



**TOWN OF LOS GATOS
PLANNING COMMISSION
REPORT**

MEETING DATE: 06/24/2026

ITEM NO: 4

DATE: June 18, 2026
TO: Planning Commission
FROM: Joel Paulson, Community Development Director
SUBJECT: Forward a Recommendation to the Town Council on Proposed Changes and Additions to the Town's Object Design Standards for Multi-Family and Mixed-Use Projects. Not Subject to CEQA Review Under Pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15061 (b)(3) Because it can be seen with Certainty that there is No Possibility that the Changes and Additions to the Town's Object Design Standards for Multi-Family and Mixed-Use Projects Would Have a Significant Effect on the Environment. All Projects for which the Object Design Standards for Multi-Family and Mixed-Use Projects will Apply will Undergo Separate CEQA Review and Approval. **Location: Town Wide.** Project Planner: Sean Mullin.

RECOMMENDATION:

Forward a recommendation to the Town Council on proposed changes and additions to the Town's Object Design Standards for Multi-Family and Mixed-Use Projects.

CEQA:

The project is not subject to review under the CEQA Pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15061 (b)(3) because it can be seen with certainty that there is no possibility that the changes and additions to the Town's Object Design Standards for Multi-Family and Mixed-Use Projects would have a significant effect on the environment. All projects for which the Object Design Standards for Multi-Family and Mixed-Use Projects will apply will undergo separate CEQA review and approval.

BACKGROUND:

On November 15, 2022, the Town Council adopted Objective Design Standards for Qualifying Multi-Family and Mixed-Use Residential Development (ODS). Adoption of the ODS was the

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Planning Manager

Reviewed by: Community Development Director

culmination of a three-year effort involving the Town Council, Planning Commission, Planning Commission Subcommittee, and the Los Gatos community. Planning staff led the effort and worked with a consultant, M-Group, to write the ODS.

The preparation of the ODS was in response to State legislation [Senate Bill (SB) 167, SB 35, and SB 330] requiring jurisdictions to adopt objective standards and to implement them in a streamlined review of qualifying housing development applications, such as multi-family and residential mixed-use developments. Objective standards are defined under State law as, “standards that 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 or proponent and the public official prior to submittal” (California Government Code, Section 65913.4).

The purpose of the ODS is to:

- Comply with State housing legislation;
- Implement the State-required streamlined and ministerial review processes for qualifying housing proposals;
- Ensure that qualifying proposals align with the Town’s expectations and vision to maintain and support the character of the Town;
- Provide a set of clear criteria to guide development; and
- Establish an objective framework by which a qualifying project is evaluated.

Since their adoption, the Town’s ODS have been implemented in the review of many qualifying Planning applications.

On May 7, 2024, the Town Council voted to direct staff to approach M-Group, the consultant that assisted in drafting the Town’s current ODS and ask for a proposal to work on additional standards related to view standards, architectural styles, and high-quality building design. Further, the Town Council asked that M-Group speak to their experience developing ODS for these topics.

On August 6, 2024, staff and M-Group provided feedback on additional standards. The Council requested that staff issue a Request for Proposals (RFP) to qualified providers to address the development of additional ODS in the following areas:

- High-quality building design: ODS are to focus on façade materials to ensure high-quality building design that reflects the existing character of the Town.
- Architectural style: ODS must evaluate the architecture within the immediate neighborhood to determine the architectural styles that are consistent and appropriate for the neighborhood.

- Height transitions: ODS shall provide effective strategies for appropriate massing transitions between zones/densities (i.e., from new multi-story buildings to single-family neighborhoods). Consideration of solar access impacts are also to be evaluated.
- All new ODS should also consider small, multi-family housing.

The Town distributed an RFP in September 2024 and received three proposals. Staff interviewed each candidate since all submissions met the qualifications provided in the RFP. After interviewing the three qualified candidates, staff selected Lisa Wise Consulting, Inc. based on their experience, timeline, and qualifications provided in their proposal. Through an existing partnership with Lisa Wise Consulting, the consultant team also includes staff from Urban Planning Partners, who provide many opportunities for community engagement and collaboration to ensure all voices are heard.

In April 2025, staff and the consultant initiated the ODS project. Initial timelines and an engagement plan were established to guide the development of updated and additional ODS.

On September 9, 2025, the consultant conducted focus groups where participants provided observations and suggestions to help identify trends and patterns in existing and recent development. A summary of the findings from the focus groups is included as Exhibit 3.

On October 22, 2025, the consultant delivered a Technical Analysis and Evaluation Memo examining the regulatory framework, input collected, example projects, and initial analysis for revisions (Exhibit 4). The analysis and evaluation helped set the direction for the development of the updated and additional ODS. The consultant also prepared a Recommendations Memo providing recommendations on specific text, graphics, and implementation updates (Exhibit 5).

On December 4, 2025, staff and the consultant conducted a Community Open House at the Los Gatos Adult Recreation Center. Attendees provided thoughts and insights on the ODS project objectives: high quality building design and site design; building massing and height transitions; and architectural character and details. A Summary Memo for the Community Open House is included as Exhibit 6.

On March 17, 2026, the Town Council and Planning Commission held a Joint Study Session to provide the consultant with Town Council, Planning Commission, and community input and direction prior to the preparation of the Administrative Draft ODS. During the Study Session, the consultant, led by Lisa Wise Consulting, introduced the ODS project; provided an overview of community outreach and feedback; and presented several topics for consideration by the Council, Commission, and community. The feedback and direction from the Study Session was essential in shaping the Administrative Draft ODS. A Summary Memo for the Joint Study Session is included as Exhibit 7.

On June 18, 2026, the Draft Objective Design Standards for Qualifying Multi-Family and Mixed-Use Residential Development was posted on the Town's website (Exhibit 1). Staff notified the public through social media outlets and direct email to architects and designers.

DISCUSSION:

The updated Draft ODS document is included as Exhibit 1; a track changes version is included as Exhibit 2. The Draft ODS continues to be organized into two sections: Site Standards (Section A) and Building Standards (Section B). The Site Standards section includes objective standards for site layout and building placement; vehicular access and parking; and outdoor spaces and amenities. The Building Standards section includes objective standards for building form and massing; façade articulation; materials; roof design; windows and doors; and materials and architectural details. Many of the objective standards have corresponding figures to help visualize the standards.

An updated recommendations memo is included as Exhibit 8, providing details of the revisions recommended to address the Council's direction and respond to feedback from the Council, Planning Commission, and community. These changes are reflected in the Draft ODS document (Exhibit 1).

Exhibit 9 includes a summary of how the Draft ODS responds to the Council's direction to update the existing ODS to address high-quality building design, architectural style, and height transitions; as well as consideration for small, multi-family housing.

Lastly, the consultant's slide presentation prepared for the Planning Commission meeting is included as Exhibit 10.

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

Throughout the process and prior to the June 24, 2026, Planning Commission meeting, staff and the consultant conducted several outreach opportunities to solicit feedback on the project from the community and stakeholders. Additionally, staff contacted professional organizations, design professionals, developers, and residents to inform them about the Planning Commission meeting and encourage participation and written comment on the Draft ODS. In addition to the direct contact summarized above, staff notified the public of the June 24, 2026, Planning Commission meeting and that the Draft ODS were available on the Town's website through the following media and social media resources:

- On the Town's website home page, What's New;
- On the Town's webpage dedicated to objective standards; and
- On the Town's social media accounts.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW:

The project is not subject to review under the CEQA pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15061 (b)(3) because it can be seen with certainty that there is no possibility that the changes and additions to the Town's Object Design Standards for Multi-Family and Mixed-Use Projects would have a significant effect on the environment. All projects for which the Object Design Standards for Multi-Family and Mixed-Use Projects will apply will undergo separate CEQA review and approval.

CONCLUSION:

A. Summary

At the Council's direction, staff and the consultant developed Draft ODS that address high-quality building design, architectural style, and height transitions; as well as consideration for small, multi-family housing. The updated Draft ODS also includes revisions to existing standards to improve effectiveness and increase clarity. The update efforts incorporated significant public engagement, including: Town Council meetings for project initiation; six consultant-lead focus groups; a community open house; Town Council/Planning Commission joint study session; and public outreach through direct emails, the Town's website, and social media channels.

B. Recommendation

The Draft ODS have been forwarded to the Planning Commission for review. Staff recommends that the Planning Commission:

- Receive and consider public comments;
- Complete the review of the Draft ODS;
- Provide input on any recommended modifications to the Draft ODS; and
- Forward a recommendation to the Town Council to approve the Draft ODS.

C. Alternatives

Alternatively, the Commission can:

1. Forward a recommendation of approval to the Town Council with additional and/or modified standards; or
2. Continue the matter to a date certain with specific direction to staff.

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SUBJECT: Update to the Town Objective Design Standards

DATE: June 18, 2026

NEXT STEPS:

Following review and recommendation by the Planning Commission, the Town Council will consider the updated Draft ODS, the Planning Commission recommendation, and any additional public comments.

EXHIBITS:

1. Draft Objective Design Standards for Qualifying Multi-Family and Mixed-Use Residential Development
2. Draft Objective Design Standards for Qualifying Multi-Family and Mixed-Use Residential Development in Track Changes
3. Focus Groups Summary Memo
4. Technical Analysis and Evaluation Memo
5. Recommendations Memo, dated October 22, 2025
6. Community Open House Summary Memo
7. TC-PC Joint Study Session Summary Memo
8. Recommendations Memo, dated June 18, 2026
9. Project Objectives Memo
10. LWC Presentation Slides