

# 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

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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

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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

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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

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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

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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

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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:

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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

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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

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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

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### 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.

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