

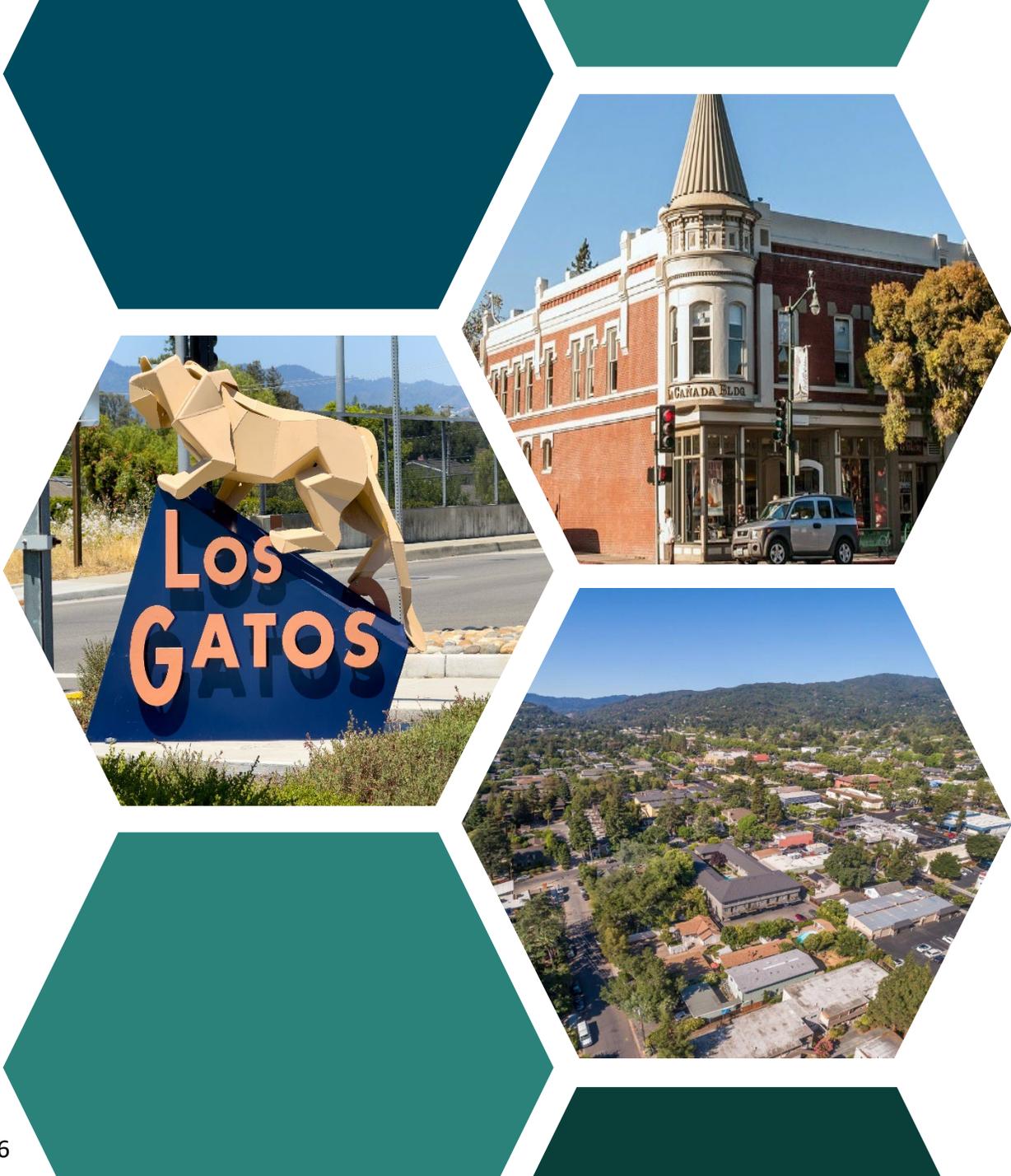


Town of Los Gatos
Multi-Family and Mixed-Use Objective Design Standards Update

**Joint Planning Commission/
Town Council Study Session**

Tuesday, March 17, 2026, 5:00 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

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

2025

2026



Project Process and Schedule

2025

2026



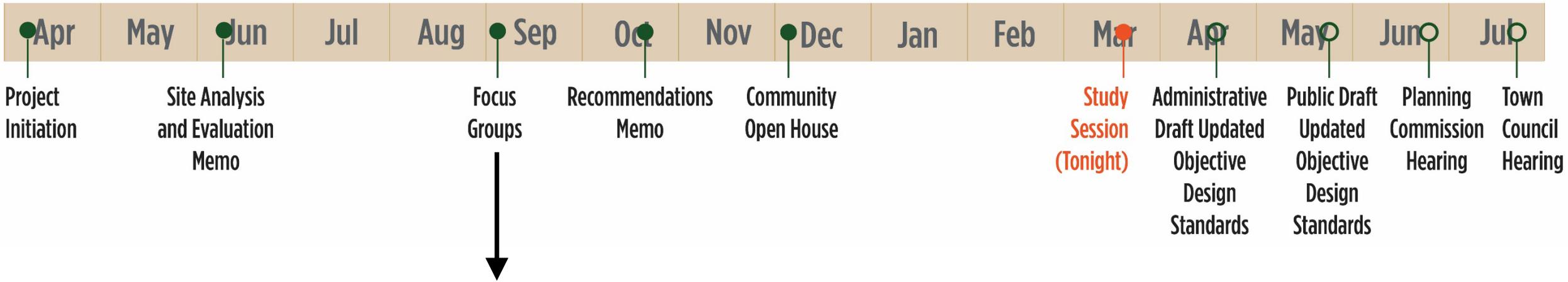
Documented:

- *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

2025

2026

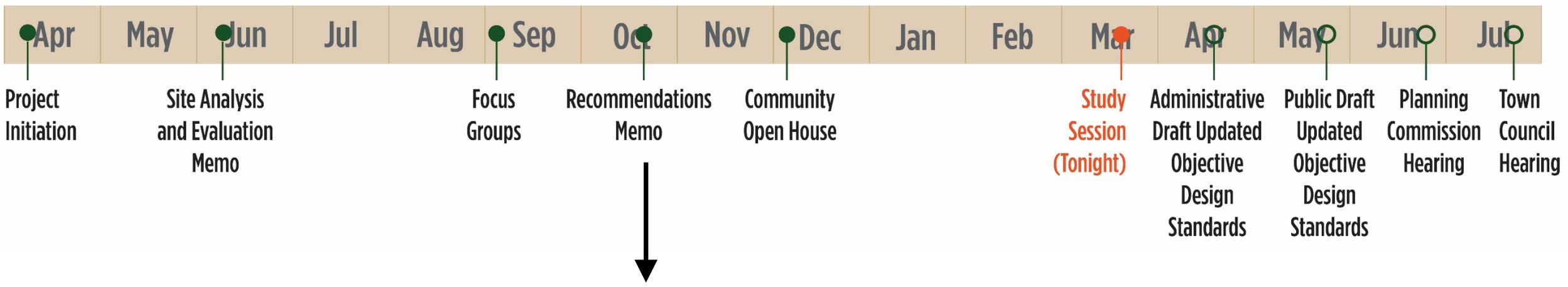


- 8 groups / 29 individuals
- September 2025
- Residents, architects, developers
- Some areas of consensus:
 - Standards do not adequately address different building types/configurations.
 - The current ODS's points system is not working out as anticipated.
 - Concern about buildings "sticking out," not reflecting Los Gatos character
 - Dislike of unarticulated and monotonous designs

Project Process and Schedule

2025

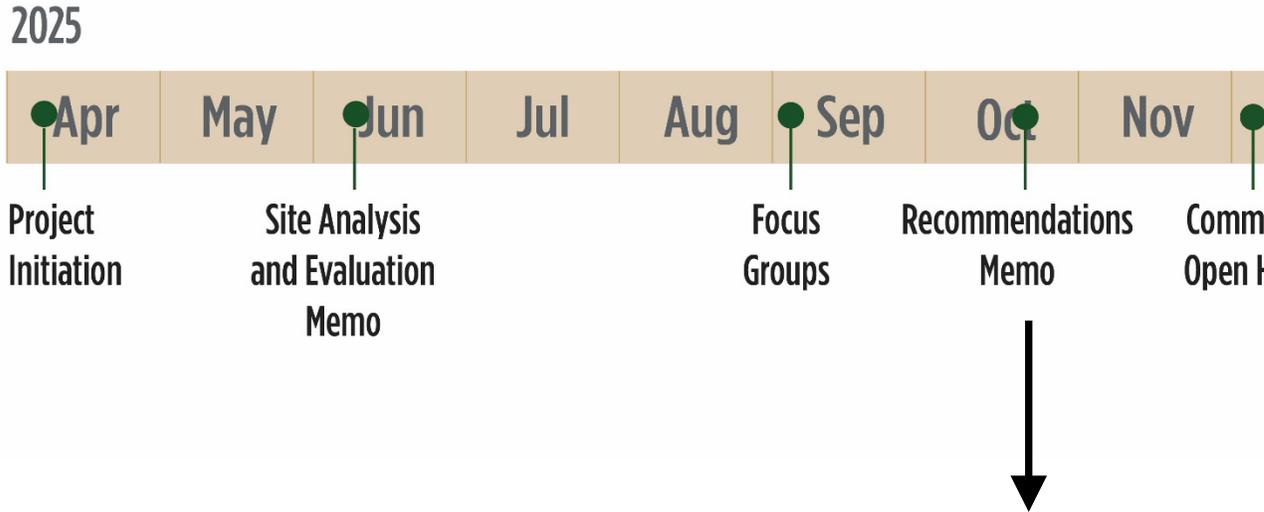
2026



Draws on findings from:

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

Project Process and



Draws on findings from:

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

Section A: Site Design

A.1 Pedestrian Access

A.2 Short Term Bicycle Parking

A.3 Long-Term Bicycle Parking

A.4 Vehicular Access

A.5 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 Massing and Scale

B.2 Parking Structure Design

B.3 Roof Design

B.4 Façade Design and Articulation

B.5 Entrance Design

B.6 Windows and Doors

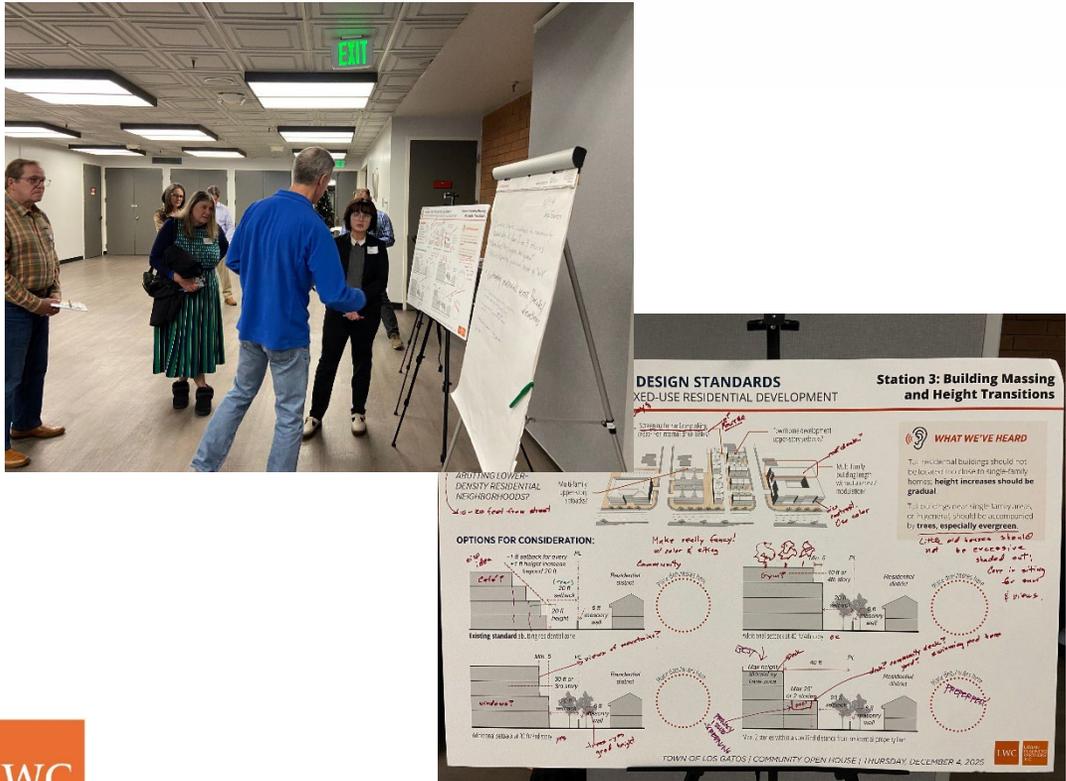
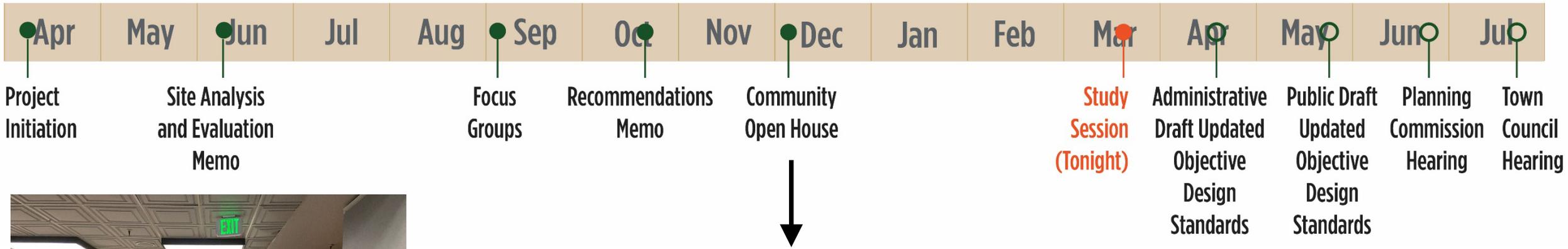
B.7 Materials, Colors, and Architectural Details

← New sections

Project Process and Schedule

2025

2026



- December 4, 2025 at the Adult Recreation Center
- 11 boards at 4 topical stations
- 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



- ***Feedback from all outreach and input informed working design ideas and questions.***
- ***Consider: How should we reflect the community's goals in the updated standards?***

Massing

Existing Massing Standards

Street-facing facades must incorporate at least 3 of the following:



- A Maximum 30-foot façade interval
- B Minimum two-foot change in depth for a minimum length of two-feet

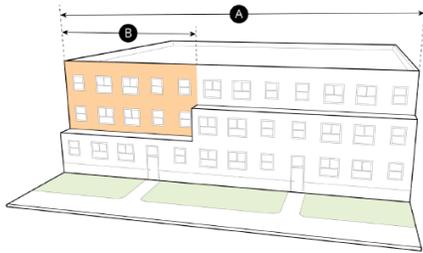


- Ground floor open area with a minimum of 60 square feet



- Recessed entries, 24 square-foot minimum

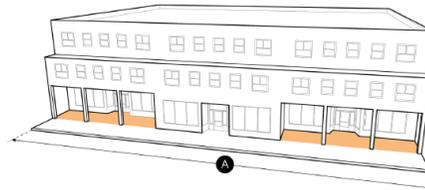
The above standards may be too similar, resulting in similar breaks in massing.



- A Total street-facing façade length
- B Minimum five-foot upper floor setback for 40 percent of façade length



- A Full height of building base or ground floor, whichever is greater
- Vertical elements, such as columns or pilasters, that protrude a minimum of one-foot from the façade



- A Total façade length 50 feet or greater.
- Walkway sheltered by a ground floor arcade with a minimum eight-foot depth on a minimum of 65 percent of the street-facing façade.

Upper story step-backs may be appropriate adjacent to single-family. Pilasters (middle) and arcades (right) may not adequately break up massing.



What we've heard

Existing massing standards:

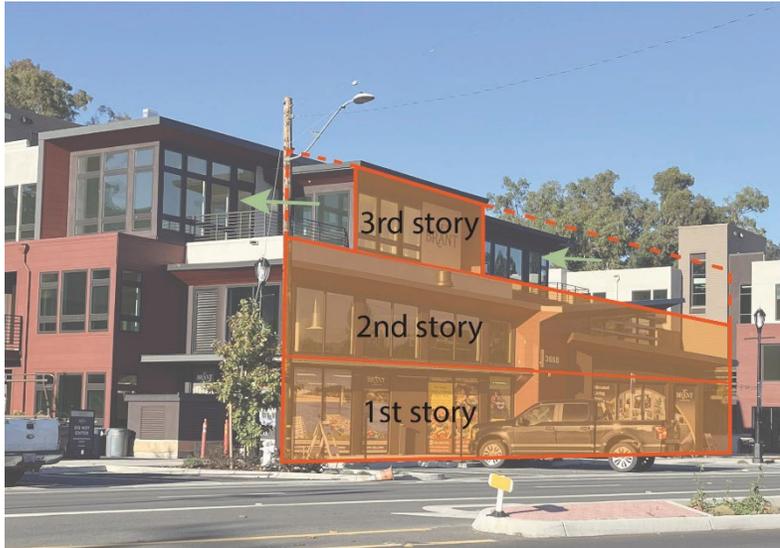
- Are **inadequate**
- Do not address **adjacency to single-family residential**

Massing - Multi-family

Working design standard

Establish new/different massing options for multi-family buildings.

Consider one or more of the following...



40% of upper story/stories stepped-back



A publicly accessible forecourt



Limitations on building size/length where abutting single-family

Massing - Townhomes

Working design standard

Establish specific massing requirements for townhome development.



Massing changes that correspond to different units?



Massing changes unrelated to units?



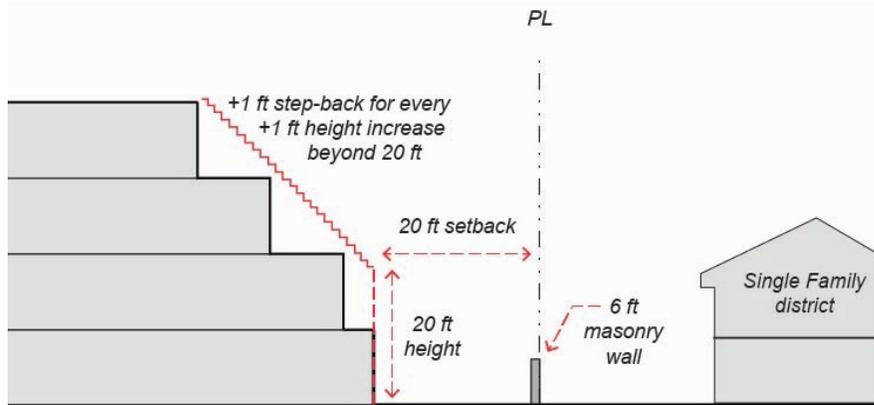
Minimal or no massing changes?

Height Transitions

Working design standard

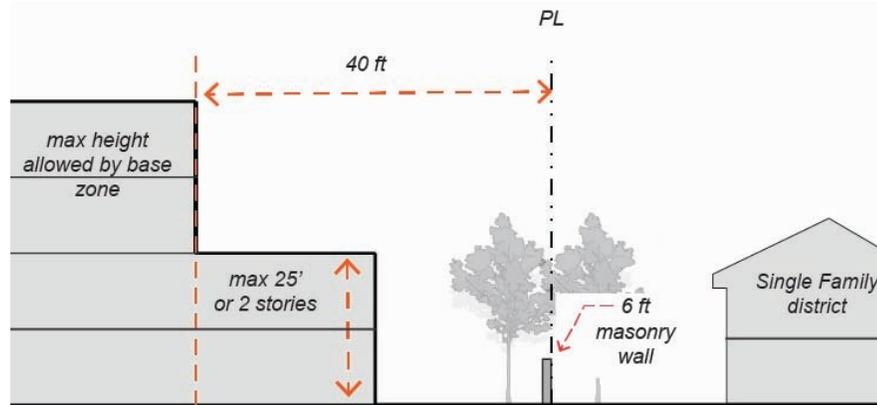
Establish maximum heights adjacent to or facing single-family.

Existing Base Zone Standards: C-1, C-2, CH, CM



Some zones already require every foot of building height above 20 ft to be stepped-back by 1 ft.

Open House Preference



*How should we regulate **height next** to single-family districts? Require angled planes? Upper-story step-backs instead?*

What we've heard

- There should be a **maximum height within a specific distance** of a shared property line
- Existing standard is expensive/onerous for builders

Materials & Colors

Working design standard

Regulate primary, secondary, and accent materials.



Primary, secondary,
& accent?

Primary ~ 60%
Secondary ~ 25%
Accent ~ 15%



Variation without
hierarchy?

Brown ~ 30%
Beige ~ 30%
Stone ~ 25%
Blue/grey ~ 15%



*What we've
heard*

- The community dislikes **too few** material changes but also dislikes **too many** material changes
- Materials should be used to **break up monotony** in project design
- Changes in material and color should be **orderly**, not chaotic
- Bright colors are not a good fit in Los Gatos

Materials & Colors

Working design standard

Regulate how and what materials are used.



Require material changes between townhome units?



Or allow material changes independent of units and massing changes?

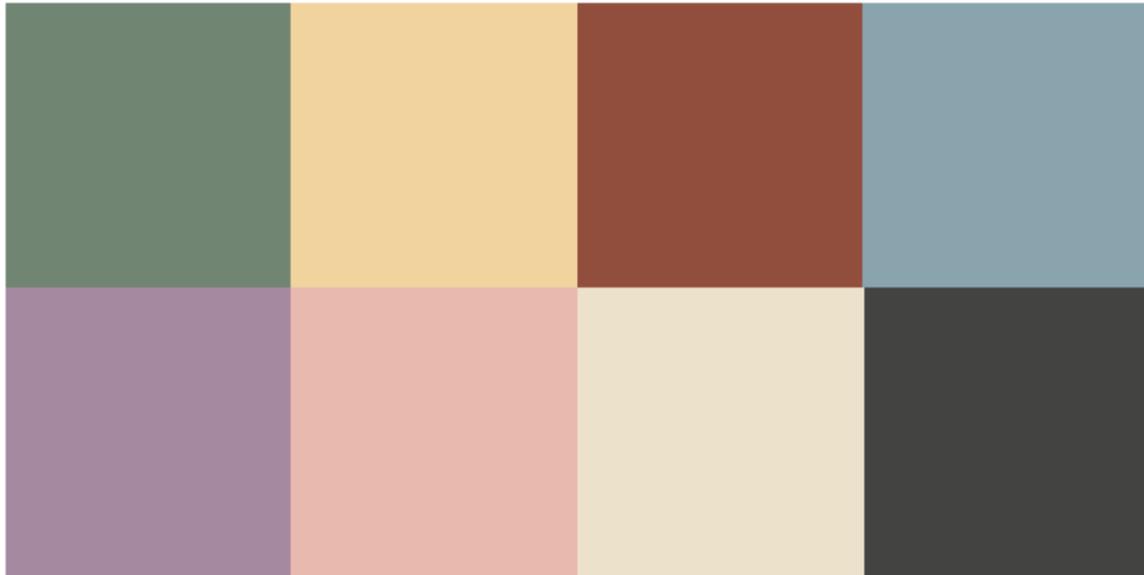


Any materials that should be prohibited?

Colors

Working design standard

Regulate color by Saturation and Light Reflecting Value (LRV).



Potential allowed color ranges: Saturation of $< 70\%$ or $< 35\%$ for pinks and purples; LRV between 5 and 80



Potential prohibited color ranges: Saturation of $> 70\%$ or $> 35\%$ for pinks and purples; LRV outside 5 and 80

Roof Design

Working design standard

Establish a minimum dimension for eaves and cornices.

No eave



Deep eave



Flat parapet



Parapet with cornice



*Require a **minimum eave depth**?*

*Require a **cornice or overhang** on parapets?*



What we've heard

- No/little support for roofs without eaves or with shallow eaves
- No/little support for parapets without architectural detail
- Reconsider max. length allowed without change in roof form or height

Windows

Working design standard

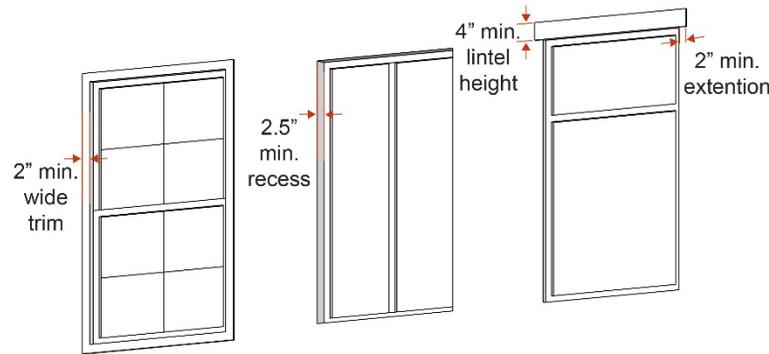
Require trim, recesses, or lintels for windows.

Flat windows



Prohibit flat windows?

Trim, Recesses, and Lintels



*Require **trim, recesses, or lintels** for some or all windows? Appropriate dimensions?*



What we've heard:

- No/little support for flat, unarticulated window design

Entry Design

Working design standard

Establish standards for entry design features and dimensions.



Be flexible, requiring min. dimensions for overhang or recess for weather protection only?

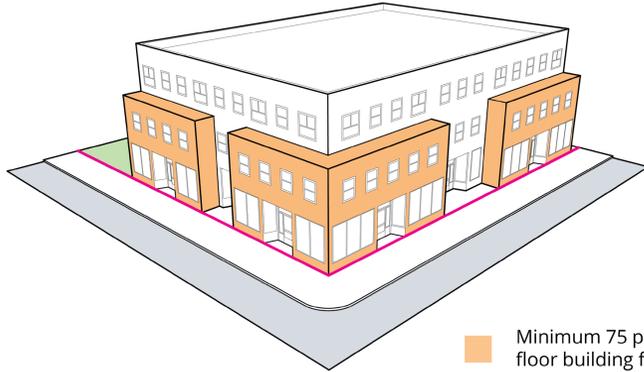


*...Or be **more prescriptive**, requiring design features from a list (e.g., columns, transom features, elevation change, corresponding height changes, other features)*

Building Placement, Landscaping, and Open Space

Existing Standards

Placement



- Minimum 75 percent of total ground floor building frontage
- Front or side setback

Private Recreation Space

- Min. 60 sq ft; min. 6 ft dimension, min. 8-foot vertical clearance
- Accessible from unit

Landscaping

- 50% front yard landscaped; 20% total site landscaped
- Landscape buffer with a wall and trees between multi family/ mixed-use and residential zones

Community Recreation Space

- Min. 100 sq ft /unit; min dimension 10 ft
- 60% open to the sky; 15% shaded



What we've heard

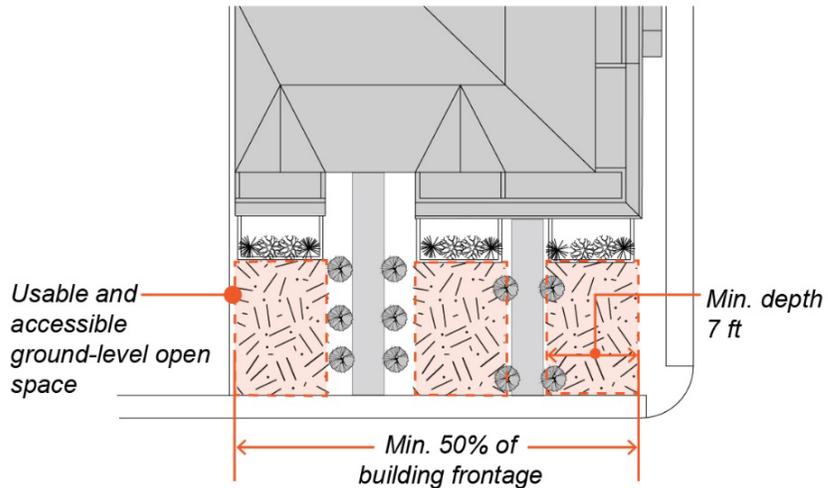
- There is a need for **improved setbacks/expanded sidewalk** areas
- Standards should facilitate/encourage **elevated open spaces**
- There is a preference for **smaller open spaces**

Building Placement, Landscaping, and Open Space

Working design standard

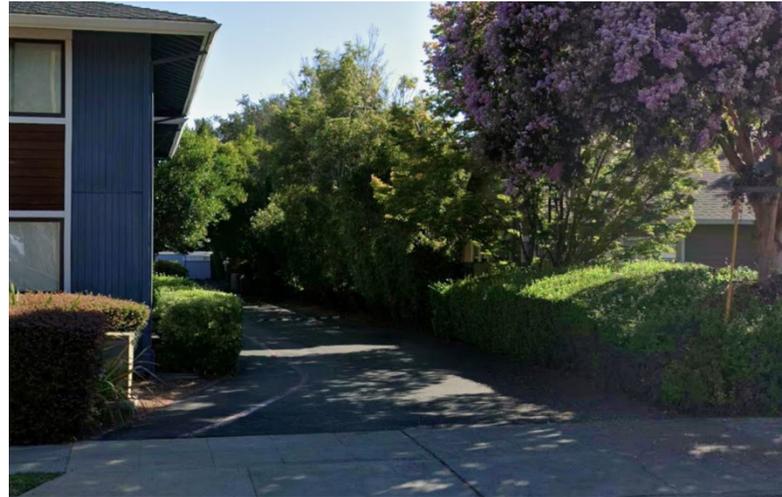
Enhance usable open space, landscaping, screening.

Setback improvements



Require **specific improvements** to setback areas?

Landscaping, screening



Require more **landscaping** along front and side property lines?

Elevated open spaces



How to best regulate **elevated open spaces** (placement, visibility)?

Thank you!