LWC

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

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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-acing 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.