

We, a cooperative of Architects and Designers of Los Gatos, have reviewed the Draft Objective Standards for multi-family and mixed-use residential projects. We respectfully request that our concerns be heard and addressed where ever possible.

Our review is based on our experience with not only designing quality architecture, but also how codes, guidelines and standards can be misinterpreted by different designers but also staff. We also take great pride in carefully crafted design and how less experienced designers might use these standards as a crutch, instead of finding more appropriate and elegant and site/project specific design solutions. In many cases, we are playing devils advocate, in order to highlight where we see holes or weaknesses in specific standards. We have made specific suggestions where we see an opportunity to do so.

We also understand that this is an onerous task that has been put upon you but the state and that there can be no perfect set of standards. Design is inherently complicated and subjective. We are here to help with any further discussions if requested.

GENERAL

- The Planning Dept needs to make sure the Planning Commissioners understand that these design guidelines/standards are not to be referred to or used at all when evaluating Discretionary Review projects that go through the normal DRC/PC approval process. The two processes are mutually exclusive, and Discretionary projects should be reviewed on their own merits. It must be understood and clearly stated that these “Standards” are not to be considered a standard that is compared to projects that do not apply for this stream lined process. These standards are not standards of excellence and should never be considered as such.
- Could there be a tiered system for some of these requirements? Projects that are 3 units or 50 units or 500 units shouldn’t necessarily have the same standards.

KEY TERMS

- Are community recreation space and landscaped areas mutually exclusive?
- In community areas, is there a minimum size of such a space? How big must it be to have it considered community space? Example: could a widened, paved node at a pathway intersection be considered community space? Like with a bench?
- Does landscape area include pathways?

A.10 LANDSCAPE, PRIVATE, AND COMMUNITY RECREATION SPACES

- Does landscape area mean any and all planted areas, including planters and pots on every floor?
- Private recreation space should be proportionally based on the size of the unit. The Palo Alto standards require just 50 SF for each unit regardless of which floor or unit size. We propose a requirement of 10% of the living area. A 500 SF studio should not be required to have a 10'x15' balcony. There could be a minimum as well, 50 SF, so that it must still be able to hold a couple of people comfortably.
- Can the required recreation space be broken down into many smaller community spaces? If so, what are the minimum dimensions? (Refer back to key terms comment.)

A.11 BUILDING PLACEMENT

- Requirement 11.1 states that 75% of the ground floor of a building shall be placed within 5 feet of the front & street side setbacks. Does this mean all the buildings on site? Does this mean 75% of the entire street frontage must have a building on its frontage? Or only the buildings that abut the street when multiple buildings are on site? Will buildings be calculated individually? What about corner lots and corner open plazas?
- Requirement 11.2 states that there must be between 15-30% of the street frontage area shall have site amenities. If a restaurant is at this ground floor, and they would like the whole frontage to be tables & chairs and landscaping, how can they meet the 30% max. Why is a maximum necessary?

B.1 BUILDING DESIGN - Massing & Scale

- Do these options apply to each individual building that abuts the street separately? Does this apply to buildings on site that do not abut the street?
- Some of these options seem mutually exclusive. How would a continuous arcade, continuously vertical recessed entries and recessed courtyards all exist on the same building facade? How would any of these options work with the arcade?
- Longer buildings and corner buildings will look monotonous with a continuous arcade. And architecturally speaking not attractive unless in a very particular setting. Shouldn't this option be contingent on the length of the building? When over 80 or 100 ft long, a 2/3 arcade approach could apply? And special treatment for corner lots. What about open corner plazas?
- There should be an entire section that deals with corner lots, with points awarded for an open plaza/public amenity at the corner, or a tower at a corner (with a height increase exception for the tower), or another creative way to highlight/celebrate a corner, etc. although maybe too complex for this cookie cutter approach document.

- B.1.1c suggests entries should be recessed all the way up the entire building height, but it is not good practice to have uncovered entries. How will this option be beneficial? Would a roof/covered porch at these entries be allowed for this option? Especially when this conflicts directly with the recommendation for a 3' recessed entry per diagram B.4.6a. If any fenestration element needs an awning it's the entrance.
- Option B.1.1f offers pilasters as an option, but pilasters are much less about massing as they are about facade articulation. Shouldn't this be in section B.4?

B.3 ROOF DESIGN

- B.3 illustration has all pitched roofs. This is not exemplary of most modern architecture and seems to show favor for sloped pitches. Offer more examples of flat roofs with eaves or parapets.

B.4 FACADE DESIGN & ARTICULATION

- B.4.1d & f shows a continuous belly band and cornice. Do these bands have to be continuous and unbroken? The pop outs, recesses, and continuous pilasters suggested in the other options would not be very harmonious with these options. These also seem to conflict with the recessed courtyards and entries and recessed upper floors if the bands must be continuous. What about different roof heights? This option is not very compatible with many other design elements suggested.
- B.4.1d - A 10" tall belly band is quite thick for a modern line. This suggests only a traditional style building will be allowed. Palo Alto objectives require 4" min, not 10" min.
- B.4.1f - Requiring a "floor to ceiling height" is a structural dimension that is measured in a cross section and cannot be perceived from the outside. The height between the top of the top windows and the top of the parapet is what is perceived. Is this what is supposed to be 24" + lower floor framing/ceiling assembly height? Interior finishes, such as dropped ceilings should not be part of this calculation as they are not perceived from the outside. How does a sloped interior ceiling height get calculated? It's really the facade height, parapet height, etc that should be controlled.
- B4.2 - When a building side facade is on the property line or within 5' of it, how can this requirement be fulfilled? Windows are not allowed. Further, expensive accent materials, that can enhance a street side facade will be wasted money on a side no one can see. This will prohibit small amounts of high end exterior materials from being used at all.
- B.4.3 - Almost all of the first listed architectural features are found in the previous section under B.4.1. These are redundant.
- B.4.3 - Who will determine if a particular architectural "solution", aka decorative feature, will constitute points? Will one Juliet balcony, or planter box mean the points are achieved? One chimney, one bay window? This points system lacks specificity and at the same time is entirely too specific about traditional style

architectural features. Most of these features are entirely inappropriate on modern architecture. When we say "Bay Window", can we add in "or Box Window", and "angled Box Window"? The term Bay Window is too specific/ limiting. And what about the unfortunate designer that decides "hey maybe I'll take one of each thing on the menu?" One bay window, one planter, one awning, one pilaster, one arcade - oh wait maybe two, one balcony, one trellis, one braced overhang, one corbel, one scoop with sprinkles, and why don't you just throw in a 10" thick caramel flavored belly band just for fun". Are we making an ice cream sundae here? In my absurd example, the Town would have no choice but to approve it as long they scored the minimum 16 points" To quote their own language: "... by incorporating any combination of the following architectural solution to achieve a minimum of 16 points" with no mention of any cohesive design theme, scale, proportion, repetition, cadence, architectural nuance, color, materials, etc.

- B.4.5 - This illustration should be stricken of the "Architectural Features" pilasters. Not Good
- B.4.6a - This requirement seems to conflict with the vertically continuously recessed entry option from section B.1.1c
- B.4.6b - How about adding in another drawing that shows glass extending to the floor? Why say between 2 and 10 feet above the sidewalk? Why can't the glass extend to the sidewalk?
- B.4.10 - Wouldn't it be more appropriate to have a setback to roof top decks and balconies, rather than prohibiting them entirely from a building? The building could be very large and deep. What about a daylight plane?
- B.4.11 - Why can't the balconies extend beyond the footprint if you can prove that views to residential uses are prevented?
- B.4.12 - Why is this even a section? Isn't this all covered in great detail in the previous sections?

Respectfully,

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