

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.