

**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.

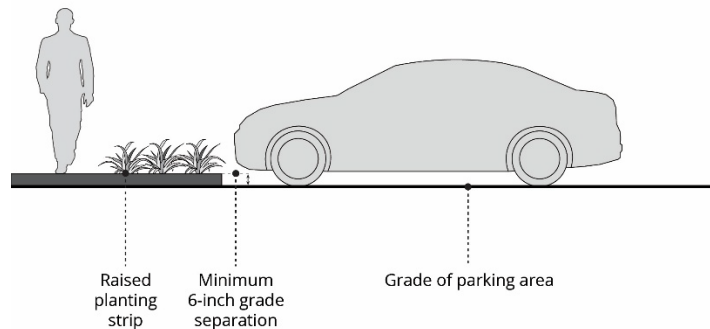


Figure A.1.2a

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.

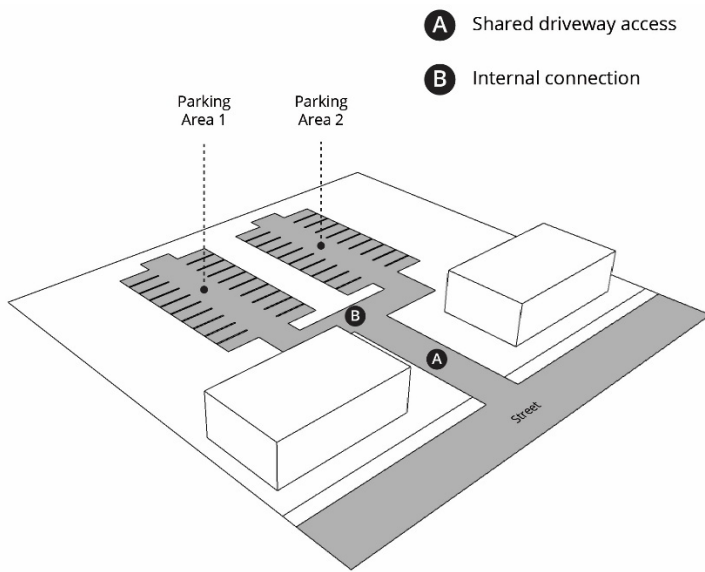


Figure A.4.1a

- 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.

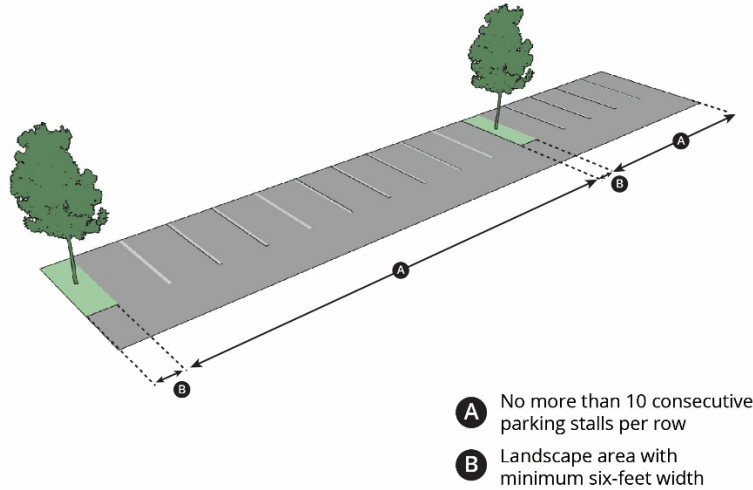


Figure A.5.2

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.

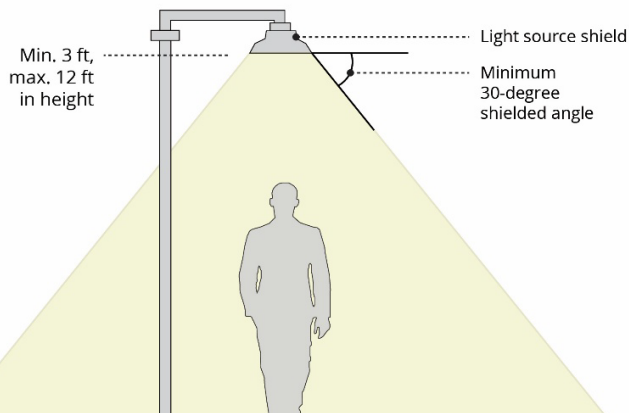


Figure A.7.2

- 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

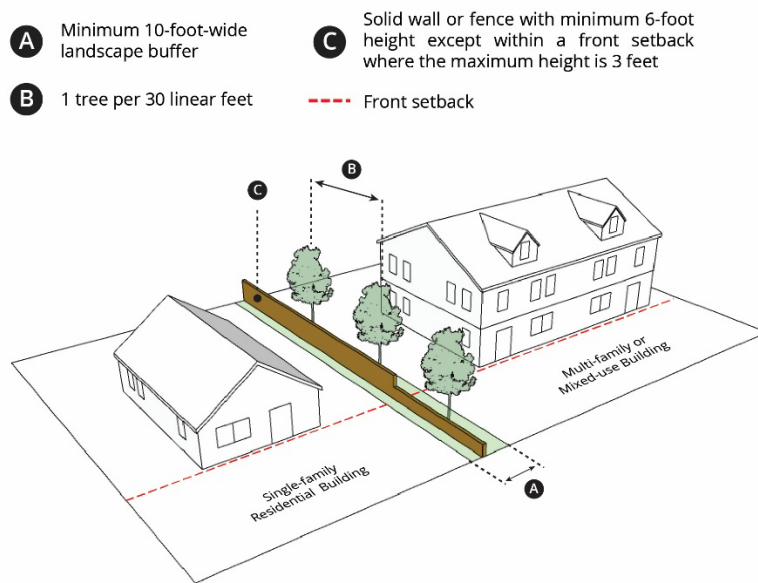


Figure A.8.2

- 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.

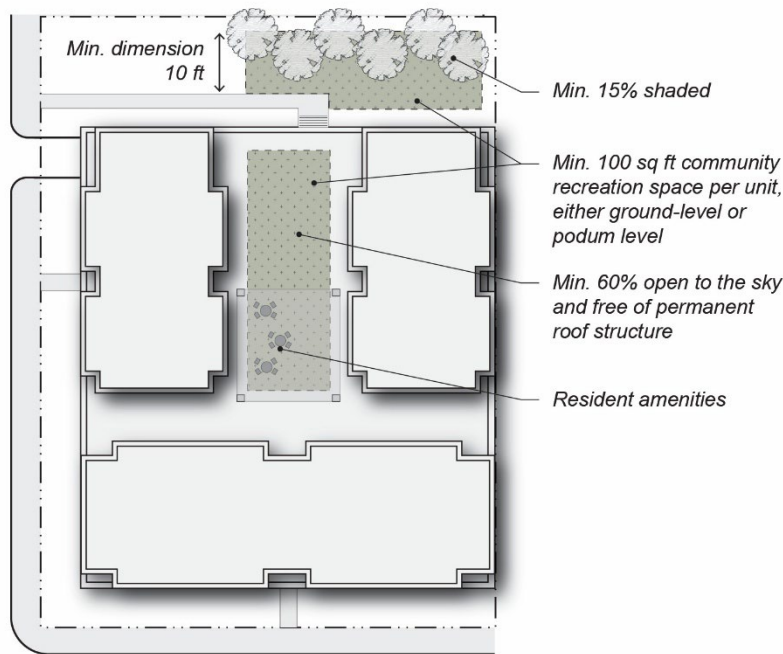


Figure A.11.1

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.

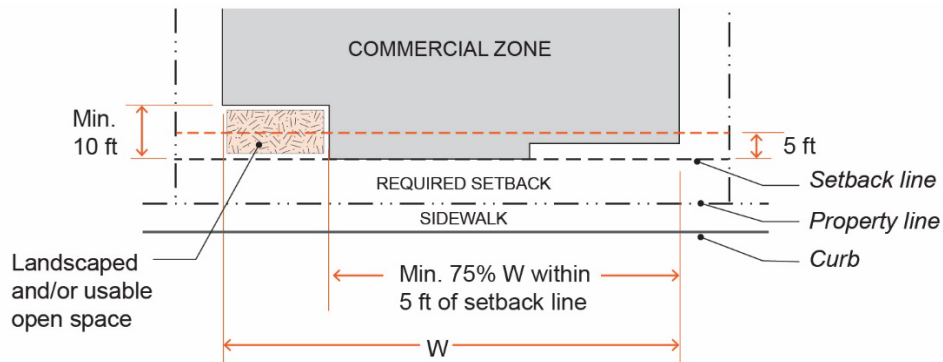


Figure A.12.1

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.

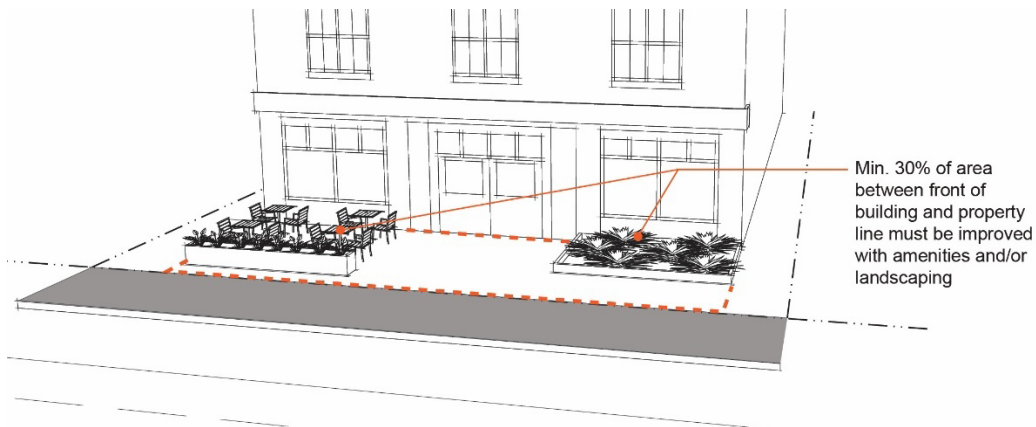


Figure A.12.2

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.

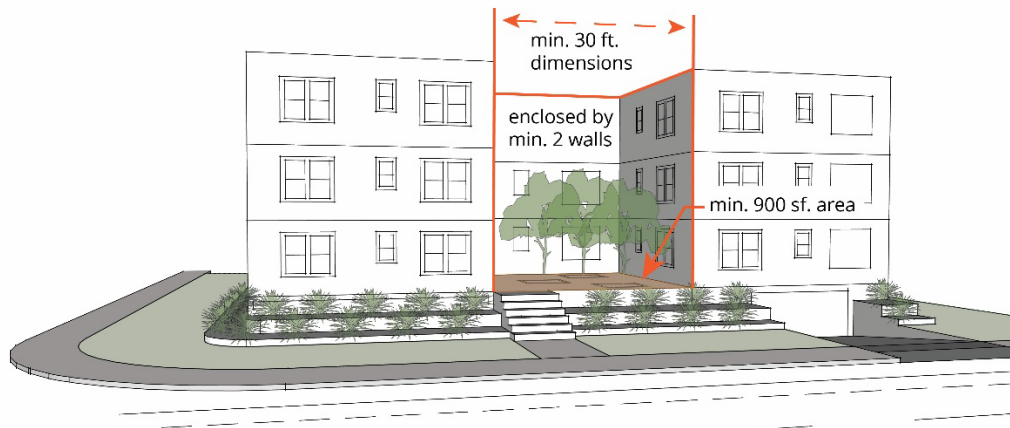


Figure B.1.1b

- 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.

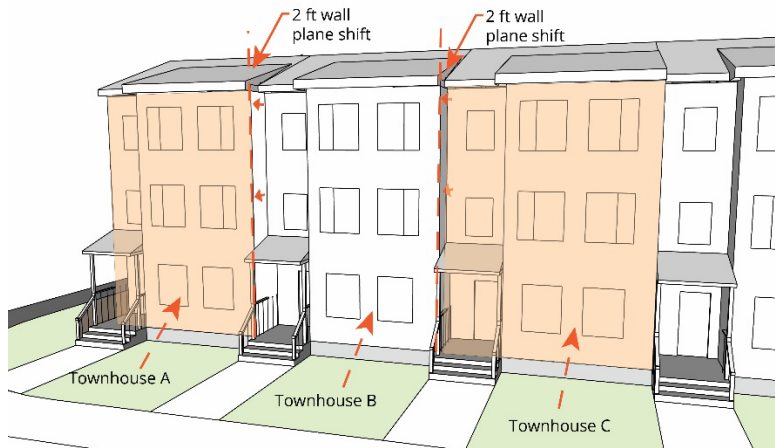


Figure B.1.2a

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

- a. The building height is limited to 25 feet or 2 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.

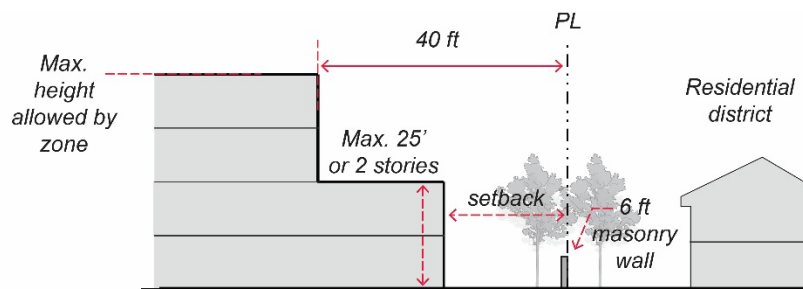


Figure B.1.3a

- 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.

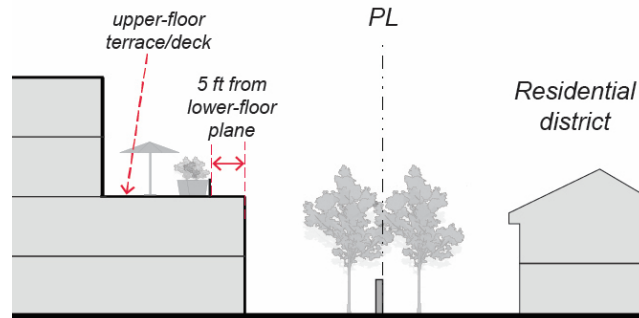


Figure B.1.3b

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.

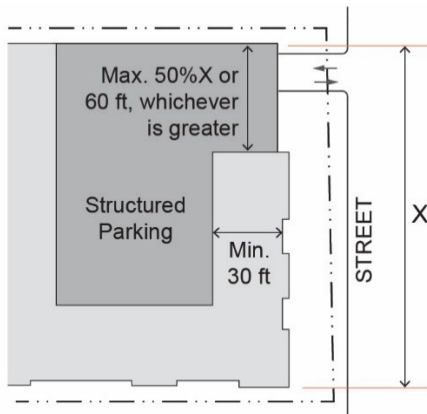


Figure B.2.1

- 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/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 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.

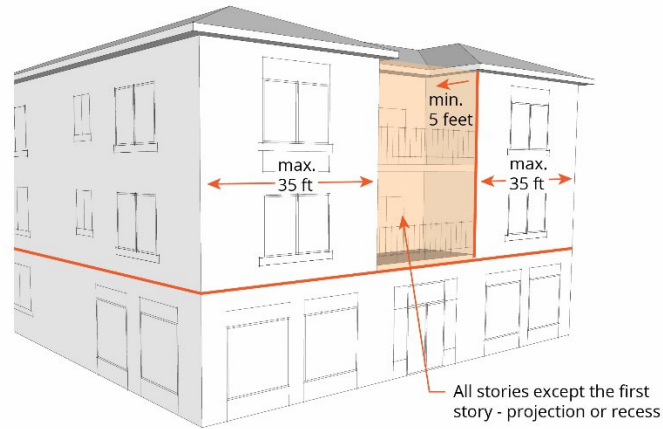


Figure B.4.1b

- 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.

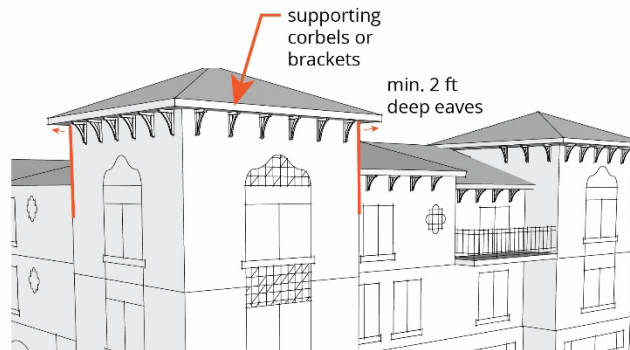


Figure B.4.1d

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

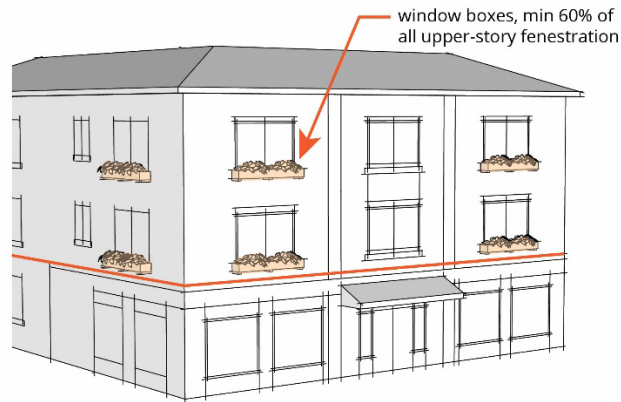


Figure B.4.1e

- 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.

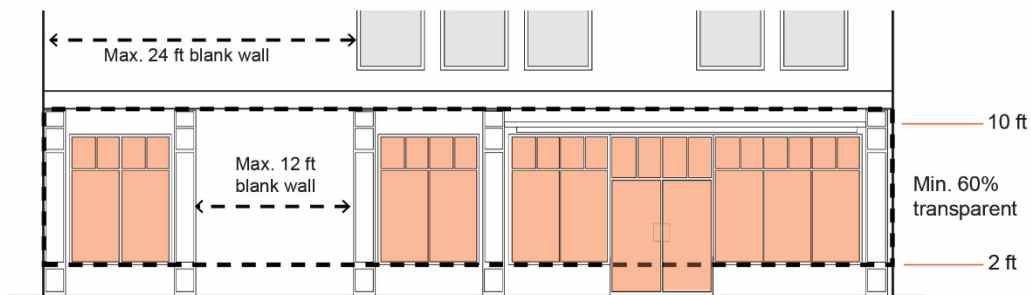


Figure B.4.4

- 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.

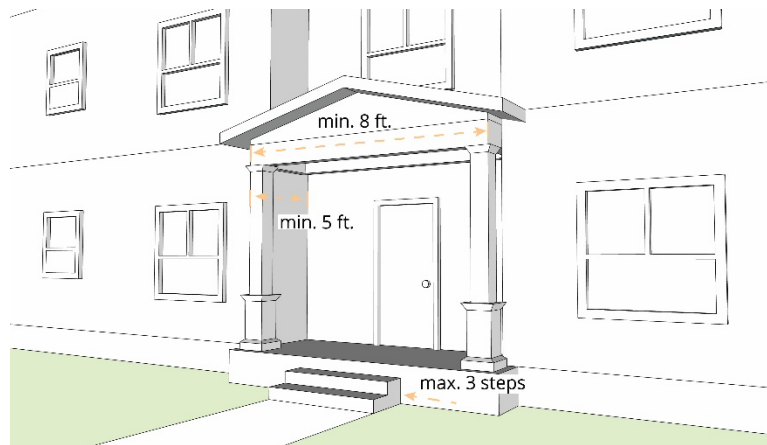


Figure B.5.2

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.

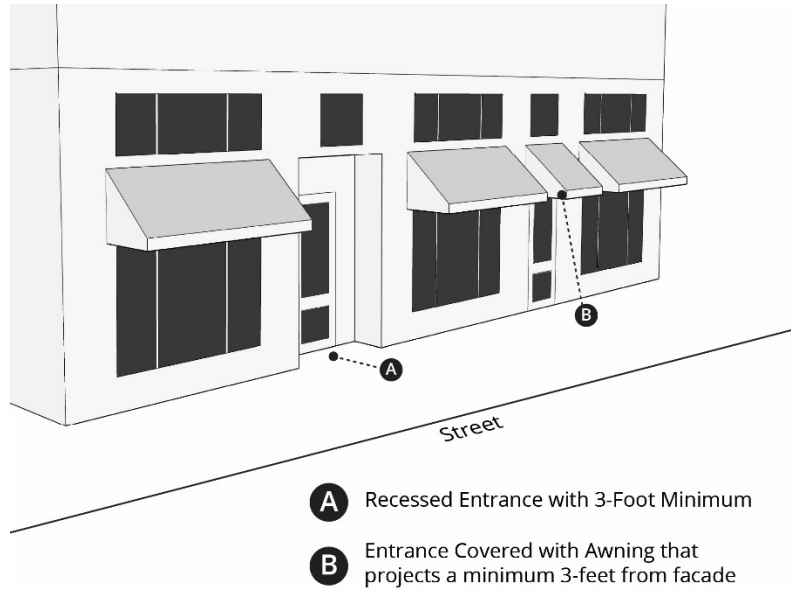


Figure B.5.3

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.

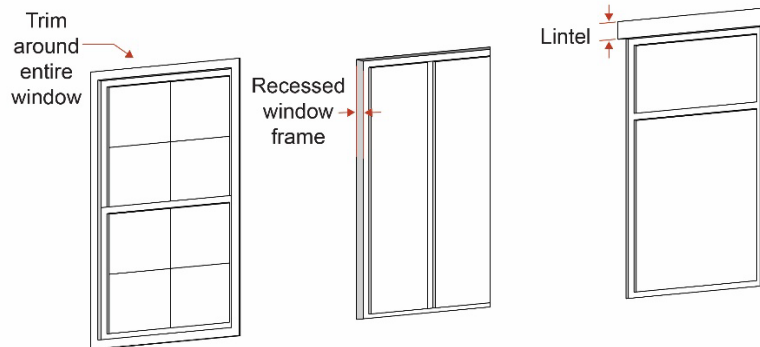


Figure B.6.2

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.

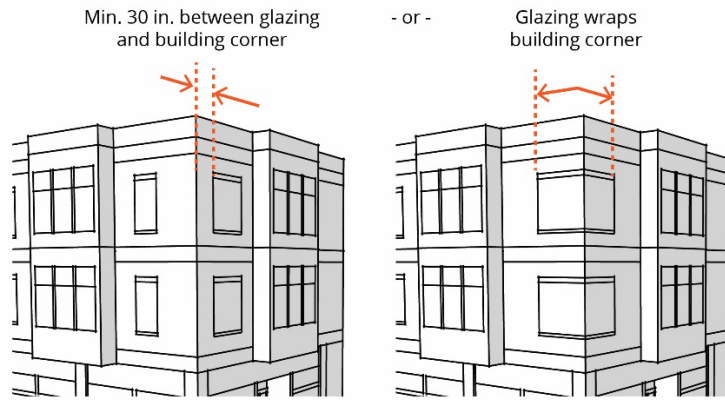


Figure B.6.4

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.