policy CD-3.9:** Parking structures and facilities shall have a low profile, be screened from view, and be aesthetically pleasing.
- **Goal CD-4:** To preserve existing trees, natural vegetation, natural topography, riparian corridors and wildlife habitats, and promote high quality, well designed, environmentally sensitive, and diverse landscaping in new and existing developments.
 - o **Policy CD-4.5:** New development shall promote visual continuity through tree planting, consistent use of low shrubs, and ground cover.
 - o **Policy CD-4.6:** Encourage mixtures of tree species, both deciduous and evergreen, to screen projects, add variety, create a more natural environment, and avoid future problems of insect infestation or other blights that might destroy the desired tree cover.

Residential Neighborhoods

- **Goal CD-6:** To promote and protect the physical and other distinctive qualities of residential neighborhoods.
 - o **Policy CD-6.1:** Reduce the visual impact of new construction and/or remodels on the Town and its neighborhoods.
 - o **Policy CD-6.4:** New homes shall be sited to maximize privacy, livability, protection of natural plant and wildlife habitats and migration corridors, and adequate solar access and wind conditions. Siting should take advantage of scenic views but should not create significant ecological or visual impacts affecting open spaces, public places, or other properties.
- **Goal CD-7:** To preserve the quality of the private open space throughout Los Gatos.
 - o **Policy CD-7.1:** Maximize quality usable open space in all new developments.
 - o **Policy CD-7.2:** Multi-family residential developments shall include common open space suitable for group gathering.
 - o **Policy CD-7.3:** All residential developments shall include private open space in proportion to the building size.

Historic Preservation

- **Goal CD-12:** To preserve significant historic and architectural features within the Town.
 - o **Policy CD-12.6:** New structures within historic districts shall be designed to blend and harmonize with the neighborhood.

Public Facilities, Services, and Infrastructure Element

The Public Facilities, Services, and Infrastructure Element describes the provision and maintenance of public facilities, services, and infrastructure.

Utilities and Alternative Energy

- **Goal PFS-7:** Promote green buildings that minimize consumption of energy and natural resources.
 - **Policy PFS-7.4:** Green Roofs and Community Gardens. Encourage new multi-family construction to include green roofs and common space for community gardens.

Open Space, Parks, and Recreation Element

The Open Space, Parks, and Recreation Element addresses open space for outdoor recreation facilities and preservation.

Parks and Recreation

- **Goal OSPR-7:** Create and maintain open space areas and parks that complement and enhance natural habitats and neighborhoods.
 - **Policy OSPR-7.7:** Recreation Space for Young Children. Encourage new multi-family residential development of eight units or more to include tot lots or similar shared off-street recreation space for young children.

Zoning Code Regulations

Development standards for zoning districts that support multi-family residential and mixed-use development in the Code are summarized below. Table 1 summarizes standards for districts within the Housing Element Overlay Zone (HEOZ), and Table 2 summarizes standards for districts outside of the HEOZ.

Table 1: Standards for Districts Supporting Multi-sFamily and Mixed-Use Development (HEOZ Zones)							
District	R-1:8:HEOZ	R-M:HEOZ	C-1:HEOZ	C-2:HEOZ	CH:HEOZ	CM:HEOZ	NF-SP: HEOZ
Density	0-5 du/ac	Where GPLU is HDR, 30-40 du/ac; where GPLU is MRD, 14-22, 5-12 du/ac in VHFSZ	10-20	20-30	30-40 du/ac	-	30-40 du/ac
FAR	n/a	n/a	1.0	2.0	3.0	-	-
Lot Coverage	50%	75%	n/a	n/a	n/a	50%	Mixed-use: 50%; Residential-only: None

Table 1: Standards for Districts Supporting Multi-sFamily and Mixed-Use Development (HEOZ Zones)

District	R-1:8:HEOZ	R-M:HEOZ	C-1:HEOZ	C-2:HEOZ	CH:HEOZ	CM:HEOZ	NF-SP: HEOZ
Height	30 ft	Where GPLU is HDR: 45 ft Where GPLU is MRD: 35 ft	35 ft	45 ft	45 ft	35 ft	35 ft; 45 ft for mixed-use w/ min. 40% affordable; 25 ft w/in 50 ft of Los Gatos Blvd or Lark Ave
Yard, Front	25 ft ¹	25 ft	15 ft; 25 ft abutting or facing an R zone; +1 ft for each foot over 20 ft.	10 ft; 15 ft abutting or facing an R zone; +1 ft for each foot over 20 ft	15 ft; 25 ft abutting or facing an R zone; +1 ft for each foot over 20 ft	25 ft, +1 ft for each foot over 20 ft.	Varies by right-of-way ²
Yard, Street Side	15 ft	20 ft	15 ft, +1 ft for each foot over 20 ft		15 ft, +1 ft for each foot over 20 ft		
Yard, Interior Side	8 ft	Two-family: 8 ft; Multi-family: 10 ft, 12 ft w/ bedroom windows, 20 ft w/ living room windows	None; 20 ft abutting or facing an R zone, +1 ft for each foot over 20 ft	None; 20 ft abutting or facing an R zone; +1 ft for each foot over 20 ft	None; 15 ft abutting or facing an R zone, +1 ft for each foot over 20 ft	25 ft	Mixed-use on interior streets: none Elsewhere: not specified
Yard, Rear	20 ft	20 ft			None; 20 ft abutting or facing an R zone, +1 ft for each foot over 20 ft		
Private Open Space	-	120 sf/unit for ground-floor units; 60 sf/unit for upper-story units	-	-	-	-	some form of useful private open space is required
Common Rec. Space	-	100 sf/unit + 2% of non-residential sf	-	-	-	-	100 sf/du (condos) 200 sf/du (other multi-family)

Notes:

¹ Where an entire side of a block is being developed at one time, the minimum front yard requirements may be reduced by 5 feet to create a staggered building line, provided the average of the front yards equals the requirements of this section.

² 40 ft (Lark Ave); 20 ft (Los Gatos Blvd with Market Hall at edge); 30 ft (Los Gatos Blvd in all other areas); 12 ft (North A St, Noddin Ave, Burton Rd, C2 Street); 24 ft (South A Street, Lark District); 15 ft (Neighborhood Street); 25 ft (South A Street, Transition District); per Architecture and Site Review (residential on interior streets)

Table 2: Standards for Districts Supporting Multi-Family and Mixed-Use Development (Outside the HEOZ)

District	R-M	C-1	C-2	CH	O
Density	5-12 du/ac (R-M:5-12 zone); 5-20 du/ac (R-M:5-20 zone)	-	-	-	-
FAR	-	0.6 when in a parking assessment district	0.6	-	0.6 when in a parking assessment district
Lot Coverage	40%	50%	-	50%	40%
Height	30 ft	35 ft	45 ft	35 ft	35 ft
Yard, Front	25 ft	15 ft; 25 ft abutting or facing an R zone; +1 ft for each foot over 20 ft.	10 ft; 15 ft abutting or facing an R zone; +1 ft for each foot over 20 ft	15 ft; 25 ft abutting or facing an R zone; +1 ft for each foot over 20 ft	25 ft
Yard, Street Side	20 ft	15 ft, +1 ft for each foot over 20 ft		15 ft, +1 ft for each foot over 20 ft	15 ft
Yard, Interior Side	Two-family: 8 ft; Multi-family: 10 ft, 12 ft w/ bedroom windows, 20 ft w/ living room windows	None; 20 ft abutting or facing an R zone, +1 ft for each foot over 20 ft	None; 20 ft abutting or facing an R zone; +1 ft for each foot over 20 ft	None; 15 ft abutting or facing an R zone, +1 ft for each foot over 20 ft	10 ft
Yard, Rear	20 ft			None; 20 ft abutting or facing an R zone, +1 ft for each foot over 20 ft	20 ft
Private Open Space	120 sf/unit for ground-floor units; 60 sf/unit for upper-story units	-	-	-	-
Common Rec. Space	100 sf/unit + 2% of non-residential sf	-	-	-	-

North 40 Specific Plan

The North 40 Specific Plan, adopted in 2015, establishes a comprehensive framework for a 44-acre neighborhood that offers a mix of residential, commercial, and open space uses. The Specific Plan is an opportunity to address the community's needs and preferences in housing, retail, outdoor amenities, and the natural environment while maintaining a small-town feel. The document includes design guidelines that address all residential and mixed-use development in the Specific Plan area. The following is a summary of design guidelines related to high-quality building design, architectural style, and height transitions.

Mixed-Use Design

- **Building Form.** Exterior wall planes should be varied in depth and direction with minimized blank walls and visual bulk. Retail linkages along retail-oriented side streets shall be achieved through corner entries and adjacent display windows.
- **Building Elements and Articulation.**
 - o *Architectural Details.* Buildings should include details and elements that add visual interests and alleviate the look of blank walls with unified design around all sides of buildings.
 - o *Entrance Design.* Building entries should be well defined and incorporate vestibules.
 - o *Window Design and Transparency.* Display windows should provide sufficient transparency. Windows should complement the architectural style of the building and avoid dark or reflective glazing.
 - o *Protection.* Install awnings and trellises when weather and sun exposure protection are desired.
 - o *Colors and Materials.* Wood window frames are encouraged. Avoid strong colors.

Residential Design

- **Building Elements and Articulation.**
 - o *Building and Roof Forms.* Avoid boxy forms with large massing by using a variety of building forms and roof shapes with variations in height, setback, shape, and roof lines.
 - o *Entrance Design.* Emphasize entries via projecting porches or other entry elements.
 - o *Façade Articulation.* Buildings should include horizontal and vertical offsets and well-defined base, middle, and top to prevent bulk. Avoid repetition of identical façades and roof lines.
 - o *Architectural Materials and Details.* All materials and details should be carried around all sides of the building. Architectural features such as bay windows and cornices are encouraged. Provide pedestrian-oriented elements and details on facades facing sidewalks.
 - o *Window Design.* The size and proportion of the windows should be appropriate to the building. Window articulation such as sills and trim should be applied.

2 Community Input to Date

This section documents public input and takeaways related to community design from the Town's previous community engagement efforts and subsequent public meetings regarding the need to update the standards.

Community Design Workshop (2020)

In 2020, the Town hosted an online community workshop as part of the 2040 General Plan Update. The objective of the workshop was to collect community input on the topic of community design to inform the Community Design Element of the General Plan. The workshop included a visual preference survey on participants' design priorities. The planning team collected the following observations about multi-family residential and mixed-use project examples:

- Larger buildings need upper-story step-backs that break up the massing and serve as open space. However, certain participants worried that step-backs might waste floor space and create more underutilized decks and patios.
- New construction should incorporate a mix of high-quality materials and colors and avoid a cheap and overly uniform look.
- Building façades should be well articulated to achieve a balanced look without looking too “chopped up.”
- New buildings need sufficient transparency and high-quality window design.
- Participants were divided over architectural styles. While some believed that new developments should feature historic-inspired styles compatible with the existing built environment, especially in and near downtown, others preferred more contemporary styles with clean and simple lines.

Objective Design Standards Community Meetings (2022)

In 2022, the Town held two community meetings to discuss the Town’s current objective design standards. At these meetings, the community articulated the following priorities related to design:

- Buildings need to provide shading and weather protection.
- There needs to be different standards for various roof types. Standards should allow for diverse roof forms to avoid the uniform look.

Town Council Meeting (2024)

On September 6, 2024, the Town Council discussed the effectiveness and shortcoming of the Town’s existing objective sign standards. Key input gathered at that meeting included the following:

- Many of the nine projects that have been subject to the objective standards (SB 330 projects) have requested waivers. This has included waivers for public bike parking, some specific design features, and dimensions of required open space/balconies.
- The standards document does not include specific standards for small multi-family projects. Most Housing Element sites are anticipated to support small multi-family, so this is an oversight.
- The Council is concerned about protecting the character of Los Gatos and is interested in additional standards focused on
 - o Height transitions/massing: make sure tall residential buildings are not located too close to single-family homes
 - o Architectural style: make sure things don't look out of place
 - o High-quality design: ensure that façade materials reflect existing character
 - o Small multifamily housing (on the scale of 3 to 8 units). Since the standards seem written for larger developments, there is concern about creating loopholes for smaller projects.
- We need to make sure there attention is paid to details, and that the standards don't take a "one size fits all" approach.

Staff Input on 2023 Objective Design Standards

Last updated in 2023, the Town of Los Gatos Objective Design Standards are the Town's guiding framework for new multi-family and mixed-use residential development projects. The standards aim to preserve the Town's unique character through high-quality architectural and environmental design that integrates with the surrounding built environment. The document includes Purpose and Applicability statements; a glossary of key terms; two sections of design standards; and two appendices.

Below is a summary of the two sections of design standards along with needed revisions and additions as indicated by Town planning staff.

Site Design

- **A.1 Pedestrian Access** – Pedestrian connectivity throughout site plan and within parking areas.
 - o Clarify the standard to recognize that pedestrian circulation in parking garages typically utilizes the drive aisle.
 - o Add standards that require pedestrian pathway, as opposed to regulating design for a pathway when implemented.
- **A.2 Short Term Bicycle Parking (Class II)** – Short-term bicycle rack design and dimensions, location and weather coverage requirements, and ratio.
 - o Ratio is too high. Suggest revising to one short-term bike space per four units. Cite rates from other cities to justify.
 - o Permanent solid-roofed weather protection structure is frequently waived for applicants.
- **A.3 Long-Term Bicycle Parking (Class I)** – Long-term bicycle parking facility design, location requirements, and ratio.
 - o Add flexibility on location requirement – consider revising to allow the facilities to be located in below-grade parking garages.
 - o Applicants are finding difficulty in sourcing a locker that meets these specific dimensions. Revise to increase flexibility based in products on the market.
 - o This additional space between aisle and long-term bicycle parking spaces has proven onerous. Reconsider, and revise diagrams as needed.
- **A.4 Vehicular Access** – Internal circulation requirements for off-street parking lots.
- **A.5 Parking Location and Design** – Location and design requirements for parking sites.
- **A.6 Parking Structure Access** – Design criteria to minimize conflicts (access and congestion) between drivers and pedestrians.
- **A.7 Utilities** – Pedestrian-scale lighting; screening of utilities and mechanical equipment.
 - o Revise to increase flexibility to allow integrated fixtures such as lights embedded in walls.
 - o Revise to recognize the constraints of traffic view areas, and location and clearance requirements dictated by utilities.

- **A.8 Landscaping and Screening** – Measures to buffer residential properties and reduce visibility of surface parking lots.
 - o Clarify standard's reference to setback
 - o Hyperlink to Master Street Tree List.
- **A.9 Fencing** – Location, height, materials, and transparency of fences and gates.
- **A.10 Retaining Walls** – Height, configuration, and visual treatment of retaining walls.
- **A.11 Landscaped, Private, and Community Recreation Spaces** – Size, dimensions, and distribution of landscaped areas, private recreation spaces, and community recreation spaces for qualifying projects.
 - o Add graphic/example.
 - o Note that any changes to the standard will require a Code change as well.
- **A.12 Building Placement** – Placement of buildings relative to property lines and site amenities in front setback areas for mixed-use developments.
 - o Provide internal clarification on the required “build-to zone” (requirement for building to be located within a specified distance of the minimum setback line).
 - o Graphic A.11.1 should be A.12.1.
 - o Add graphic/examples showing site amenity elements.

Building Standards

- **B.1 Massing and Scale** – Form and layout of street-facing building façades to break up massing and reduce the visual scale of multi-story buildings. This standard requires compliance with at least three out of a menu of six design options.
 - o Reduce to two solutions to incorporate breaks in building mass.
 - o Edit to, “A minimum of 40 percent of the upper floor façade length of the floors above the ground floor shall step back from the plane of the ground-floor façade by at least five feet.”
 - o Revise [b.] to state that the depth changes need to be applied to the full vertical extent of the façade.
 - o Delete (d) and figures. Generally, arcades are a poor design choice that hides storefronts or ground floor facades.
 - o The standard € should emphasize that the intent is to introduce articulation to the massing. Clarify if each “open area” must be 60 sq ft. Clarify that the open areas can be landscaped.
 - o Add graphic for 1.2.
- **B.2 Parking Structure Design** – Façade treatment, transparency, and street-facing design of parking structures.
 - o Clarify if 2.2 applies to each opening or across the entire façade. Is it limited to each elevation? Add graphic.
 - o Remove, “landscaping between the building façade and the street, or” (2.3).
- **B.3 Roof Design** – Roof form, features, and materials to create variation and consistency with primary structures.

- o Add graphic for 3.1.
- **B.4 Façade Design and Articulation** – Building façade composition, material transitions, entry design, and architectural features for all sides of a building, with specific standards for street-facing façades and adjacent residential uses. Standard 4.1, which regulates differentiation of the base, middle and top, requires compliance with at least two out of a menu of five design options. Standards 4.3, which regulates variation in street-facing façade planes, requires a total of 16 points, which may be achieved through a combination of a range of design options with a value of 3 to 8 points each.
 - o For 4.1a-d, clarify whether/how standards apply to the base, middle, and/or top. Add dimensions to the exhibits.
 - o Remove “arcade or gallery along the ground floor” in 4.3.
 - o Add dimensions to the diagram 4.6b.
 - o Add diagram for 4.7.
 - o For 4.9b, revise language to mirror Commercial Design Guideline 3.3.8(e).
 - o The intent of standard 4.11 was to try and eliminate privacy intrusions created by balconies. Develop approach on how best to protect privacy while requiring private recreation space and using balconies as an element of articulation.
 - o Reconsider 4.12. Is this redundant? Most of it is addressed elsewhere.

3 Example Projects

This section provides information on several recent multi-family residential and mixed-use projects. All but one are located on sites included in the site inventory of the Town’s 6th Cycle Housing Element Update. The profile for each project is summarized in Table 3 below, followed by a brief summary of design features and elements that may inform the revised design standards.

Table 3: Select Multi-Family Residential and Mixed-Use Development Projects					
	151 E. Main St (Café Dio)	14789 Oka Road	15367 Los Gatos Blvd (Los Gatos Green, Genuine Automotive)	50 Los Gatos-Saratoga Rd (The Lodge)	16492 Los Gatos Blvd (Happy Cleaners)
Type	Mixed-Use	Multi-family	Multi-family	Multi-family	Mixed-use
Zone	C-2	R-1	CH: HEOZ	CH	C-1
HE Site Inventory Area	n/a	Lark Avenue	Los Gatos Boulevard	Los Gatos Lodge	Los Gatos Boulevard
Lot Area (ac)	0.43	6.71	1.56	8.8	0.60 (over 5 lots)
Units	30	138	55	155	14
Residential Density (du/ac)	71	20.6	35	17.6	16.6
Commercial FAR	0.13 (2,416 sq ft)	-	-	-	0.06 (1,695 sq ft)

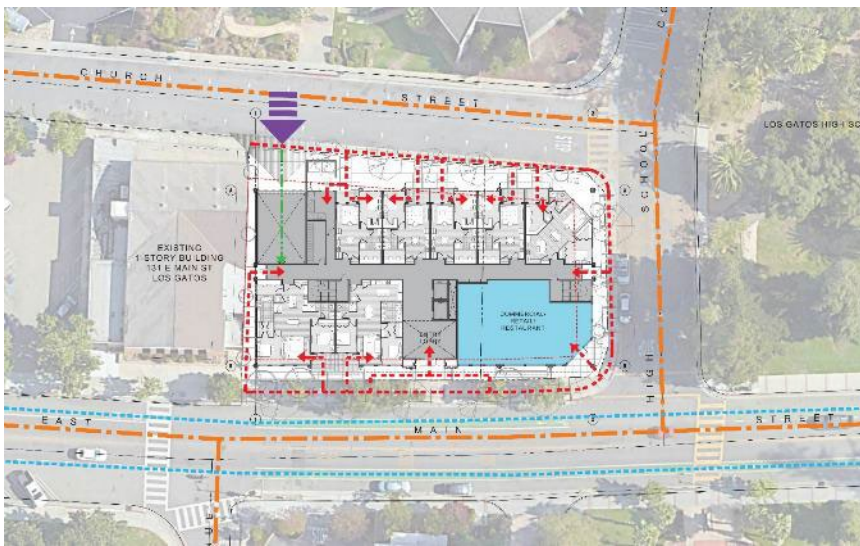
Table 3: Select Multi-Family Residential and Mixed-Use Development Projects

	151 E. Main St (Café Dio)	14789 Oka Road	15367 Los Gatos Blvd (Los Gatos Green, Genuine Automotive)	50 Los Gatos- Saratoga Rd (The Lodge)	16492 Los Gatos Blvd (Happy Cleaners)
Height	52' / 4 stories	40'-9" / 3 stories	45' / 3 stories	37'-3.5" / 3 stories	35'-11" / 3 stories
Residential Parking Ratio (spaces/du)	1.6 (opt 1) or 1.3 (opt 2)	2.1/unit (2.0/unit + 20 guest)	1.2/unit (1.0/unit + 9 guest)	2.1/unit	2.0/unit

151 E. Main St (currently Café Dio)



*151 E. Main Street,
perspective rendering*



*151 E. Main Street,
siteplan*

This project at 151 E Main Street may help inform the following design standards, among others:

- Street-facing elevations: how standards may (or may not) vary for facades and other street-facing elevations. This may include design and quality of windows, horizontal articulation, architectural details, and other building elements.
- Upper story step-backs: street wall height, symmetry of step-backs, usability of rooftop space.
- Roof form: incorporating multiple roof forms in one building (e.g., cornice and hip).
- Entry features: dimensions with respect to the rest of the building façade.

- Architectural style: whether particular choices must accompany others (e.g., design integrity/adherence to a recognized style).

14789 Oka Rd



14789 Oka Road,
perspective rendering



14789 Oka Road,
siteplan

This project at 14789 Oka Road may help inform the following design standards, among others:

- Materials and colors: allowed and prohibited for primary, secondary and accent.
- Ground floor design: required separation between sidewalk elevation and entrance elevation.
- Ground floor vs. upper-story design: height (whether ground floor height must exceed that of upper stories) and articulation specific to the ground floor (building base elements).
- Townhome design: standards for rows of units with identical or similar floor plans. May include variation of units; staggering of units in plan; design of “end” units; vehicular approach/access; entrance design, spacing, and width with respect to façade width; garage door design, spacing, and cumulative width with respect to façade width.

15349 - 15367 Los Gatos Blvd (Los Gatos Green, currently Genuine Automotive)



15349-15367 Los Gatos Boulevard, perspective rendering



15349-15367 Los Gatos Boulevard, siteplan

This project at 15349-15367 Los Gatos Boulevard may help inform the following design standards, among others:

- Transitions in height: step-backs in height adjacent to and/or facing lower-density residential zones.
- Building length: maximum length adjacent to and/or facing lower-density residential zones.
- Materials, textures, and colors: allowed and prohibited for primary, secondary and accent.
- Site design: building separation.
- Townhome design: standards for rows of units with identical or similar floor plans. May include variation of units; staggering of units in plan; design of "end" units; vehicular approach/access; entrance design, spacing, and width with respect to façade width; garage door design, spacing, and cumulative width with respect to façade width.
- Open space design: amenities, dimensions, landscaping.

50 Los Gatos-Saratoga Rd (currently The Lodge)



*50 Los Gatos-Saratoga Road,
perspective rendering*



*50 Los Gatos-Saratoga Road,
siteplan*

This project at 50 Los Gatos-Saratoga Road may help inform the following design standards, among others:

- Architectural style: whether particular choices must accompany others (e.g., design integrity/adherence to a recognized style).
- Site design: building separation.
- Entry design: shared units and individual units.
- Open space design: amenities, dimensions, and landscaping in private open space and common open space.

16492 Los Gatos Blvd (currently Happy Cleaners)



16492 Los Gatos Boulevard - Mixed Use Planned Development

16492 Los Gatos Boulevard,
perspective rendering



16492 Los Gatos Boulevard,
siteplan

This project at 16492 Los Gatos Boulevard may help inform the following design standards, among others:

- Garage design: visibility from the right-of-way, garage width with respect to façade width.
- Building articulation: vertical and horizontal.
- Entry design: shared units and individual units.
- Materials, textures, and colors: allowed and prohibited for primary, secondary and accent.
- Window design: size, shape, consistency across one or more elevations.

4 Initial Analysis

High-Quality Building Design

The following existing direction and guidance related to building design quality can be expanded upon and illustrated to become objective in nature:

- *Colors and Materials.* Wood window frames are encouraged. Avoid strong colors.

- *Architectural Materials and Details.* All materials and details should be carried around all sides of the building. Architectural features such as bay windows and cornices are encouraged. Provide pedestrian-oriented elements and details on facades facing sidewalks.
- New construction should incorporate a mix of high-quality materials and colors and avoid a cheap and overly uniform look.

Existing standards can be updated, and new standards can be introduced, to become specific in terms of allowed and prohibited material and color palettes for primary, secondary and accent materials and colors, and architectural details (e.g., eave depth, trim, brackets, windows details, columns/pilasters, etc.). Standards may also vary based on zone, location, scale, architectural style, or other features of the development. Specific revisions will reflect community and decision-maker input gathered during the Project's community outreach efforts.

Architectural Character and Details

The following existing direction and guidance related to architectural details and overall character can be expanded upon and illustrated to become objective in nature:

- *Window Design and Transparency.* Display windows should provide sufficient transparency. Windows should complement the architectural style of the building and avoid dark or reflective glazing.
- Design workshop participants were divided over architectural styles. While some believed that new developments should feature historic-inspired styles compatible with the existing built environment, especially in and near downtown, others preferred more contemporary styles with clean and simple lines.

Existing standards can be updated, and new standards can be introduced, to speak to building character, whether or not the building reflects any particular recognizable architectural style. This may involve defining the character-defining features of, and illustrating, design elements that are traditionally found in and appropriate for Los Gatos. Standards may also vary based on zone, location, scale, or other features of the development. Specific revisions will reflect community and decision-maker input gathered during the Project's community outreach efforts.

Height Transitions

Existing direction and guidance related to height transitions is limited to the following:

- *Building and Roof Forms.* Avoid boxy forms with large massing by using a variety of building forms and roof shapes with variations in height, setback, shape, and roof lines.
- *Height Step-back standards.* Step-back requirements in the C-1, CH and CM zones abutting or across from lower-intensity uses or zones.

Existing standards can be updated, and new standards can be introduced, to address all adjacency conditions, anticipating where sites are likely to support development that uses density bonus and exceeds applicable building height limits. Height transition standards may address building length and bulk, sunlight access, and privacy, among other transition concerns. Standards will vary based on zone, location, and specific adjacency. Specific revisions will reflect community and decision-maker input gathered during the Project's community outreach efforts.

Small-Scale Multi-Family Development

Existing direction and guidance related to height transitions is limited to the following:

- *Policy LU-1.2:* Ensure that new development preserves and promotes existing commercial centers consistent with the maintenance of a small-scale, small-town atmosphere and image.

The standards can be updated to small projects that are on the sale of a large single-family house and small apartment building, as well as various configurations of townhomes, cottage court development and other medium-density models that are appropriate in Los Gatos neighborhoods. Design elements may include the location and design of shared vs. individual entries; the location and design of private open space and common open space; vehicular access and circulation; and variation of units. Standards may vary based on zone, location, and specific adjacency. Specific revisions will reflect community and decision-maker input gathered during the Project's community outreach efforts.

Other

Other limitations of the current objective design standards and related requirements include:

- *Clarity and usability for the applicant.* There is a need for graphics that reflect typical Los Gatos development forms and configurations. This may involve updating, replacing, or adding to existing graphics.
- *Clarity and usability for the Town staff.* There is a need for applicants to prepare and submit a drawing that specifically demonstrates compliance with the required standards, wherever compliance can be shown graphically. The Appendix checklist may be modified to note which standards must be shown graphically on the required drawing.

MEMO

To: Sean Mullin, Town of Los Gatos
 From: Lisa Wise Consulting, Inc. (LWC)
 Date: October 22, 2025
 Re: Town of Los Gatos Updated/Additional Objective Design Standards for Qualifying Multi-Family and Mixed-Use Residential Development: DRAFT Recommendations

Below are Recommendations for the Updated/Additional Objective Design Standards for Qualifying Multi-Family and Mixed-Use Residential Development for the Town of Los Gatos. These recommendations, which will guide the development of the Draft Standards, stem from and are informed by:

- The October 2025 Technical Analysis and Evaluation Memo
- Direction provided by Town Staff on needed updates to the 2023 Objective Design Standards
- The body of Community input gathered to date on the 2023 Objective Design Standards, including:
 - Community Design Workshop, conducted as part of the 20240 General Update (2020)
 - Objective Design Standards Community Meetings (2022)
 - Town Council Meeting (2024)
 - September 2025 Focus Groups

Text Updates

Section A: Site Design

- **A.1 Pedestrian Access**
 - Clarify the standard to recognize that pedestrian circulation in parking garages typically utilizes the drive aisle.
 - Add standards that require pedestrian pathway, as opposed to regulating design for a pathway when implemented.
- **A.2 Short Term Bicycle Parking (Class II)**
 - Reduce ratio to one short-term bike space per four units.
 - Remove requirements for permanent solid-roofed weather protection structure.
- **A.3 Long-Term Bicycle Parking (Class I)**
 - Add flexibility on location requirement and allow in below-grade parking garages.
 - Increase flexibility of bike locker standards and spatial requirements.
- **A.4 Vehicular Access**

- Add standard to limit number of curb cuts along primary frontage.
- **A.5 Parking Location and Design**
 - Rename to Surface Parking Location and Design.
- **A.6 Parking Structure Access**
 - Rename to Parking Structures Access and Visibility.
 - Confirm the requirements for parking structure placement and visibility based on recent project examples.
- **A.7 Utilities**
 - Revise to allow wall-mounted fixtures.
 - Revise to recognize the constraints of traffic view areas, and location and clearance requirements dictated by utilities.
- **A.8 Landscaping and Screening**
 - Clarify reference to building setback established by zone.
 - Ensure that tall buildings are “softened: by enhanced trees and landscaping
 - Add hyperlink to Master Street Tree List.
- **A.9 Fencing** – No change
- **A.10 Retaining Walls** – No change
- **A.11 Landscaped, Private, and Community Recreation Spaces**
 - Add text to clarify that changes to the standards will require a Code change as well.
 - Add a standard to ensure that required upper-story building step-backs are designed to be usable open space (decks, patios, etc.).
 - Add flexibility to required dimensions for required shared and private open spaces, including balconies.
- **A.12 Building Placement**
 - Revise standards related to the “build-to zone.” Specifically:
 - Reflect site plans that include multiple buildings located at the frontage of the property
 - Reconsider the “75 percent at within 5 feet” standard to ensure that the standard enforces front street-facing setbacks that are comfortable and usable.
 - Require buildings to “match” the setback of adjacent lower-intensity uses for a specified distance from the abutting lot.

Section B: Building Standards

- **B.1 Massing and Scale**
 - Require compliance with two instead of three building mass strategies.
 - Edit strategy B.1.1.a to “A minimum of 40 percent of the upper floor façade length of the floors above the ground floor shall step back from the plane of the ground-floor façade by at least five feet.”

- Revise strategy B.1.1.b to require depth changes be applied to the full vertical extent of the façade.
- Delete strategy B.1.1.d and figures.
- Revise strategy B.1.1.e to emphasize that the intent is to introduce articulation to the massing and clarify requirements for “open area” (size, landscaping, other).
- Re-visit standard B.1.1 to:
 - Clarify its relationship with the existing upper-story setback standards applicable in the C-1:HEOZ, C-2:HEOZ, CH:HEOZ, and CM:HEOZ zones.
 - Clarify the story or height in feet at which a step-back is required.
 - Establish upper-story step-backs options that are sensitive to zone and/or abutting right-of-way, as appropriate.
 - Consider an additional step-back at a specified height for buildings above three stories.
 - Reflect small multi-family development, such as triplexes, quadplexes, small apartment buildings, and a range of townhome configurations.
 - Add standards to address height transitions (e.g., where a multi-family or mixed-use zone abuts a single-family zone).
- **B.2 Parking Structure Design**
 - Revisit screening standard for parking garages (strategies for screening; degree of transparency; linear percent of street-facing elevations requiring screening; linear percent of other elevations requiring screening).
 - Address building configurations where a parking structure is lined with habitable uses.
 - Remove requirements for landscaping between the building façade and the street.
- **B.3 Roof Design**
 - Consider reducing the 40-foot maximum linear dimension allowed without a change in roof form or height.
- **B.4 Façade Design and Articulation**
 - For standards B.4.1.a through B.4.1.d, clarify whether/how standards apply to the base, middle, and/or top.
 - Remove arcade or gallery as design options for standard B.4.3.
 - For B.4.9.b, revise language to mirror Commercial Design Guideline 3.3.8(e).
 - Revise standard B.4.11 to eliminate privacy intrusions created by balconies while protecting privacy, allowing for private recreation space, and using balconies as an element of articulation.
 - Consider revising standard B.4.13 (blank walls on any floor) to be a maximum number of linear feet instead of a percentage of the street-facing elevation.
 - Revise, delete, and/or move standards in this section to avoid redundancy other standards. This includes B.4.8 (windows), B.4.12 (redundant with other standards), and B.4.6.a and B.4.7 (entrance design).

- **Add Section B.5 Entrance Design**
 - Move standards B.4.1.c, B.4.6.a, and B.4.7 to this new section.
 - Add dimensions to ensure spaces are appropriately scaled and usable.
- **Add Section B.6 Windows and Doors**
 - Move standard B.4.8 to this new section and elaborate.
 - Add standards for window glazing and window and door frame materials. This may be a list of permitted materials, or a list of prohibited materials.
 - Regulate glazing for residential uses and for ground floor non-residential uses.
- **Add Section B.7 Materials, Colors, and Architectural Details** (e.g., corrugated metal).
 - Add standards for building materials. This may be a list of permitted materials, or a list of prohibited materials (e.g. corrugated metal). Develop the palette based on historic buildings in the Town and materials currently available to builders. Ensure that allowed materials are durable and high-quality.
 - Add standards for primary, secondary, and accent building colors. Colors to be identified by saturation value, or a combination of saturation value and light reflecting value. This may be a list of permitted colors, or a list of prohibited colors.
 - Establish limits on the number of materials and colors used on any one structure.

Graphics Updates

- Update graphics to reflect typical Los Gatos forms and configurations. This will involve updating existing graphics to be more reflective of Los Gatos project design, replacing graphics, and adding to the set of graphics.
- Add graphics to Section A.11: Landscaped, Private, and Community Recreation Spaces to illustrate standards.
- Fix numbering of graphics and add graphics to standard A.12,2 to show amenities.
- Add graphic to standard B.1.2 (upper story step-back).
- Add graphics for standard B.3.1 (roof design) to illustrate design options.
- Add dimensions to the diagram for standard B.4.1.a through B.4.1.e (façade articulation).
- Add dimensions to the diagram for standard B.4.6.b (ground-floor commercial transparency).
- Add diagram for B.4.7 (building entrance design) and move to Section B.5 Entrance Design.
- Add diagram for B.4.11 (balcony placement and privacy) to illustrate revised standard.

Implementation Updates

- Discuss with the Town and community the effectiveness of the point system for standard B.4.3, consider eliminating.

- Require a drawing that specifically demonstrates compliance with the Objective Design Standards, wherever compliance can be shown graphically. The Appendix checklist may be modified to note which standards must be shown graphically on the required drawing.

***This Page
Intentionally
Left Blank***

MEMO

To: Sean Mullin, Town of Los Gatos
From: Lisa Wise Consulting, Inc. (LWC) and Urban Planning Partners (UPP)
Date: December 18, 2025
Re: Community Open House Summary Memo

As part of the community outreach effort for the Update to the Multi-Family and Mixed-Use Objective Design Standards, the Town of Los Gatos held a Community Open House on December 4, 2025 at the Adult Recreation Center, located at 208 E. Main Street. The Open House took place prior to the drafting of the updated standards, with the objective of gathering community input to help inform the upcoming standards. Town staff conducted outreach to publicize the event through a posting on the project webpage; an email sent to a group of local architects, designers, and members of the public that have signed up for notifications from the Town; and through various media and social media resources. A total of seven community members participated.

Shortly after 6:00 pm, the Town and Consultant Team gave a brief presentation to describe the project, objectives, and progress as well as to introduce the format of the Open House. At about 6:30, the group began to circulate at four topical “stations” set up around the room by the Town and the Consultant Team. Each station included two to three detailed presentation boards to focus the conversation and provide graphic context for the topics at hand. Attendees were urged to share their thoughts in a casual, informal style. The four stations were:

- **Station 1: Project Overview.** The boards prompted participants to review project objectives and design topics and to record initial visual preferences.
- **Station 2: High Quality Building and Site Design.** The boards prompted participants to consider exactly what “high-quality design” means in Los Gatos. The presentation boards focused on a range of topics in site design, roof form and articulation, and windows.
- **Station 3: Building Massing and Height Transitions.** The boards prompted participants to identify their priorities for regulating building massing. The presentation boards focused on building length, upper-story step-backs, and options for transitions to lower-intensity residential areas.
- **Station 4: Architectural Character and Details.** The boards prompted participants to consider the details of design—specifically, four different “detail palettes,” details of façade articulation, building entry design, and ranges of building materials and colors—and lend input into which options are the best fit for new development in Los Gatos.

In addition, at each station was a blank flip-chart for recording discussion notes and community feedback. Community participants and planning team members alike noted thoughts and ideas directly on the boards (see p. 5) as well as on flip charts (see p. 9). Below is a summary of the community input.

Summary of Open House Input

Building Placement

- A maximum setback is not seen as critical because it's unlikely a developer would waste that space.

Massing and Articulation

- More articulation is preferred. We should avoid long, straight, unbroken lines, particularly along roof lines and facades.
- Avoid boxy, "chock-a-block" design.
- Building "modules" should break up bulky facades. Modules should be used in combination with step-backs.
- Step-backs for second and third stories are supported, but not with balconies occupying the stepped-back space.
- Support for street-facing step-backs starting at the second story, similar to 1001 Oak Hill in Lafayette.
- Strong preference for courtyards that break up the massing of larger buildings.
- Of the different step-back options presented, there was a preference for a height limit imposed within a certain distance of an abutting residential property line.
- Usable balconies are preferred over Juliet balconies, except on Spanish-style buildings.
- Recessed balconies are preferred over projecting balconies.
- Balconies should consider the safety of pedestrians and passers-by below.
- Preference for an emphasized building base with a material change and a cornice marking the top of the base.
- Privacy should be considered for all new development.

Roof Design

- False mansard roofs are acceptable if they wrap around all sides of the building and do not have a steep slope.
- All sloped roofs should have eaves.
- Flat roofs without a parapet are discouraged.
- Preference for a well-articulated cornice and overhangs.

Windows

- Windows should have charm. This includes details, trim, lintels, porticos, and awnings. Avoid windows that are flush with the building.
- Flat window frames should not be allowed.
- Trim, recessed windows, or lintels are preferred.

- Support for arched windows.
- Window trim should not be stucco.
- Preference for windows with sills.

Entry Design

- Individual Residential Entries
 - o Preference for entries that are emphasized with a recess or projection; however, thin shed-roof overhangs without columns are insufficient and look cheap.
 - o Support for two-story porches.
 - o Entries should be no more than three steps up from the sidewalk.
- Shared Entry Residential
 - o Shared entries below a floating balcony are not supported.
 - o Preference for entries that are articulated with gable-end roofs and columns.
- Commercial Frontages
 - o Preference for seating and planter boxes to define ground floor commercial frontages.
 - o Preference for awnings, recessed entries, and terraces.

Building Materials

- Materials should be mixed; should be used to break up facades and prevent monotony
- Too much variation without any rhyme or reason can look chaotic. For example, townhouses should have material and color changes that correspond to the different units.
- Preference for siding, shakes, brick, and stone.
- Board-form concrete should be used only on a small portion of the building.
- There should be a maximum percentage of stucco allowed on any one façade; too much stucco can create boring facades.
- Metal panels, reflective materials, glass curtain walls, and corrugated metal should not be allowed.

Building Colors

- Muted, earthy, natural colors are preferred. Color palettes should cohere with those of neighboring buildings.
- Bright, saturated colors are not a good fit in Los Gatos.
- No blinding white.

Style and Character

- New development should be consistent with the small-town, cottage-style, Craftsman vibe of Los Gatos.
- Avoid any new development that is “too Modern.”

- Preference for Neoclassical and Italianate styles. Spanish and modern Craftsman/Farmhouse also liked. When Spanish style is used, there shouldn't be repeating bays.
- Contemporary style and agricultural-looking buildings (corrugated siding, minimal windows, shallow eaves) are not liked/not appropriate.
- Support for courtyard-style buildings.
- Avoid big buildings; strong preference for "compact design."
- Developers are often willing to listen to neighbors and refine proposals accordingly.

Parking

- Although we're a small town, people do drive and need parking.
- Parking should be underground, hidden from view, and/or located to the rear of buildings. Safeway is good example.
- Surface parking should be screened from view from the right-of-way with landscaping and two access driveways should be provided where possible.

Landscaping

- More trees and shrubbery.
- Preferences for an expanded sidewalk, and not just in the Downtown.

Public Art

- Murals and public art is a priority. The new Whole Foods is a good example.

Open Space

- Small open spaces, parklets, and shared public spaces should be encouraged/required. Consider seating, barbeque areas, etc. The Newton building is a good example.
- Common open spaces should not be allowed where they can overlook a single-family yard.

Safety/Evacuation

- The Town should consider evacuation strategies when approving any new development.

Infrastructure

- Los Gatos does not have the civil infrastructure to support much/any new residential development.

Affordability

- The project should consider that additional design requirements may impact affordability.
- The Town should be able to negotiate to reduce the burden on developers to produce more affordable housing.

Station 1: Project Overview



UPDATED OBJECTIVE DESIGN STANDARDS

FOR MULTI-FAMILY AND MIXED-USE RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

Project Background

OBJECTIVES

The Multi-Family and Mixed-Use Objective Design Standards (ODS) Update Project is an effort by the Town's existing ODS by refining design standards to respond to Town Council and community feedback.

PROJECT TIMELINE

	Prep Phase	Site Review Phase	Final Recommendations Phase	Community Review Phase	Adopted Standards Phase	Public Input Phase	Final Design Review Phase
Month	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov
Year	2023				2024		



SCAN HERE FOR MORE PROJECT INFORMATION

THE TOWN'S EXISTING OBJECTIVE DESIGN STANDARDS

The existing Objective Design Standards for Qualifying Multi-Family and Mixed-Use Residential Developments were adopted on January 31, 2023. The document includes two sections:

- **Site Design**, including site layout and building placement; vehicular access and parking; and outdoor areas and amenities.
- **Building Design**, including building form and massing; façade articulation; materials; and roof design.

WHAT IS THE FOCUS OF THE UPDATES TO THE STANDARDS?

About two years ago, we, Town Staff and the Los Gatos community agreed that the existing design standards have room for improvement in how they address and regulate new development—specifically:

- **High-Quality Building Design**
 - Façade articulation, pedestrian orientation, and visual interest.
 - Building materials and colors that convey a sense of quality and durability and that are consistent with existing buildings.
 - Utilize open spaces that complement the building and create a comfortable public realm.
- **Height Transitions**
 - Ensuring smooth transitions to adjacent lower-density neighborhoods.
- **Architectural Character and Details**
 - Integrity in building composition and details.
 - Elements of the base, middle and top of the building; rooftop design; and ground floor design.

WHY ARE THE ADVANTAGES OF OBJECTIVE DESIGN STANDARDS FOR RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT?

State law, specifically SB830 (the Housing Crisis Act of 2019), requires a ministerial review pathway for residential projects. Objective design standards (ODS) can be used as approval criteria for this ministerial pathway. ODS:

- Should be easy to understand, feasible to implement, consistent with the General Plan and Municipal Code, and reflective of community character.
- Remove the uncertainty of discretionary review. If an applicant follows the standards, no design review is required.
- Lead to predictable results. Because the standards are known and quantifiable, the community can anticipate how new development will look.



LOS GATOS COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

TOWN OF LOS GATOS | COMMUNITY OPEN HOUSE | THURSDAY, DECEMBER 4, 2025

UPDATED OBJECTIVE DESIGN STANDARDS FOR MULTI-FAMILY AND MIXED-USE RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

Station 1: Project Overview

Selected Design Topics

SITE DESIGN

Vehicular Access: Internal circulation within off-street lots.

Pedestrian Access: Pedestrian connectivity throughout site and within parking areas.

Landscaping and Screening: Residential buffers and limits on surface lot visibility.

Parking Structure Access and Visibility: Minimizing conflicts between drivers and pedestrians.

Private, Common and Public Open Spaces: Size, dimensions, and distribution of landscaped areas, private recreation spaces, and community recreation spaces.

Building Placement and Setback Design: Placement of buildings relative to property lines and design of areas between building and property line.

BUILDING DESIGN

Roof Design: Roof form, slope, features, and materials.

Parking Structure Design: Access, facade treatment, visibility.

Massing and Scale: Options for breaking up massing/reducing perceived scale of multi-story buildings.

Facade Articulation:

- Variation in street-facing planes through awnings/canopies, windows, balconies, trellises, material changes, window boxes/planters, and molding/brackets/corbels.
- Building material and color palettes.
- Recessed garages doors.
- Transparency of ground-floor commercial uses.
- Equal facade treatment on all building elevations.

Building and Entry Design:

- Differentiation of the base, middle and top through facade recessed/projections, balconies, entry design, material transitions, top story height.
- Balcony location and residential privacy.
- Recessed or covered building entries.

TOWN OF LOS GATOS | COMMUNITY OPEN HOUSE | THURSDAY, DECEMBER 4, 2025

UWC

UPDATED OBJECTIVE DESIGN STANDARDS FOR MULTI-FAMILY AND MIXED-USE RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

Station 1 Project Overview

Visual Preferences

Western Slopes APN: 000-000

THE IMAGES BELOW SHOW A RANGE OF BUILDING AND SITE DESIGNS, WHICH DESIGNALIAS WORTH FOR LOS GATOS?

NE ENTERTAINMENT AREA (W/)

Low-rise, multi-story, multi-unit residential building

Visual Preference
+ mix of materials
+ mix of window sizes
+ mix of colors
+ mix of textures
+ mix of heights
+ mix of styles
+ mix of colors
+ mix of textures
+ mix of heights
+ mix of styles

Low-rise, multi-story, multi-unit residential building

Visual Preference
+ mix of materials
+ mix of window sizes
+ mix of colors
+ mix of textures
+ mix of heights
+ mix of styles
+ mix of colors
+ mix of textures
+ mix of heights
+ mix of styles

Low-rise, multi-story, multi-unit residential building

Visual Preference
+ mix of materials
+ mix of window sizes
+ mix of colors
+ mix of textures
+ mix of heights
+ mix of styles
+ mix of colors
+ mix of textures
+ mix of heights
+ mix of styles

Low-rise, multi-story, multi-unit residential building

Visual Preference
+ mix of materials
+ mix of window sizes
+ mix of colors
+ mix of textures
+ mix of heights
+ mix of styles
+ mix of colors
+ mix of textures
+ mix of heights
+ mix of styles

Low-rise, multi-story, multi-unit residential building

Visual Preference
+ mix of materials
+ mix of window sizes
+ mix of colors
+ mix of textures
+ mix of heights
+ mix of styles
+ mix of colors
+ mix of textures
+ mix of heights
+ mix of styles

Low-rise, multi-story, multi-unit residential building

Visual Preference
+ mix of materials
+ mix of window sizes
+ mix of colors
+ mix of textures
+ mix of heights
+ mix of styles
+ mix of colors
+ mix of textures
+ mix of heights
+ mix of styles

Low-rise, multi-story, multi-unit residential building

Visual Preference
+ mix of materials
+ mix of window sizes
+ mix of colors
+ mix of textures
+ mix of heights
+ mix of styles
+ mix of colors
+ mix of textures
+ mix of heights
+ mix of styles

Low-rise, multi-story, multi-unit residential building

Visual Preference
+ mix of materials
+ mix of window sizes
+ mix of colors
+ mix of textures
+ mix of heights
+ mix of styles
+ mix of colors
+ mix of textures
+ mix of heights
+ mix of styles

Low-rise, multi-story, multi-unit residential building

Visual Preference
+ mix of materials
+ mix of window sizes
+ mix of colors
+ mix of textures
+ mix of heights
+ mix of styles
+ mix of colors
+ mix of textures
+ mix of heights
+ mix of styles

Visual Preference
+ mix of materials
+ mix of window sizes
+ mix of colors
+ mix of textures
+ mix of heights
+ mix of styles
+ mix of colors
+ mix of textures
+ mix of heights
+ mix of styles

Visual Preference
+ mix of materials
+ mix of window sizes
+ mix of colors
+ mix of textures
+ mix of heights
+ mix of styles
+ mix of colors
+ mix of textures
+ mix of heights
+ mix of styles

TOWN OF LOS GATOS | COMMUNITY OPEN HOUSE | THURSDAY, DECEMBER 4, 2025

NEW NEUTRAL AREA - TRAVIS ROAD, BLDG. 100

UPDATED OBJECTIVE DESIGN STANDARDS

FOR MULTI-FAMILY AND MIXED-USE RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

Station 2: High-Quality Building and Site Design

Building Placement, Site Design, and Parking

WHAT DESIGN ELEMENTS AND FEATURES WILL HELP CREATE ATTRACTIVE, ENDURING, AND PEDESTRIAN-FRIENDLY SITES?

BUILDING PLACEMENT

- Establish a maximum setback for all or a portion of the building to create a consistent street wall along the street.
- Or allow for varied building placement.

DESIGN OF STREET-FACING SETBACKS

- Landscaping (trees, shrubs, planter boxes).
- Expanded sidewalks.
- Amenities (seating, dining, etc.).
- Continuation of design features along retail-oriented side streets.

DESIGN OF THE SITE PERIMETER

- Allowed number/frequency of curb cuts along primary, secondary streets.
- Pedestrian/vehicle separation.
- Screening of internal drive aisles.
- Screening of surface parking areas.
- Screening of structured parking portions of buildings.

WHAT WE'VE HEARD

- Not much is being offered - usable open spaces.
- Need more trees - wide spacing is great.
- Trees should be planted in a way that is not too close to the building.

TOWN OF LOS GATOS | COMMUNITY OPEN HOUSE | THURSDAY, DECEMBER 4, 2025

UPDATED OBJECTIVE DESIGN STANDARDS

FOR MULTI-FAMILY AND MIXED-USE RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

Station 2: High-Quality Building and Site Design

Roof Form and Articulation

WHAT ROOF DESIGNS BEST REFLECT LOS GATOS' CHARACTER, PATTERNS, AND STYLE?

ROOF TYPES AND DETAILS

WHAT WE'VE HEARD

- Avoid overly prescriptive rules (e.g., specific roof pitches).
- Roof form and design matter more than color materials.
- Roof overhangs under one foot tend to look visually of scale.
- Incorporate energy-efficient strategies such as reflective roof paint.

ROOF DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

- Maximum linear dimension allowed without a change in roof form or height?
- Desired limitations on incorporating multiple roof forms in one building (e.g., cornice and hip)?
- Requirement for variations in roof forms to correspond with massing and facade articulation?

TOWN OF LOS GATOS | COMMUNITY OPEN HOUSE | THURSDAY, DECEMBER 4, 2025

UPDATED OBJECTIVE DESIGN STANDARDS

FOR MULTI-FAMILY AND MIXED-USE RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

Station 2: High-Quality Building and Site Design

Windows

WHAT WINDOW FEATURES WILL HELP CREATE ATTRACTIVE, ENDURING, AND HIGH-QUALITY BUILDINGS?

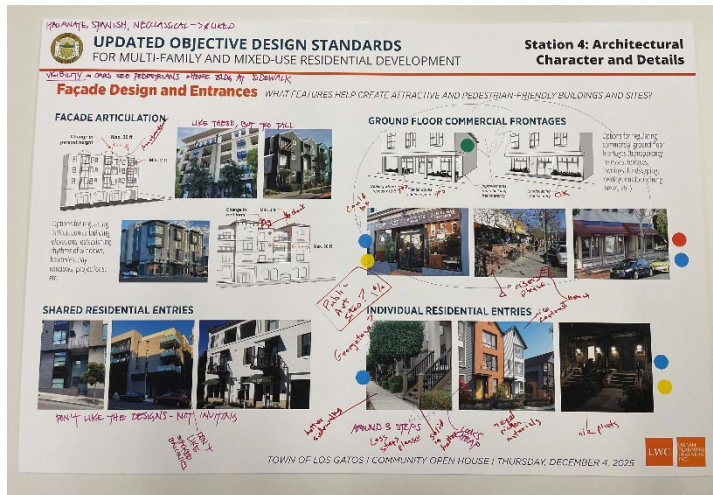
WINDOW TREATMENT TO AVOID

WINDOW TREATMENT TO ENCOURAGE

WHAT WE'VE HEARD

- Windows should have articulation - if not, request minimal uniform appearance.
- Windows and facades should have depth and articulation.
- Upper-story windows should be taller.

TOWN OF LOS GATOS | COMMUNITY OPEN HOUSE | THURSDAY, DECEMBER 4, 2025



Flip Chart Pages

Post-it
CONT. 30 1/2 IN/PO/PULG. X 30 IN/PO/PULG.
(85.5 cm x 76.2 cm) 5.2 FT/PP (1.6 m)

need
Wide enough drive aisles
↓
that allows thru traffic
(N 40 units too closely spaced)
For safety purposes during evacuation

Station 1 12/1/25
Los Gatos
Open House

- Courtyard "style" acceptable/preferred
- Earth tone, muted colors preferred (brown, ochre)
diagram
- Avoid boxy... Choch-a-bloc, "busy", avoid orange
- Avoid building getting "too big"... prefer more "compact"

Post-it
CONT. 30 1/2 IN/PO/PULG. X 30 IN/PO/PULG.
(85.5 cm x 76.2 cm) 5.2 FT/PP (1.6 m)

Station 2 12/04
Los Gatos
1/2

- Articulation - rooflines preferred - avoid long, straight
as N. Sta Cruz - back bridges
- Should consider evacuation strategy
- Los Gatos does not have infrastructure
to support high density
- Windows should have charm detail, trim, awnings,
Intel, Brico
- Development should be consistent with
Small town, Cottage style, Craftsman - Los Gatos
- Avoid too "modern"
- Need parking... small town... people drive... preferred
hidden... back of bldg... side... underground (Safeway)
- Landscaping in front of bldg., trees/shrubs
- Murals/preferred... (on-site or off-site)
Public art
- Shared facilities, parkettes (bldg), support → community
space Newtown bldg = example

Station 2 12/14
Los Gatos 7/2

- Landscaping @ parking areas PREFERRED
+ @ ingres/egress
- Parklets should be allowed/supported
- Prefer underground/hidden parking (if ground)

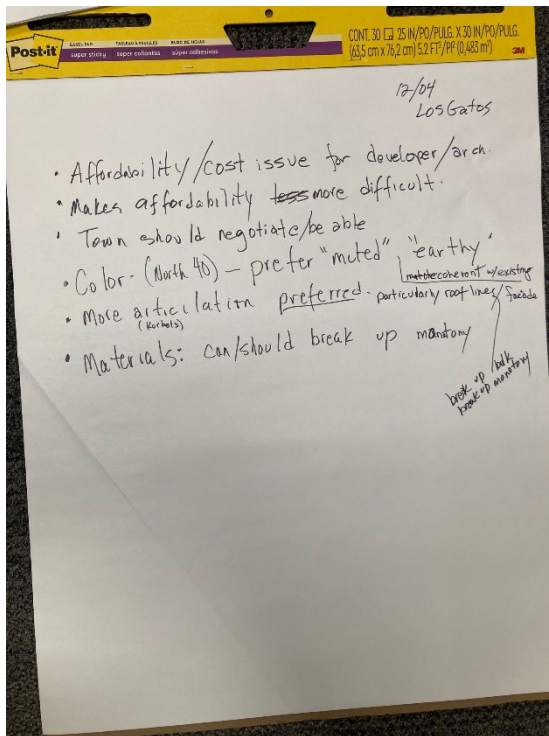
1% Arts commission
of bldg costs (commercial bldg)
for art

Office DEPOT
essex pad/floorchart

12/04
Los Gatos

Savenson adapted/Listened to community
Reduced bldg. ht. from 7 to 3 stories
Trees/more trees/improve development
Modules/separated preferred, break up "bulk"

- Contrasting materials across facades/
elevations
- Issue w/ balconies about protection during windy storms
and about how - some falling/breaking away
- Like Lafayette example bldg → 2nd floor balconies
w/ metal bars
- Conflicting about on-street parking for public space
- Need depth
- Privacy important
- Arts Comm. 1% tax to support art



Objective Design Standards

Town of Los Gatos, CA

Joint Town Council/Planning Commission Study Session

A Joint Study Session on the Revised Los Gatos Objective Design Standards for Multi-Family and Mixed-Use Objective Design Standards (ODS) was held at the Los Gatos Town Hall on Tuesday, March 17, 2026. The objective of the Study Session was for the Town Council, Planning Commission, and community to provide the consultant, Lisa Wise Consulting, Inc., with input and direction prior to the preparation of the Administrative Draft Revised Objective Standards. Below is a summary of the takeaways from the Study Session discussion.

1. General

- a. Some preference for point system, but a menu of options is OK as alternative. The most important thing is that requirements are clear and can be verified by staff-level, ministerial review.
- b. Regulating views may become a later phase or a separate project
- c. Health and safety: Town Attorney clarifies that evidence is needed before a design standard can be considered a threat to public health and safety

2. Site Design

- a. Open space and landscaping
 - i. Open spaces should be meaningful and usable
 - ii. Elevated open space is OK
 - iii. Forecourts are appropriate for larger sites. But for smaller buildings and sites, they detract.
 - iv. Genuine Automotive is a good example of a bioswale becoming usable space; Los Gatos Lodge is not
- b. Require community/common buildings

3. Height Transitions

- a. Stepping when adjacent to smaller buildings – but be careful how
- b. Step-backs aren't needed on public-facing elevations; only along shared property line
- c. Strong preference for requiring a maximum height within a set distance of a single-family residence.
 - i. Support for a step-back in height at 40 ft from an interior property line. This is similar to the Palo Alto strategy (limits above X ft within 50 feet of property line.)

- ii. Consider a 2-story differential:
 - 1. Limit to 3 story height when abutting 1 story
 - 2. Limit to 4 story height when abutting 2 story
 - 3. Limit to 5 story height when abutting 3 story

4. Apartments/Stacked Flats

- a. Massing
 - i. Privacy, bulk, and mass are most important – see Palo Alto for privacy reference
 - ii. Massing break-ups shouldn't be random.
 - 1. Forecourt is good because of the rest of the building. Yes to forecourts on large properties only
 - 2. Façade breakups "every X feet" is too much/too prescriptive
 - 3. Too much change/articulation is chaotic.
 - iii. Along major rights-of-way
 - 1. Elevations facing major rights-of-way (especially Los Gatos Blvd) should not be subject to additional standards
 - 2. It is important to prohibit long blank walls –need deliberate, clear standards to prevent this
 - 3. Need interaction and permeability between sidewalk and building
 - 4. The primary entrance, or at least a primary entrance, must be located along Los Gatos Blvd
 - 5. Café Dio on E Main, however, has the primary entry on Church St, which is the secondary street. Because it's Downtown, this feels appropriate, but is not advised elsewhere.
 - iv. Massing facing all rights-of-way are the priority. Support for the three massing options provided (forecourt; max façade width; upper story step-back for X%)
- b. Materials
 - i. Too many different materials is chaotic
 - ii. Don't prohibit materials, as this limits imagination
 - iii. Materials should be required to be fire-resistant (we're in the WUI)
 - iv. Regulate quality over type – quality, durability, fireproofing, etc.

5. Townhomes

- a. Massing
 - i. Too much change is chaotic.

- ii. Townhomes mostly look okay, the concern is more about large multi-family projects
- b. Materials
 - i. Colors could change each townhouse if they're the same form, or form could change each townhouse if they're the same color, but not both

6. Roof Design

- a. Yes, require eaves, but don't be too prescriptive
- b. Yes, require cornice or overhang on flat roofs

7. Windows

- a. Yes, require trim, recesses, or lintels, but there's no need to provide specific measurements

8. Entry Design

- a. Be flexible, not prescriptive

9. Colors

- a. Color should not be regulated, as doing so can become a slippery slope
- b. Defer to designers' creativity
- c. Support for primary, secondary, and accent colors

10. Parking

- a. Vehicular access: no streets that are so short that you have to back out of it
- b. As few curb cuts as possible on major rights-of-way
- c. Preference for alleys
- d. GP2040 envisions connectivity in the back, connecting parking lots in the rear
- e. Boulevard Specific Plan calls for walkability

***This Page
Intentionally
Left Blank***

MEMO

To: Sean Mullin, Town of Los Gatos
 From: LWC
 Date: June 18, 2026
 Re: Los Gatos Updated/Additional Objective Design Standards for Qualifying Multi-Family and Mixed-Use Residential Development: Revised Recommendations

Below are Recommendations for the Updated/Additional Objective Design Standards for Qualifying Multi-Family and Mixed-Use Residential Development for the Town of Los Gatos. These recommendations, which guide the Updated draft ODS, stem from and are informed by:

- The October 2025 Technical Analysis and Evaluation Memo
- Direction provided by Town staff on needed updates to the 2023 Objective Design Standards (issues received at the beginning of the project and in a February 20 follow-up email)
- Community input, including:
 - Community Design Workshop conducted as part of the 20240 General Update (2020)
 - Objective Design Standards Community Meetings (2022)
 - Town Council Meeting (2024)
 - September 2025 Focus Groups
 - December 4, 2025 Open House
 - March 17, 2026 Joint TC/CC Study Session

Text Updates

Section A: Site Design

- **A.1 Pedestrian Access**
 - Clarify the standard to recognize that pedestrian circulation in parking garages typically utilizes the drive aisle.
 - Add standards that require pedestrian pathway, as opposed to regulating design for a pathway when implemented.
- **A.2 Short Term Bicycle Parking (Class II)**
 - Reduce ratio to one short-term bike space per four units. (Modified A.2.2, consistent with current CalGreen.)
 - Remove requirements for permanent solid-roofed weather protection structure.
- **A.3 Long-Term Bicycle Parking (Class I)**
 - Add flexibility on location requirement and allow in below-grade parking garages.

- Increase flexibility of bike locker standards and spatial requirements.
- **A.4 Vehicular Access**
 - Add standard to limit number of curb cuts along primary frontage.
 - *3/17 Joint Study Session:* Driveways should be limited.
- **A.5 Parking Location and Design**
 - Rename to Surface Parking Location and Design.
- **A.6 Parking Structure Access**
 - Confirm the requirements for parking structure placement and visibility based on recent project examples.
 - *12/4 Open House:* Parking should be screened. (Screening is already required in A.8.3; no edits made.)
- **A.7 Utilities**
 - Revise to allow wall-mounted fixtures.
 - Revise to recognize the constraints of traffic view areas, and location and clearance requirements dictated by utilities.
 - Removed requirement that screening uses the same material as the primary building.
- **A.8 Landscaping and Screening**
 - Clarify reference to building setback established by zone.
 - Add hyperlink to Master Street Tree List.
- **A.9 Fencing – No change**
 - *Town staff 2/20 Comments:* Fences over 3' tall in the front setback are prohibited by the ODS but are allowed by the zoning code. (LWC removed existing A.9.1.)
- **A.10 Retaining Walls – No change**
- **A.11 Landscaped, Private, and Community Recreation Spaces**
 - Add a standard to ensure that required upper-story building step-backs are designed to be usable open space (decks, patios, etc.).
 - Elevated Open Space:
 - 12/4 Open House:* Common open space should not be allowed where it can overlook single-family yards.
 - 3/17 Joint Study Session:* Elevated open space is okay.
 - Update applicability of community recreation space to be required for all projects with 9 or more units.
 - Add flexibility to required dimensions for required shared and private open spaces, including balconies.
 - *3/17 Joint Study Session:* Require community recreation buildings.

- **A.12 Building Placement**

- Revise standards related to the “build-to zone.” Specifically:
 - Reflect site plans that include multiple buildings located at the frontage of the property.
 - Reconsider the “75 percent at within 5 feet” standard to ensure that the standard enforces front street-facing setbacks that are comfortable and usable.

Section B: Building Standards

- **B.1 Massing and Scale**

- Require compliance with two instead of three building mass strategies.
 - *3/17 Joint Study Session:* Supported the reduction of options and menu of options.
- Edit strategy B.1.1.a to “A minimum of 40 percent of the upper floor façade length of the floors above the ground floor shall step back from the plane of the ground-floor façade by at least five feet.”
- Revise strategy B.1.1.b to require depth changes be applied to the full vertical extent of the façade.
- Delete strategy B.1.1.d and figures.
- Revise strategy B.1.1.e to emphasize that the intent is to introduce articulation to the massing and clarify requirements for “open area” (size, landscaping, other).
- *Town staff 2/20 Comments:* Modify B.1.1.c and/or B.1.1.e to reduce repetition. Consider allowing the recessed façade plane to count towards the open area abutting a street.
- *Town staff 2/20 Comments:* Specify whether the open area needs to be within a recessed façade plane.
- Re-visit standard B.1.1 to:
 - Remain consistent with existing upper-story setback standards of the C-1:HEOZ, C-2:HEOZ, CH:HEOZ, and CM:HEOZ zones.
 - Clarify the story or height in feet at which a step-back is required.
 - Establish upper-story step-backs options that are sensitive to zone and/or abutting right-of-way, as appropriate.
 - *3/17 Joint Study Session:* Step-backs are not needed along public-facing elevations and elevations facing major rights-of-way should not be subject to additional standards.
 - Consider an additional step-back at a specified height for buildings above three stories.
 - Reflect small multi-family development, such as triplexes, quadplexes, small apartment buildings, and a range of townhome configurations.
 - *3/17 Joint Study Session:* Not concerned about townhome massing as much as multi-family massing.
 - Add standards to address height transitions (e.g., where a multi-family or mixed-use zone abuts a single-family zone).

- *3/17 Joint Study Session:* Limit allowed building height based on heights of adjacent buildings. (LWC does not recommend regulating buildings based on characteristics of adjacent buildings; no edits made.)
- **B.2 Parking Structure Design**
 - Revisit screening standard for parking garages (strategies for screening; degree of transparency; linear percent of street-facing elevations requiring screening; linear percent of other elevations requiring screening).
 - Address building configurations where a parking structure is lined with habitable uses.
 - Remove requirements for landscaping between the building façade and the street.
 - Moved existing Standard A6.2 to this section.
- **B.3 Roof Design**
 - Consider reducing the 40-foot maximum linear dimension allowed without a change in roof form or height.
 - *12/4 Open House:* Require eaves, cornices, or overhangs.
 - *3/17 Joint Study Session:* Require eaves, cornices, or overhangs, but do not be too prescriptive.
- **B.4 Façade Design and Articulation**
 - For standards B.4.1.a through B.4.1.d, clarify whether/how standards apply to the base, middle, and/or top.
 - Remove arcade or gallery as design options for standard B.4.3.
 - *Town staff 2/20 Comments:* Specify that B.4.6 only applies to mixed-use or larger, single buildings with primary entrances. (LWC did not make edits as we consider townhome entrances to be primary entrances.)
 - For B.4.9.b, revise language to mirror Commercial Design Guideline 3.3.8(e).
 - Revise standard B.4.11 to eliminate privacy intrusions created by balconies while protecting privacy, allowing for private recreation space, and using balconies as an element of articulation. (LWC condensed existing B.4.11 into B.1.)
 - Consider revising standard B.4.13 (blank walls on any floor) to be a maximum number of linear feet instead of a percentage of the street-facing elevation.
 - Revise, delete, and/or move standards in this section to avoid redundancy other standards. This includes B.4.8 (windows), B.4.12 (redundant with other standards), and B.4.6.a and B.4.7 (entrance design). (LWC: Removed existing B.4.12 and moved existing B.4.8, B.4.6.a, and B.4.7 to the new B.5 and B.6.)
- **Add Section B.5 Entrance Design**
 - Move standards B.4.1.c, B.4.6.a, and B.4.7 to this new section. (LWC moved existing B.4.1.c, B.4.6.a, and B.4.7 into the new B.5.)
 - Add dimensions to ensure spaces are appropriately scaled and usable.
 - *12/4 Open House:* Entries should be emphasized with a recess or projection. Roof overhangs without columns should be discouraged. Entries should be no more than three steps from the sidewalk.

- *3/17 Joint Study Session:* Ensure standards are flexible and not too prescriptive.
- Removed requirement that all primary building entrances face a public or private right-of-way, or a public open space.
- **Add Section B.6 Windows and Doors**
 - Move standard B.4.8 to this new section and elaborate.
 - Add standards for window glazing and window and door frame materials. This may be a list of permitted materials, or a list of prohibited materials.
 - Regulate glazing for residential uses and for ground floor non-residential uses.
 - *3/17 Joint Study Session:* Be less prescriptive above window regulations. (LWC: Did not include window glazing regulations.)
 - *12/4 Open House:* Require trim, recesses, or lintels on windows.
 - *3/17 Joint Study Session:* Require trim, recesses, or lintels, but do not be too prescriptive.
- **Add Section B.7 Materials, Colors, and Architectural Details** (e.g., corrugated metal).
 - Add standards for building materials. This may be a list of permitted materials, or a list of prohibited materials (e.g. corrugated metal). Develop the palette based on historic buildings in the Town and materials currently available to builders. Ensure that allowed materials are durable and high-quality.
 - *12/4 Open House:* Metal panels, reflective materials, glass curtain walls, and corrugated metal should not be allowed.
 - *3/17 Joint Study Session:* Do not prohibit any materials.
 - *3/17 Joint Study Session:* Require that all materials are fire resistant.
 - *3/17 Joint Study Session:* Regulate material quality rather than material type.
 - Add standards for primary, secondary, and accent building colors. Colors to be identified by saturation value, or a combination of saturation value and light reflecting value. This may be a list of permitted colors, or a list of prohibited colors.
 - *12/4 Open House:* Muted colors are preferred and bright, saturated colors should be discouraged.
 - *3/17 Joint Study Session:* Do not regulate color saturation or light reflecting values.
 - Establish limits on the number of materials and colors used on any one structure.
 - *3/17 Joint Study Session:* Regulate primary, secondary, and accent materials.

Graphics Updates

- Update graphics to reflect typical Los Gatos forms and configurations. This involves updating existing graphics to be more reflective of Los Gatos project design, replacing and adding to the set of graphics as needed.
- Add graphics to Section A.11: Landscaped, Private, and Community Recreation Spaces to illustrate standards.
- Fix numbering of graphics and add graphics to standard A.12.2 to show amenities.

- Add graphic to standard B.1.2 (upper story step-back).
- Add graphic to standard B.1.3 (upper story terrace or deck step-back).
- Add graphic to standard B.2.1 (parking structure visibility).
- Add dimensions to the diagram for standard B.4.1.a through B.4.1.e (façade articulation).
- Add dimensions to the diagram for standard B.4.6.b (ground-floor commercial transparency).
- Add diagram for B.4.7 (building entrance design) and move to Section B.5 Entrance Design.
- Add diagram for B.4.11 (balcony placement and privacy) to illustrate revised standard.
- Add diagram for B.6.4 (upper story window glazing) to illustrate the standard.

MEMO

To: Sean Mullin, Town of Los Gatos
From: Lisa Wise Consulting, Inc. (LWC)
Date: June 18, 2026
Re: Town of Los Gatos Updated/Additional Objective Design Standards for Qualifying Multi-Family and Mixed-Use Residential Development - Public Review Draft

The Town of Los Gatos is leading an update to its 2023 Objective Design Standards for Qualifying Multi-Family Residential and Mixed-Use Development. The proposed revisions to the standards focus on codifying the priorities of the community and implementing direction from the Town staff, Planning Commission, and Town Council. This Memo includes the following sections:

- **Section 1: High Quality Building Design** identifies how the proposed revisions ensure high-quality building design that reflects the existing character of the Town.
- **Section 2: Architectural Style** identifies how the proposed revisions ensure that architectural design is consistent with and appropriate to the neighborhood.
- **Section 3: Height Transitions** identifies how the proposed revisions employ strategies for appropriate massing transitions between different zones and densities.
- **Section 4: Small, Multi-Family Housing Considerations** identifies how the proposed revisions address housing at different sizes and densities.

1 High Quality Building Design

This section provides an overview of standards in the updated draft ODS regulate façade materials to ensure high-quality building design, reflecting the existing character of the Town.

B.7 Materials and Architectural Details

This new section introduces standards for:

- **Primary, Secondary, and Accent Materials.** All buildings must incorporate a primary building material and a secondary building material. Any number of tertiary/accent materials may be used.
 - o *Primary:* 50 percent or more of a façade surface area;
 - o *Secondary:* Less than 45 percent of a façade surface area and must be different from primary materials; and
 - o *Accent:* Limited to 25 percent of a façade surface area and does not include trim for windows, doors, and openings.

By requiring specific percentages of primary and secondary materials, these standards prevent chaotic facades with too much variation in material.

- **Material Durability/Protection:** Requirements that materials used are:
 - o Fire resistant. Wood, engineered wood, or other wood-based products are not allowed as primary materials;
 - o Durable, with a minimum lifespan of 30 years, per the manufacturers' specification; and
 - o Protected from corrosion either through the use of galvanized, stainless, or weathering steel, as applicable.

Other Sections

New standards in other sections that regulate high-quality building design include:

- **B.2 Parking Garage Design:**
 - o Must include one of the following architectural features: cut metal screens, railings, trellises, vertical plantings, louvers, or decorative security grills.
- **B.4 Façade Design and Articulation:** All materials must be incorporated on all building elevations.
- **B.6 Windows and Doors:**
 - o Window materials must be consistent on all elevations.
 - o Mirrored, flat framed, and stucco windows are prohibited.
 - o Upper-story window glazing must wrap around building corners if within 30 inches of a corner.

2 Architectural Style

This section documents updated draft ODS regulations that ensure architecture styles consistent with and appropriate for the surrounding neighborhoods. Town Council and Planning Commission direction, community feedback, staff input, and review of existing residential and non-residential buildings in the Town all helped establish the architectural styles that the standards ensure consistency with.

B.1 Building Massing and Scale

All multi-family buildings must include one of the following massing solutions:

- At least 40 percent of the upper story is stepped back by at least 5 feet;
- The front of the building includes a ground/podium level community recreation space at least 900 square feet in size; or
- A maximum building width of 65 feet.

Additionally, townhomes must include wall plane shifts of two feet minimum between each townhome for the entire height of the building.

B.4 Façade Design and Articulation

All buildings taller than two stories must include strategies to break up facades including at least two of the following:

- A material change between the first floor and upper floors for at least 70 percent of the total street facing-elevations;
- An upper-floor projection or recess at least 5 feet deep every 35 feet;
- Habitable balconies at least two feet deep on at least 25 percent of the street-facing elevations;
- Two-foot deep eaves with regularly spaced supporting corbels or brackets; or
- Window boxes or plant shelves under least 60 percent of all upper-story fenestration.

Other Sections

Standards in other sections that regulate architectural style include:

- **B.2 Parking Structure Design:**
 - o Parking structures in mixed-use developments must be lined with non-residential ground floor uses at least 30 feet deep.
 - o Parking structures visible from rights-of-way may not exceed 50 percent of the building elevation length or 60 feet.
- **B.3 Roof Design:**
 - o At least one of the following strategies must be used to break up the eave every 75 feet:
 - Gables;
 - Building projection;
 - Change in façade or roof height;
 - Change in roof pitch or form; or
 - Inclusion of dormers, parapets, and/or varying cornices.
 - o Requirement that sloped roofs include eaves at the roof line and fascia/bargeboard at gable ends.
 - o Requirement that flat roofs include a parapet with a cornice or an overhang.
 - o Application of pitched roofs along all street-facing sides of the building.

3 Height Transitions

This section provides updated draft ODS regulations that provide strategies for massing transitions between different zones and densities including transitions between multi-story buildings and single-family zones. These height transitions protect privacy, livability, and solar access.

B.1 Building Massing and Scale:

When a multi-family building or townhome development abuts a single-family residential district, it must include the following transitions to reduce impact to the adjacent single-family district:

- **Height Limitations.** Limited the building height to 25 feet or 2 stories within 40 feet of the property line shared with the single-family district; and
- **Upper Story Terrace and Deck Step-Back.** Provide a minimum 5-foot step-back from the plane of the lower floor facing the shared property line, to prevent views into adjacent residential uses and any upper story terraces or decks.

4 Small, Multi-Family Housing Considerations

This section highlights how the updated draft ODS considers different sizes of multi-family housing, including smaller multi-family housing projects. In addition to reviewing smaller multi-family housing projects within the Town when developing the standards, additional exemptions and regulations were developed for different multi-family building sizes and types.

B.1 Building Massing and Scale

All multi-family buildings must include one of the following massing solutions:

- At least 40 percent of the upper-story is stepped back by at least 5 feet;
- The front of the building includes a ground/podium level community recreation space at least 900 square feet in size; or
- A maximum building width of 65 feet.

The third option, the maximum building width of 65 feet, accounts for smaller-scale multi-family building types, such as triplexes, fourplexes, and other multiplexes (3 to 8 units).

Additionally, townhomes must include wall plane shifts of two feet minimum between each townhome for the entire height of the building. This standard requires each townhome to be visually differentiated from its neighboring townhomes. This emphasis on each unit will enable a row of townhomes to read as individual units, rather than as a larger multi-family building.

B.4 Façade Design and Articulation

All buildings taller than two stories must include strategies to break up facades including at least two of the following:

- A material change between the first floor and upper floors for at least 70 percent of the total street facing-elevations;
- An upper-floor projection or recess at least 5 feet deep every 35 feet;
- Habitable balconies at least two feet deep on at least 25 percent of the street-facing elevations;
- Two-foot deep eaves with regularly spaced supporting corbels or brackets; or
- Window boxes or plant shelves under least 60 percent of all upper-story fenestration.

Requiring a minimum of two articulation strategies, coupled with the standards in Section B.1 Building Massing and Scale, will mandate that smaller buildings (3 to 8 units) will be well-articulated, preventing flat, monolithic facades.

A.11 Landscaped, Private, and Community Recreation Spaces

Community Recreation Space

- Projects with eight or fewer residential units are exempt from the community recreation space requirement.

Community Recreation Building

- Larger multi-family developments (50+ units) must provide a community recreation building or multi-purpose room. Smaller multi-family developments are exempt from this requirement.

***This Page
Intentionally
Left Blank***

Town of Los Gatos

Multi-Family and Mixed-Use Objective Design Standards Update

Planning Commission Hearing

Wednesday, June 24, 2026

7:00 p.m.

Los Gatos Town Hall



Introductions

Town Staff

- **Joel Paulson**, Community Development Director
- **Sean Mullin**, Planning Manager

Lisa Wise Consulting, Inc. (LWC)

- **Monica Szydlik**, AICP, Senior Associate
- **Cal Kurtz**, AIA, Lead Associate

Project Objectives

- Update the Town's existing **2023 Objective Design Standards for Multi-Family and Mixed-Use Residential Development** by refining design standards to respond to Town Council and community feedback and priorities.
- Implement the Town's General Plan goals
- Ensure compliance with State law (SB 330)
- Focus on:
 - ✓ High-Quality Building Design
 - ✓ Height Transitions
 - ✓ Architectural Character and Details
 - ✓ Small-scale Multi-family Buildings

What are Objective Standards?

- Involve **no personal or subjective judgement** by a public official and are uniformly **verifiable by reference to an external and uniform benchmark** or criterion available and **knowable by both the development applicant and public official** prior to submittal.

Subjective

Development must be compatible with the character of the neighborhood.

Objective

Blank walls (without doors and windows) of more than 20 linear feet are prohibited along any street-facing elevation.

- Set **clear expectations for approval.**
- **Streamline the review process.**

Project Process and Schedule



Documents:

- Zoning Code development standards
- 2040 General Plan relevant policy direction
- North 40 Specific Plan
- Record of community and Council input
- Staff input and issues
- Analysis of example projects

Project Process and Schedule



- *Residents, architects, developers*
- *Discussed:*
 - *Existing ODS*
 - *The architectural character of Los Gatos and*
 - *Recommendations for the updated ODS*

Project Process and Schedule



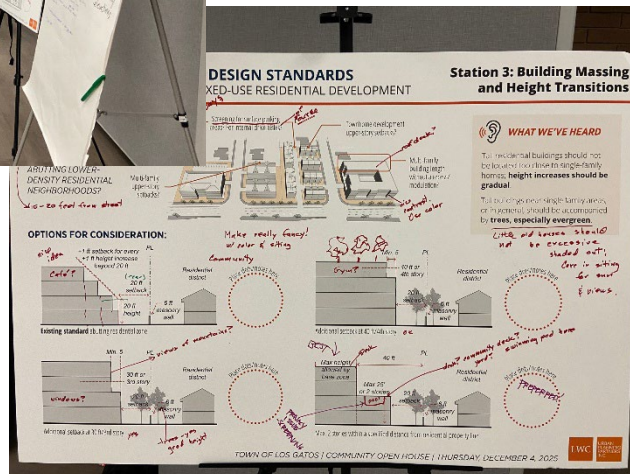
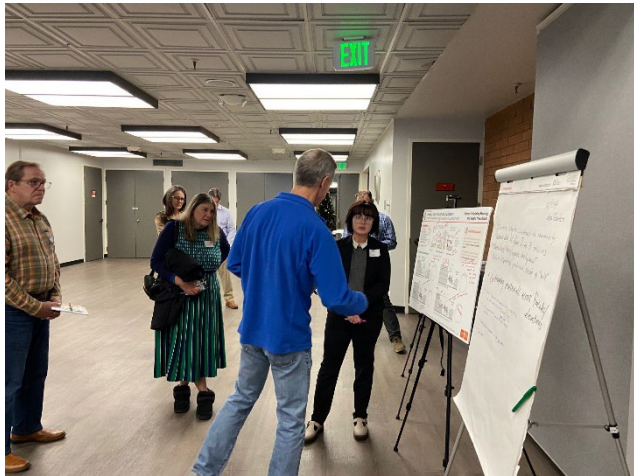
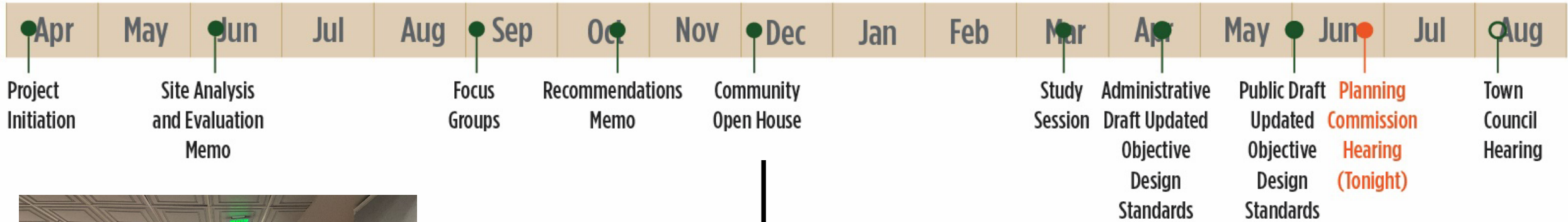
Draws on findings from:

- *Site Analysis and Evaluation Memo*
- *Focus Groups*
- *Staff input*

Project Process and Schedule

2025

2026



- *Focus on:*
 - *Building placement*
 - *Design of street-facing setbacks and site perimeter*
 - *Building massing and articulation*
 - *Roof types and details*
 - *Height transitions*
 - *Window design and entrance design*
 - *Building materials and colors*
 - *Architectural character*

Project Process and Schedule



March 27 Joint PC/CC Study Session:

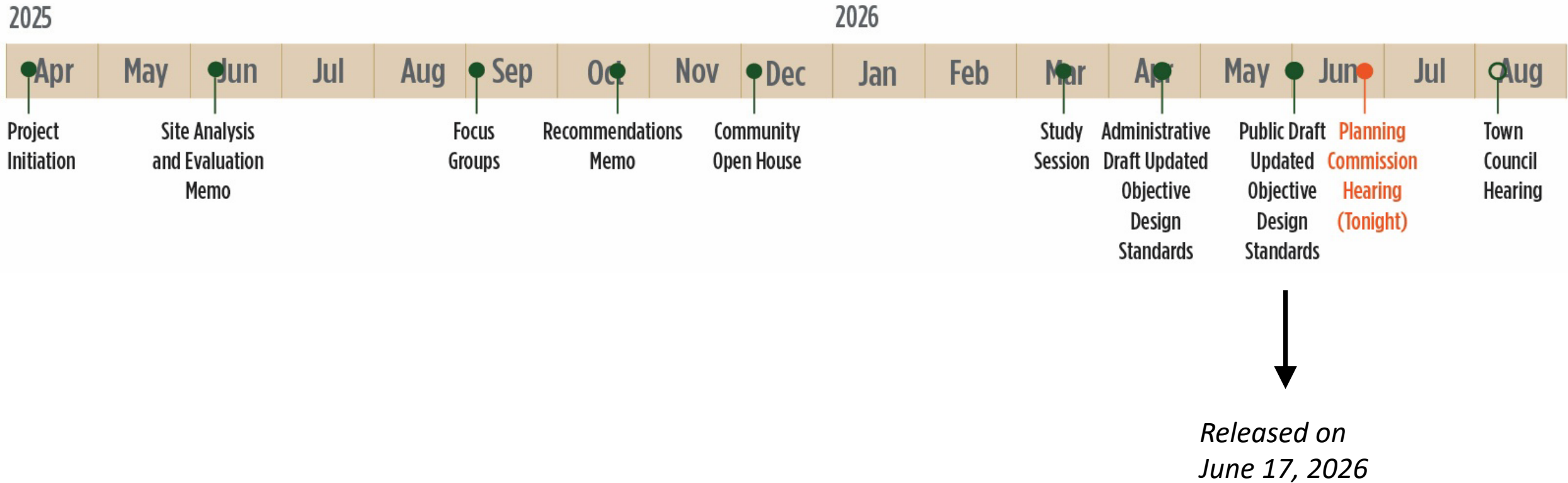
- Reviewed working design ideas informed by input from all outreach
- Gathered PC feedback on specific questions

Project Process and Schedule



- Submitted to staff for review; received comments and discussed with staff

Project Process and Schedule



Source of Updates

- **Community Design Workshop**, part of the 2040 General Update (2020):
 - Consider upper-story step-backs
 - Require high-quality materials
 - Achieve balanced facades
- **ODS Community Meeting** (2022):
 - Consider shade, weather protection
 - Support diverse roof types
- **Town Council Meeting** (2024):
 - Height transitions/massing
 - Architectural style that reflects existing character
 - High-quality design that reflects existing character
 - Standards for an array of building types and sizes, including small multi-family

Source of Updates, Cont'd

- **Staff list of changes** needed (spring 2025)
- **Focus Groups** (September 2025):
 - Support diverse architectural styles
 - Height transitions adjacent to single-family residential
- **Open House** (December 2025):
 - Preference for more articulation
 - Focus on single-family residential privacy
 - Consider projections/recesses for entries
 - Mix of quality building materials
- **Joint TC/PC Study Session** (March 2025):
 - Preference for reduced height within 40 ft of a single-family district
 - Consider requiring community space/common buildings
 - Prevent excessive/chaotic material changes and articulation

Updates

Section A: Site Standards

A.1 Pedestrian Access

A.2 Short-Term Bicycle Parking

A.3 Long-Term Bicycle Parking

A.4 Vehicular Access

A.5 Surface Parking Location and Design

A.6 Parking Structure Access

A.7 Utilities

A.8 Landscaping and Screening

A.9 Fencing

A.10 Retaining Walls

A.11 Landscaped, Private, and Community
Recreation Spaces

A.12 Building Placement

Minor edits

More substantive edits

Section B: Building Standards

B.1 Building Massing and Scale

B.2 Parking Structure Design

B.3 Roof Design

B.4 Façade Design and Articulation

B.5 Entrance Design and Ground Floor Design

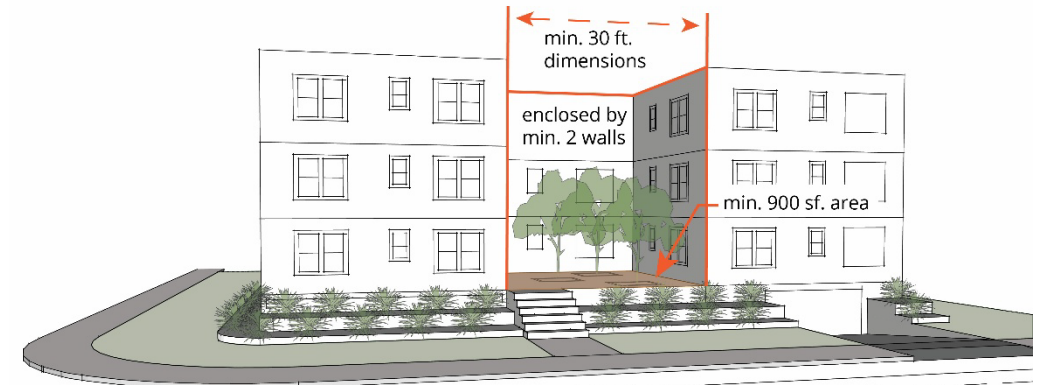
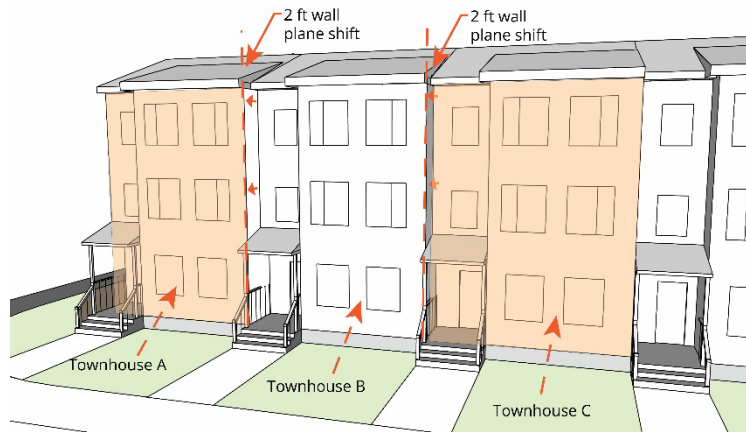
B.6 Windows and Doors

B.7 Materials and Architectural Details

New sections

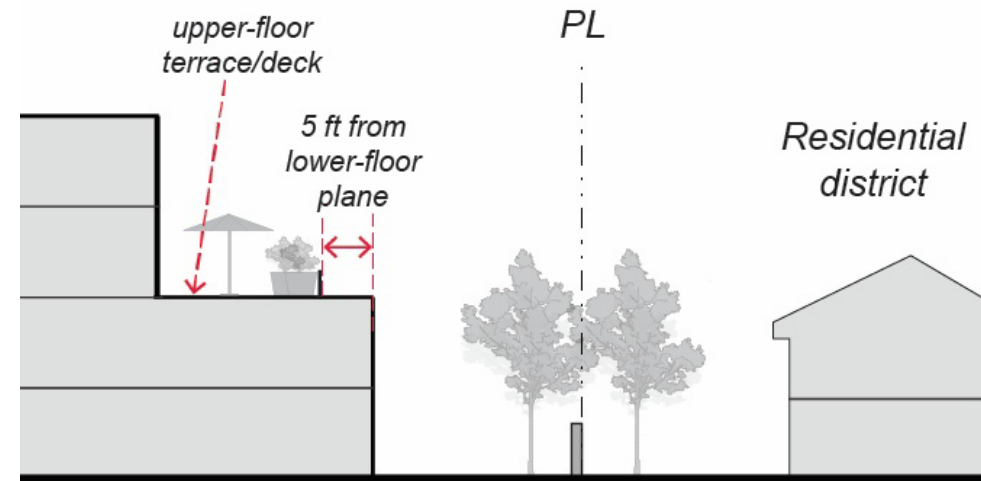
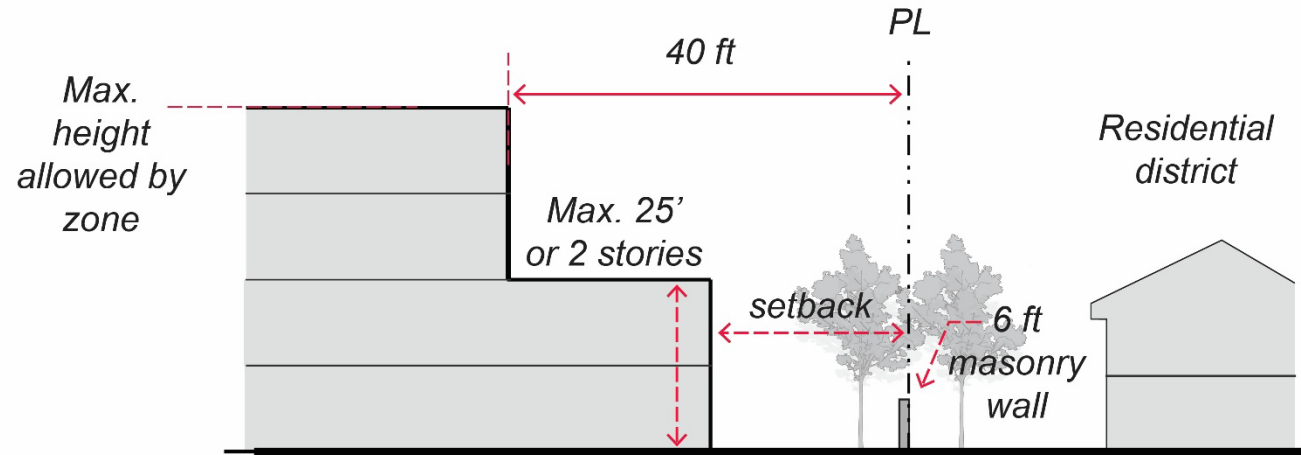
Building Massing Options

- Must choose at least one of the following: →
 - 40% of upper-story stepped back
 - Ground/podium-level community recreation space enclosed by walls
 - Maximum 65 ft building frontage
- Townhomes must provide a wall plane shift between units



Adjacency to Single-Family Districts

- Reduced height (25 ft/2 stories) when within 40 ft of a single-family district
- 5 ft step-back for upper-floor terraces/decks



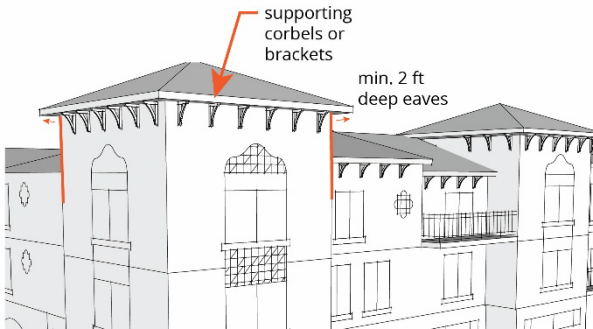
Architectural Articulation

- Differentiate base, middle, and top with at least two of the following:

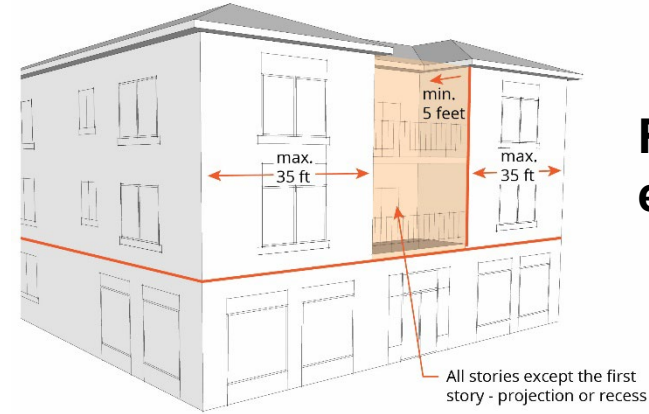


Material change between first and upper floors along a min. 70% of all street-facing elevations

Material change between first and upper floors

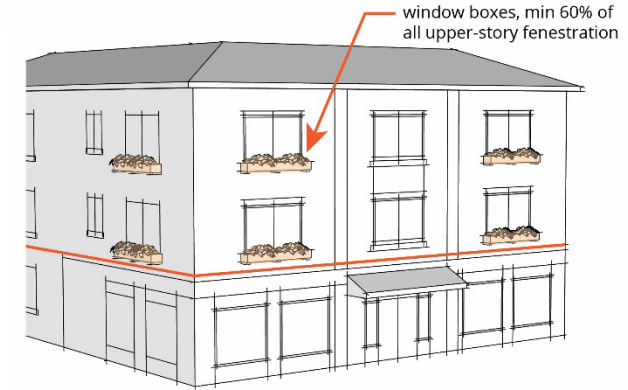


Eaves with corbels/brackets



Recesses or projections every 35 ft

Window boxes



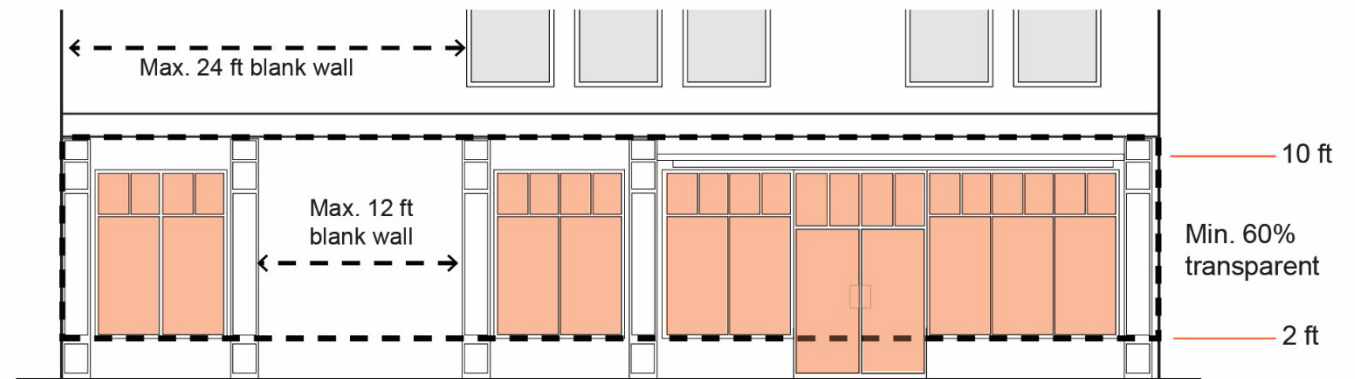
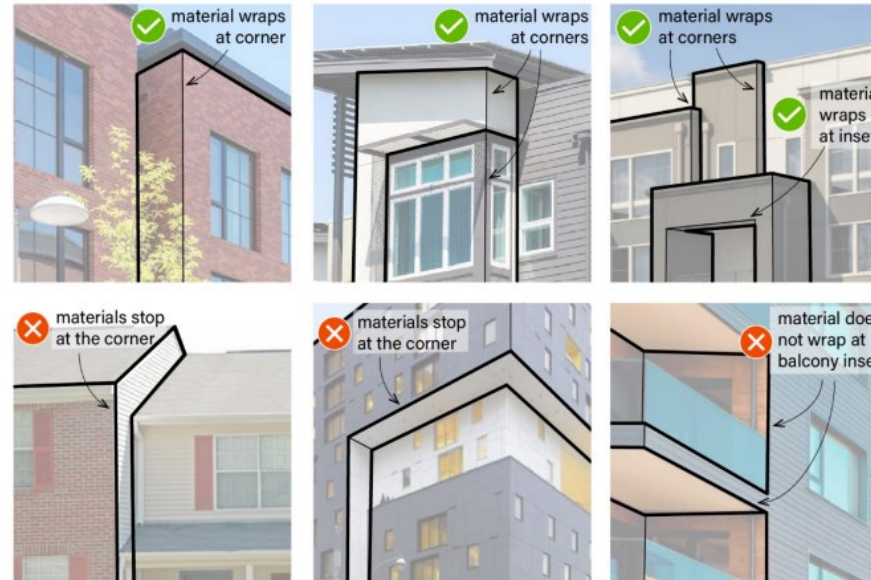
For all stories except the first story, street-facing balconies or habitable projections



Balconies or habitable projections on street-facing elevations

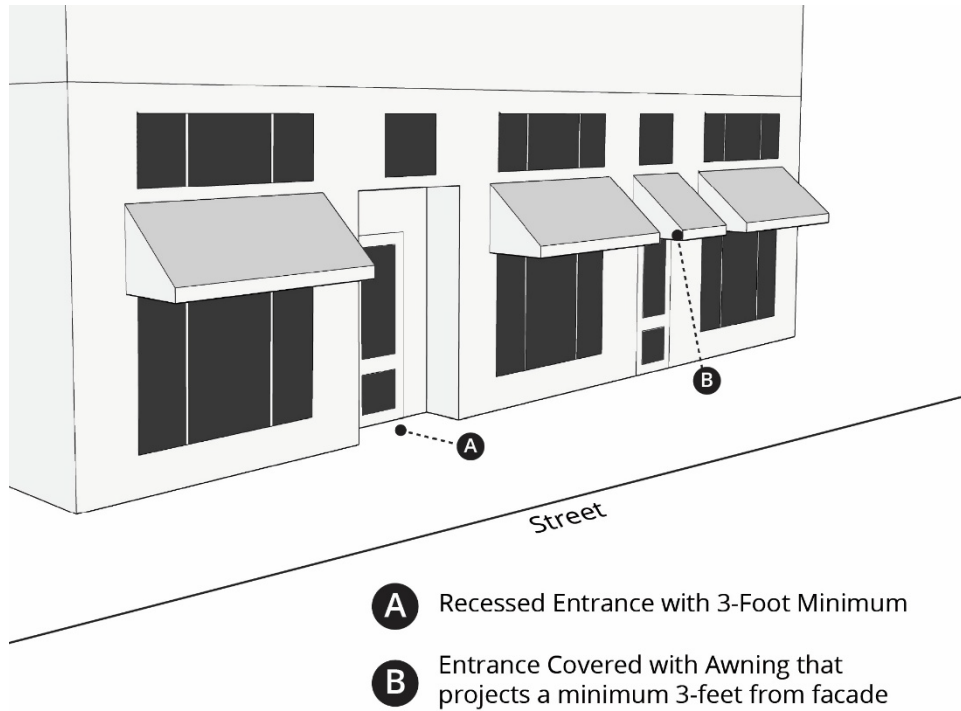
Architectural Articulation

- 360-degree design
 - All materials/details must be incorporated on all building elevations
 - Material changes must occur at inside corners
- Break up blank facades with windows or doors
 - Upper floors: max. 24 ft without a window or door
 - Ground floor: max. 12 ft without a window or door



Entrance Design

- Residential and non-residential entries must be under a roof supported by columns or a recess
- Must be framed by architectural elements



High Quality Design

- Windows

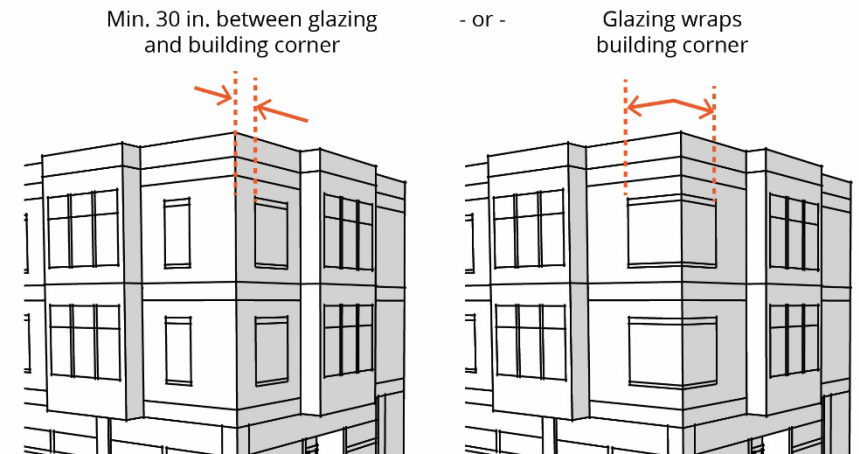
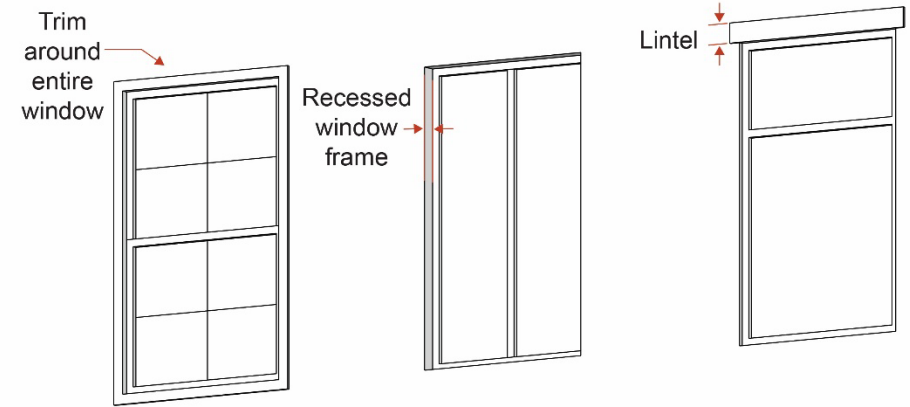
- Break up large window panes
- Require trim, recesses, or lintels
- Glazing wraps or is min. 30in from corner

- Materials

- Primary (max 50%), secondary (max 45%), accent (max 25%)
- All materials must be fire resistant, protected from corrosion, and have a lifespan of at least 30 years

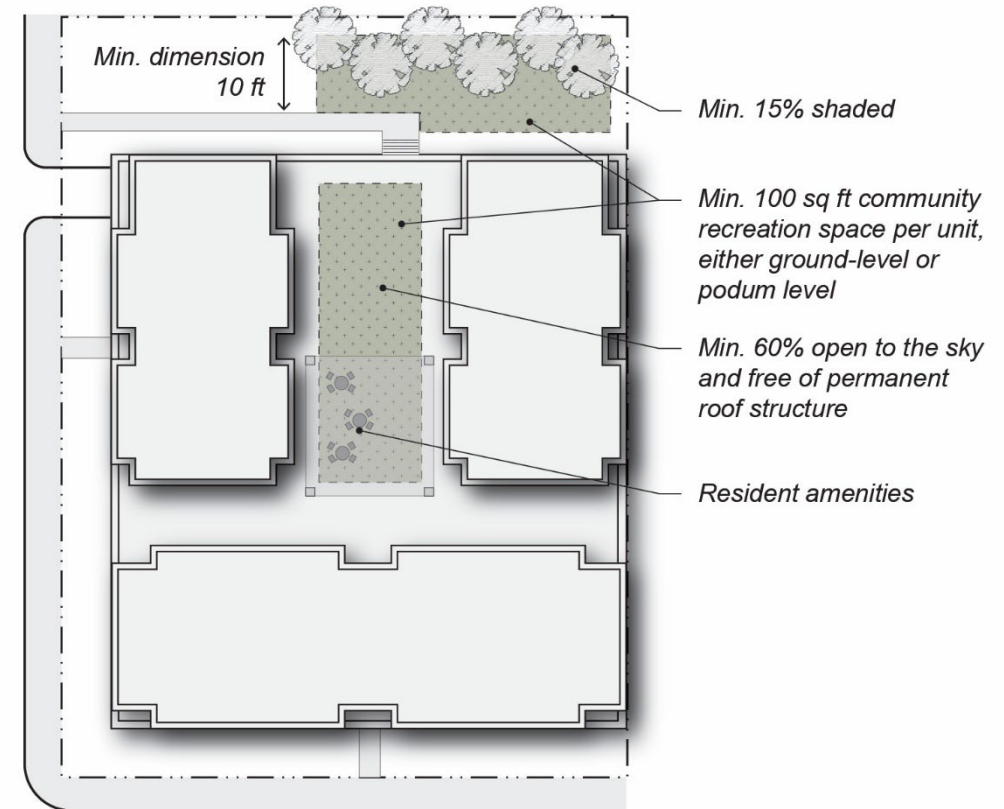
- Roofs

- Require eaves and overhangs
- Gable, projection, change in height, dormer, parapet, or cornice every 75 ft



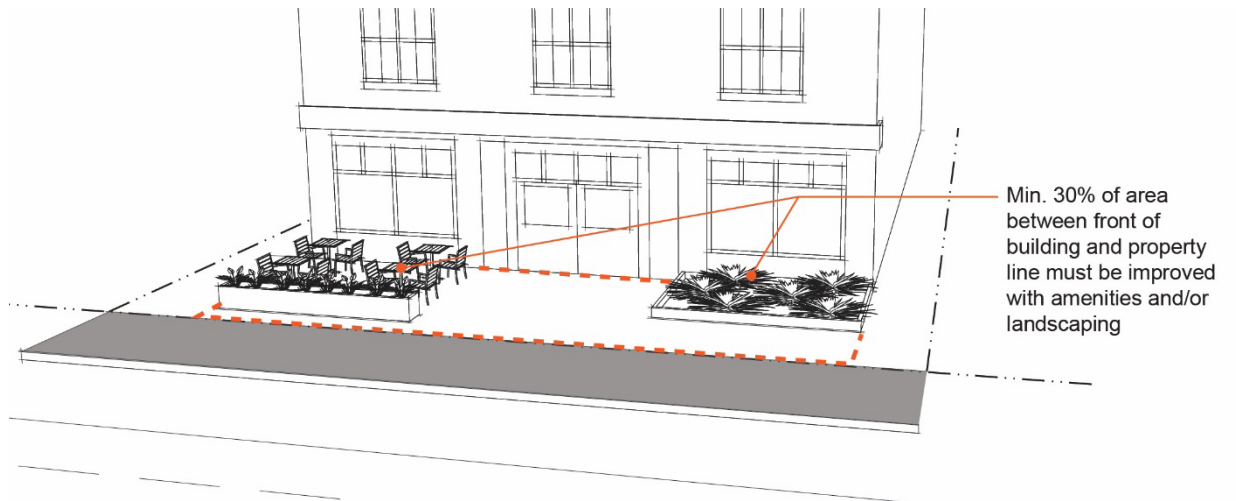
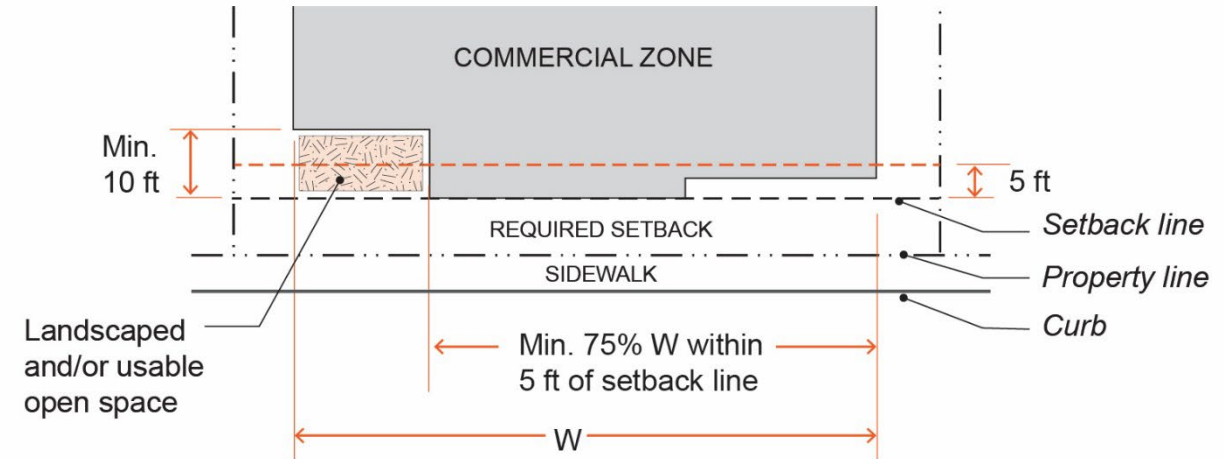
Landscaped and Recreation Space

- Landscaped Space: 20% of site
- Private Recreation Space: 60 sq ft per unit, 6 ft in any horizontal direction
- Community Recreation Space:
 - 100 sq ft per unit (developments with >8 units)
 - 60% open to sky, 15% shaded
 - ≤50% may be on a rooftop
 - Community recreation/multi-purpose room required for all buildings with 50+ units
- 40% of upper-story step-backs must be open space and stepped back for neighbors' privacy



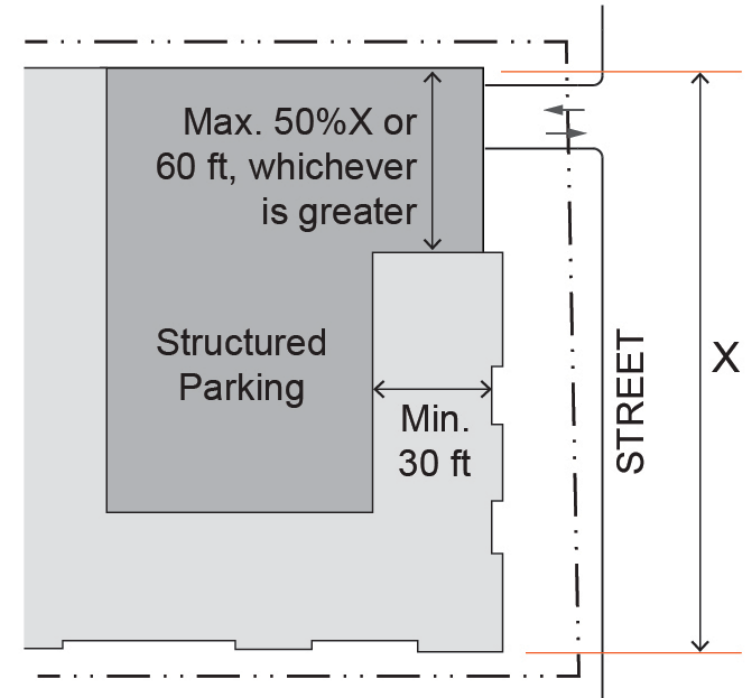
Building Placement

- 75% of frontage within 5 ft of the setback line
- Remaining space must be at least 10 ft deep and usable
- Ground-floor non-residential uses must include site amenities/landscaping on min. 30% of area between the building and the street-facing property line
- Multi-family residential primary entrances must face a public right-of-way or a community open space



Vehicle/Bicycle Parking/Access

- Vehicle/bicycle parking and access
 - Updated bicycle parking consistent with CalGreen
 - Limited number of curb cuts: 1 per 100 ft of frontage
- Above-ground parking structures
 - Lined with 30 ft-deep ground floor non-residential
 - Visibility limited to 50% street-facing facade/60 ft
 - Required architectural features: cut metal screens, railings, trellises, vertical plantings, louvers, or decorative security grills



Thank you!