



**TOWN OF LOS GATOS
SPECIAL JOINT MEETING OF THE TOWN COUNCIL AND
PLANNING COMMISSION: STUDY SESSION AGENDA
MARCH 17, 2026
110 EAST MAIN STREET AND VIA TELECONFERENCE
TOWN COUNCIL CHAMBERS
5:00 PM**

*Rob Moore, Mayor
Maria Ristow, Vice Mayor
Mary Badame, Council Member
Matthew Hudes, Council Member
Rob Rennie, Council Member
Kendra Burch, Planning Commission Chair
Jeffrey Barnett, Planning Commission Vice Chair
Susan Burnett, Commissioner
Adam Mayer, Commissioner
Joe Sordi, Commissioner
Rob Stump, Commissioner
Emily Thomas, Commissioner*

IMPORTANT NOTICE

This is a hybrid meeting and will be held in-person at the Town Council Chambers at 110 E. Main Street and virtually through Zoom Webinar (log-in information provided below). You may watch the Council meeting without providing public comment on Comcast cable channel 15 or at www.LosGatosCA.gov/TownYouTube. Members of the public may provide public comments for agenda items in-person or virtually by following the instructions listed at the end of the agenda.

Commissioner Rob Stump will be participating via teleconference pursuant to Government Code Section 54953(b)(3) from a location at 78-6842 Alii Drive, Kailua-Kona, HI 96740, Room Number 24-201. The teleconference location shall be accessible to the public and the agenda will be posted at the teleconference location 24 hours before the meeting.

To watch and participate via Zoom, please go to:

<https://losgatosca-gov.zoom.us/j/85488322698?pwd=7Sq4eCaTO82GZSxVmc2bKaNicYDDOu.1>

Passcode: 652669

CALL MEETING TO ORDER

ROLL CALL

VERBAL COMMUNICATIONS *(Members of the public are welcome to address the Town Council only on matters listed on the agenda. Town resources may not be used to facilitate audio or visual presentations. Each speaker is limited to no more than three (3) minutes or such time as authorized by the Mayor.)*

OTHER BUSINESS *(Each speaker is limited to no more than three (3) minutes or such time as authorized by the Mayor.)*

1. Review the Progress on an Update to the Los Gatos Objective Design Standards for Multi-Family and Mixed-Use Development Throughout the Town and Provide Any Feedback or Direction.

RECOMMENDATION: Review the progress on the Objective Design Standards (ODS) project and provide feedback or direction.

The Town Council, by majority vote, may direct staff to coordinate the preparation of FAQs, summary minutes, or a verbatim transcript of this meeting.

ADJOURNMENT *(Council policy is to adjourn no later than midnight unless a majority of Council votes for an extension of time.)*

ADA NOTICE - In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, if you require special assistance to participate in this meeting, please contact the Clerk's Office at (408) 354-6834. Please notify the Clerk's Office at least two (2) business days prior to the meeting so that reasonable arrangements can be made to ensure accessibility in compliance with 28 CFR §35.102-35.104 and related provisions.

NOTICE REGARDING SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIALS - Materials related to an item on this agenda submitted to the Town Council after initial distribution of the agenda packets are available for public inspection in the Clerk's Office at Town Hall, 110 E. Main Street, Los Gatos and on the Town's website at www.losgatosca.gov. Town Council agendas and related materials can be viewed online at <https://losgatos-ca.municodemeetings.com/>.

HOW TO PARTICIPATE

The public is welcome to provide oral comments in real-time during the meeting in three ways:

- **Zoom Webinar (Online):** Join from a PC, Mac, iPad, iPhone or Android device. Please click this URL to join: <https://losgatosca.gov.zoom.us/j/85488322698?pwd=7Sq4eCaTO82GZSxVmc2bKaNicYDDOu.1>
Passcode: 652669. You can also type in 854 8832 2698 in the "Join a Meeting" page on the Zoom website at zoom.us and use passcode 652669. When the Mayor announces the item for which you wish to speak, click the "raise hand" feature in Zoom. If you are participating by phone on the Zoom app, press *9 on your telephone keypad to raise your hand.
- **Telephone:** Please dial 1 (855) 758-1310 for US Toll-free or 1 (408) 961-3927 for US Toll. (Meeting ID: 854 8832 2698). If you are participating by calling in, press *9 on your telephone keypad to raise your hand.

- **In-Person:** Please complete a “speaker’s card” located on the back of the chamber benches and return it to the Town Clerk before the meeting or when the Mayor announces the item for which you wish to speak.

NOTES: Comments will be limited to three (3) minutes or less at the Mayor’s discretion.

If you are unable to participate in real-time, you may email Clerk@losgatosca.gov with the subject line “Public Comment Item #__” (insert the item number relevant to your comment).

Deadlines to submit written comments are:

-3:00 p.m. the business day before the Council meeting for inclusion in an addendum.

-11:00 a.m. on the day of the Council meeting for inclusion in a desk item.



**TOWN OF LOS GATOS
COUNCIL AGENDA REPORT**

MEETING DATE: 03/17/2026

ITEM NO. 1.

ITEM NO: 1

DATE: March 12, 2026
TO: Mayor and Town Council
FROM: Chris Constantin, Town Manager
SUBJECT: **Review the Progress on an Update to the Los Gatos Objective Design Standards for Multi-Family and Mixed-Use Development Throughout the Town and Provide Any Feedback or Direction.**

RECOMMENDATION: Review the progress on the Objective Design Standards (ODS) project and provide feedback or direction.

FISCAL IMPACT:

An existing agreement not to exceed \$189,646 with Lisa Wise Consulting, Inc. was executed in 2024. This Study Session is included in the scope of services provided in this agreement. There is no additional fiscal impact from this Study Session.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY:

This Study Session supports the Core Goals of Community Character and the Strategic Priority to preserve the Town’s small-town charm and provide a range of housing opportunities and historic neighborhoods, while diligently maintaining and implementing the Housing Element.

BACKGROUND:

On August 6, 2024, the Council requested that staff issue a Request for Proposals (RFP) to qualified providers to address the development of additional objective design standards 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.

PREPARED BY: Sean Mullin, AICP
Planning Manager

Reviewed by: Town Manager, Assistant Town Manager, Town Attorney, and Administrative Services Director

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SUBJECT: Provide Feedback and Direction on an Update to the Los Gatos Objective Design Standards

DATE: March 12, 2016

- 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 consulting 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 consulting team 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 consulting team 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 Attachment 1.

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 (Attachment 2). 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 (Attachment 3).

On December 4, 2025, staff and the consulting team 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 is included as Attachment 4.

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SUBJECT: Provide Feedback and Direction on an Update to the Los Gatos Objective Design Standards

DATE: March 12, 2016

DISCUSSION:

The purpose of this Study Session is to provide the consulting team with Town Council, Planning Commission, and community input and direction prior to the preparation of the Administrative Draft Revised Objective Design Standards (Attachment 5). During the Study Session, the consulting team, led by Lisa Wise Consulting, will introduce the ODS project; provide an overview of community outreach and feedback; and present several topics for consideration by the Council, Commission, and community (Attachment 6). The feedback and direction from the Study Session will be essential in shaping the Administrative Draft ODS to follow.

CONCLUSION:

Review the progress and provide feedback and direction on the ODS project. Following this Study Session, the consulting team will continue working with staff to prepare an Administrative Draft ODS document, followed by a Public Draft ODS document. Consideration by the Planning Commission and Town Council will follow.

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT:

This Study Session is not a project subject to CEQA, because no action will be taken.

Attachments:

1. Focus Groups Summary Memo
2. Technical Analysis and Evaluation Memo
3. Recommendations Memo
4. Community Open House Summary Memo
5. Study Session Agenda
6. Study Session Presentation

Memorandum

DATE	September 25, 2025		
TO	Sean Mullin, Planning Manager Town of Los Gatos SMullin@losgatosca.gov	FROM	Urban Planning Partners: Curtis Banks, Project Director Carla Violet, Project Manager Claire Mei, Project Planner Lisa Wise Consulting: Monica Szydlik, AICP, Senior Associate David Bergman, Director Jessica Chilingirian, Associate

RE: Los Gatos Objective Design Standards (ODS) Update Focus Groups Summary

This memo describes our findings from the Los Gatos ODS Update Focus Groups held on September 9, 10, and 11, 2025. Across eight virtual meetings, we engaged three participant groups—architects (1 session), developers (1 session), and residents (6 sessions). The feedback presented here includes responses to two icebreaker questions and perspectives on three key topics: high-quality building design, architectural style, and height transitions. Insights are organized by participant type, with a brief summary of participant feedback included at the top of each topic.

ARCHITECT ATTENDEES

1. Bess Wiersema, Principal + Owner at Studio 3 Design, Inc., residential and interiors
2. Jaclyn Greenmyer, Kohlsaas & Associates, single-family residential, some multi-family and mixed use
3. Jessie Delucchi, Kohlsaas & Associates
4. Jennifer Kretschmer from Kretschmer Architects

DEVELOPER ATTENDEES

1. Annette Seaborn, real estate agent/developer, owns 8 rentals and a 4-unit cottage in Los Gatos
2. Leumas (left the call early)

RESIDENT ATTENDEES

1. David Fradin, Los Gatos resident, has experience in environmental design.
2. Mary Pope-Handy has been a realtor for 20 years. She is concerned about fires and dense housing near the exits; she thinks Los Gatos needs more multi family.
3. Edgardo Laber is a resident of Los Gatos. He doesn't want to see unnecessary requirements that prevent quick building. He wants the Town to be a place where his kids can afford to live.
4. Mitzi Anderson is a resident of Los Gatos. She is somewhat familiar with the guidelines.
5. Linda, resident, multigenerational household with a young person's perspective and a disabled person's perspective.
6. Susan, resident, HPC and Planning Commission member
7. Ryan Rosenberg, GP and HEU advisory committee member.
8. Jeffrey Barnett, Planning Commission member, participated in developing original ODS.
9. Julie Southern, resident, house burned down in 1997 wildfire.
10. Joya Chatterjee, resident, involved in Chamber of Commerce.
11. Reva Cuthbertson, resident.
12. Daniel Snyder, advisory group to North 40
13. Dan Ross, North 40 advisory committee, General Plan advisory committee
14. Ricardo Avila, priest at St. Luke's Church
15. Lee Ann Wade, residential construction company owner
16. Peter Hertan, involved in various commissions
17. Katherine Schmidt, interested in urban design and planning
18. Kathryn, resident, remodeled an 1887 building
19. Carl, resident, lives in a neoclassical revival mansion home
20. Lee, resident, Historic Preservation Committee
21. Kevin Riley, professional planner
22. Bent Jensen, resident, from Denmark
23. Kevin, resident, lives in the historic district overlay

WHAT ARE YOUR FAVORITE BUILDINGS IN LOS GATOS?

- La Cañada
- Buildings at the NE corner of Highway 9 and University
- Former funeral parlor/current Gardenia restaurant
- Beckwith Block on East Main St (built ca.1893)
- Fretwell building
- Condos near Forbes Mill across pedestrian bridge from town. Blends in with the woods, lots of trees.
- Old Victorian homes
- Eichler homes
- Brick building on main street - southern kitchen location. Historic building, maintained well
- St. Lukes Church

- The new Whole Foods at Los Gatos Blvd and Amaden;
- The library
- Former funeral home, current Gardenia restaurant (great Victorian character)
- Corner N Santa Cruz and Main (distinctive roofline)
- Residential development along Grant Bishop Lane (good design, nice attic windows, and good diversity of design)
- Theatre
- Park side restaurant at 145 W Main Street (has the "Old California adobe" look)
- Robson project off Los Gatos Blvd
- Templeton Lane by Kennedy (Craftsman style, exterior articulation, finishes, colors)
- Los Gatos High School (classical design that doesn't get old)

WHAT ARE YOUR LEAST FAVORITE BUILDINGS IN LOS GATOS?

- Market Hall
- High rise apartment on college avenue - ugly
- North 40
 - Materials: poor quality
 - Architecture: Tiny little blocks everywhere, looks like a bunch of shoe boxes, low pitched roofs
 - Not cohesive, not enough articulation, poor quality materials, design exhibits a "coldness," units seem dark, no yard, should've been a 20-story building with open windows and a dog park

GENERAL COMMENTS - SUMMARY

Architects: Found 5-ft frontage rule unworkable; ODS assume single buildings instead of clusters; interpretation inconsistent; planners struggle with drawings; point system encourages low-quality, repetitive design.

Developers: Historic Preservation Committee slows projects; historic rules make buildings unusable.

Residents: Want ODS to be recommendations, not requirements; concerned about costs; standards should vary by neighborhood; need interim solutions for displaced businesses; want designs that create warmth and community.

GENERAL COMMENTS - DETAILED NOTES

Architects

- It's hard to do anything within 5 feet; it doesn't allow for people, decent trees, a bike zone, it's a weird number. (Note, this refers to the required building placement at max. 5 ft from the front setback line for 75% of building frontage.)

- The ODS assume development assume single buildings only. What about when development consists of several small buildings. How do the standards apply, or differ? A few buildings are better than one massive one.
- There are issues with how planners review projects (the writing, the rules, the interpretation). Planners (and Planning Commission) themselves often cannot read drawings.
- Interpreting the standards has been challenging.
- We need different standards for the Downtown proper and the other downtown.
- The current point structure is problematic. Some boxes (e.g., crown molding) are the easiest boxes to check, so those start to dictate the overall style, and that ends up being very limiting. And everyone does it. If everyone is picking the 3 same things, then everyone kind of getting the same style. Plus, some of these “easy points” are not very friendly to smaller buildings, are more tailored to large buildings.
 - Sometimes designers just need the points and end up sacrificing quality.
 - Let the architects explain how they can achieve same goal without the checklist.
 - Attendees are hoping to see the standards become more user friendly and flexible so applicants can actually check the boxes instead of going after waivers.

Developers

- Old and historic things have so many rules, HPC is difficult and if you can't make meeting it takes 3 more months, need their approval they think they know everything.
- Things that make Los Gatos quaint also make them old and unusable.

Residents

- The ODS shouldn't be requirements, only recommendations.
- The ODS should not be cost-prohibitive, require expensive design measures.
- The ODS should require trees between buildings if sidewalks are too small.
- The ODS should create warmth and a feeling of community.
- Need interim solutions for businesses that have to vacate/relocate during construction (e.g., Ace Hardware)
- The standards are not appropriate for all neighborhoods in town.
- There should be a distinction between standards for Los Gatos Blvd vs. the Downtown.
- Consider access. In the new plan for the Lodge site, there is an access issue for route 9. Needs better access, way in/out.
- Should allow developers to develop multiple buildings to make more uniform but different (think of places like Paris, Santana Row, Santa Barbara as good examples)

HIGH QUALITY DESIGN - SUMMARY

Architects: No specific comments.

Developers: Mahogany windows required by the Town were a failure — costly, leaky, impractical; want more durable alternatives.

Residents: Value sustainability, durability, solar access; like traditional styles (Spanish, Victorian, farmhouse) with some modern; want variety in materials/colors, articulation, and porches; dislike boxy, cheap, monotonous designs.

HIGH QUALITY DESIGN - DETAILED NOTES

Architects

NA

Developers

- The Town required mahogany windows, and they leak constantly. It has been 25 years, and the FG participant has redone them 10-15 times and they still leak, are cracked, don't open, and need to be replaced again. Iron clad on the outside and wood on the inside would work better.

Residents

- Likes:
 - **Sustainable design**
 - Energy efficient materials - high ceilings are luxurious but a waste of energy
 - **Durability/longevity**
 - No leaking
 - Attention paid to sunlight access for solar
 - Design
 - Timeless designs: a mix of Spanish styles, Victorian, brick/stone buildings, farmhouse style.
 - There is room for some modern design.
 - Window, door, and porch design are important
 - Materials and Colors
 - **Fire safe materials**
 - Varied use of materials.
 - High-quality stucco
 - **Different colored stucco, brick, wood**
 - Don't like buildings made of steel and glass
 - Materials like wood siding or hardie board, shingles
 - **Don't object to siding materials other than wood**
 - Sturdy railings
 - **Muted, natural colors, earth tones**
 - Articulation
 - Exterior articulation – not just boxes

- Tall windows, especially on the 2nd and 3rd stories, creates a welcoming feel.
- Buildings over 3 stories should provide more articulation and variety, considering how they relate to the buildings next to them
- Porches and other projections are important
- Heights building to building should vary
- Several people enjoy the glass and openness of the library
- Support for the open space and use of stone on the corner of Santa Cruz and Main
- Support for use of decals and other details
- Underground parking or parking in the back
- Dislikes:
 - Design
 - Dislike anything boxy, plain, or with weird shapes/curves.
 - No cheap-looking design
 - design that lacks detail, that is not distinctive
 - Corrugated steel, like on North 40, looks cheap
 - Small windows as they create a closed-off feeling
 - Monotony
 - Flat fenestration
 - Materials and Colors
 - T-1 11 – looks cheap, impermanent, low quality
 - Mismatched colors

ARCHITECTURAL STYLE - SUMMARY

Architects: Dislike prescriptive rules (continuous roof pitch, plate heights); want variation and flexibility; question “fake” frontages when parking is hidden.

Developers: Favor taller, larger, more modern mixed-use projects; appreciate Los Gatos’ eclectic, mixed style.

Residents: Support broad variety of styles if high-quality and compatible; dislike post-modern 70s designs and flat, monotonous facades; mixed feelings about glass/modern buildings; prefer good articulation and authentic details; okay with well-integrated small multiplexes.

ARCHITECTURAL STYLE – DETAILED NOTES

Architects

- If all of the parking is in the back, then what use is the frontage? It is fake, a movie storefront.
- There are challenges with buildings of 400 – 500 units being pedestrian-friendly. Where can you even put a building that massive? Should it be close to road like in downtown San Jose where they have a walkable downtown? Or should we push it back, so the height is not so intimidating?

- Dislike for the ODS that require continuous plate height and continuous roof pitch. We need more variation!
- The ODS are too specific about ways to conform to rules. They don't represent enough variety in ways to comply so that different styles can work. The Town wants variety and interesting architecture, but this pigeonholes us too much.
- Current ODS not friendly to middle housing.
- Some items in the checklist are too traditional (e.g., 8 ft arcade) and no one is doing that anymore.
- There is a need for more contemporary and modern design.

Developers

- There was a time when you could build the house you wanted and be creative with little bit of everything. The beauty of this Town is that it is a mix of everything.
- Need higher stories and to develop bigger and more mixed-use, likes modern and glass designs

Residents

- Setbacks
 - Architectural compatibility means similar setbacks, similar footprints to some of the classic neighborhoods
 - Do not like buildings with a solid flat wall up against the sidewalk in a neighborhood with a 20 ft setback
- Articulation
 - Windows should have some articulation – flat windows, or windows with minimal trim, look cheap
 - Windows and facades need depth, should not be just flat
 - Defining a better roof is more important than the roofing materials. Overhangs under 1' look visually cheap.
- Support for a variety of architectural styles
 - Los Gatos Blvd has lots of different types of buildings. It's different from El Camino Real, and we should keep it that way. Let's prevent development like we see on El Camino Real in Sunnyvale and Mountain View.
 - Accepting variety. Avoiding monotony.
 - Monolithic styles that lack articulation are not good
 - There is a feeling that people want to preserve what makes Los Gatos what it is.
 - Almost every style/design is appropriate: Eichler/mid-cent modern, Victorians, Pueblo style, Craftsman, Spanish, Victorian, Modern farmhouse, Contemporary
 - Architectural style is not as important
 - Compatibility comes down to how it presents at the street and how it relates to the neighbors behind
 - Don't want fake-looking imitations of historic styles

- Buildings should use details and features appropriate and authentic to the architectural
 - Compatibility is more about quality of a style than if it looks like your neighbors. Like variety of architectural styles – no need to look like neighbors. Similar massing is good, but style can be varied.
 - Do not like post-modern design from the 70s.
 - Example addition: Miles & University, raised an old Victorian up and brought it closer to the sidewalk – so now it’s visually dominating.
 - Some are not bothered by modern buildings with glass and stone in a setting with a lot of trees while others do not like glass buildings in their town
 - House along Alta a few doors in from Los Gatos Blvd that is modern, doesn't fit. But we like the library, so should an applicant be able to build something more modern.
 - Main Street project is a great example of beautiful design that is compatible with the neighborhood and takes cues from the Los Gatos High School design. The Robson homes on Los Gatos Blvd are also more compatible with a variety of materials.
- Small MF
 - 2, 3, and -4-plexes – When done well, they look nice. When they look nice, with appropriate roofs, courtyards, doorways, etc., as opposed to a motel with a flat roof, they are good.
 - Fourplex Example: south on University Ave before bridal shop, before getting Old town on eastern side of the street. May have been a motel. It’s ugly and horrible. Small, older cheap homes. 20 feet wide, u-shaped, poor use of space. One parking space, very tight spaces, added parking issues on the street.
 - Townhouses and small multiplexes should be well integrated into the neighborhood they go into
 - Don't want to be too prescriptive because that will limit new development
 - 6 story condo buildings in San Francisco - all look awful. Something more classic.
 - Support tall mixed-use buildings to enable more walkable environment (residential above commercial)
 - Balconies big enough to be usable
 - Like in Detroit, tall buildings on corridors with single family behind
 - Commercial and restaurant usage on ground floor
 - Design garages so they can convert to housing in the future
 - Specific Design Ideas (Green Building Focused):
 - Energy Efficiency
 - Lighting with motion detectors
 - Reflective paint for roofs
 - Passive cooling; specifically, thicker walls and circulating water through somewhat permeable materials (walls that “sweat” and dispense heat)
 - Water Efficiency

- Rain guards (Big Basin Way and Cupertino have these). Silicon Valley is sinking because of over-pumping of aquifer.
- Water barrels and plumbing from laundry room for water recycling
- Mechanical Equipment
 - Solar
 - Covered parking should have solar panels.
 - Solar electricity-producing windows, locally manufactured
 - Require EV charging
 - Heat pumps
- Landscaping
 - Vertical gardens on side of the building
 - Planting more trees
 - Edible landscaping/herb gardens (like in Northeast)

HEIGHT TRANSITIONS – SUMMARY

Architects: Concern about new multi-family on commercial lots “sticking out” due to mismatched setbacks with neighbors.

Developers: No specific comments.

Residents: Support for step-backs (e.g., 5 ft per story), especially near neighborhoods; landscaping and trees soften tall buildings; want gradual height increases in neighborhoods but accept taller buildings on boulevards/corridors; concerned about looming walls; some examples (Los Gatos Hotel positive, ACE/Whole Foods negative).

HEIGHT TRANSITIONS – DETAILED NOTES

Architects

- If a multi-family or mixed-use building develops on a commercial lot, then you’ll have commercial uses abutting the residential, where the setback is generally deeper. With the building placement standards, the new building will stick out. Especially when there is parking in the front setback of the neighboring commercial buildings.

Developers

NA

Residents

- Step-backs
 - Building should step-back so they don’t appear massive. The building across from Los Gatos high school is huge, it should fit in better.
 - Support for upper-story step-backs
 - Support for 5 feet step-back per story

- Feeling that step-backs create good design and would not limit number of units. Units may get smaller, but developers will still be motivated to get their desired number of units, regardless of the step-back
- There are locations where no set back or step-back is needed – existing context has no setback
- The Los Gatos hotel was controversial, but they nestled it in and transitioned well, with setbacks and green space. But the new ACE development has no transition to the surrounding neighborhood.
- The Whole Foods is too close to the Boulevard – it’s a looming building and very modern that would have benefited from greater setbacks.
- Preference to have building setback away from the lower density home.
- Los Gatos Blvd, where more density is needed – shouldn’t require transitions. Along major boulevards and freeways, no need for rear step-backs. Maximize density there.
- Landscaping
 - Having tall buildings near single family areas or in general should be accompanied by trees, especially evergreen
 - Example: Chase Bank on Santa Cruz Ave – already have tall trees, so it doesn’t matter how tall the building is.
- Concentration
 - Los Gatos Blvd, where more density is needed – shouldn’t require transitions. Along major boulevards and freeways, no need for rear step-backs. Maximize density there.
 - Support for slowly going up in height
 - A story beyond what is existing in a neighborhood is fine. If the area is two stories, then new buildings at 3 stories are fine. But going up to 4 or 5 stories in a two-story neighborhood is too much
 - Need transitions for larger homes to smaller homes, as well as taller buildings to shorter buildings
 - Preference to have taller buildings on main corridors
- Visual impact of what you see from those roads doesn’t matter.
- Solid walls could feel imposing. Important to break it up.
- Support for varying the roof types allowed by the height of the roof

MEMO

To: Sean Mullin, Town of Los Gatos
 From: Lisa Wise Consulting, Inc. (LWC)
 Date: October 22, 2025
 Re: Technical Analysis and Evaluation, Town of Los Gatos Updated/Additional Objective Design Standards for Qualifying Multi-Family and Mixed-Use Residential Development

The Town of Los Gatos launched an update to its objective design standards for multi-family residential and mixed-use development. The revisions to the standards will focus on codifying the perspective of the community on the elements of high-quality building design, architectural style, and height transitions, as well as edits for clarity and usability. This Memo includes the following sections:

- **Section 1: Regulatory Framework** documents relevant policy and regulatory framework;
- **Section 2: Input to Date** documents Staff feedback on the objective design standards and community input related to design, gathered from the Town's previous public outreach events;
- **Section 3: Example Projects** explores how five current development proposals may inform the revised standards; and
- **Section 4: Initial Analysis** indicates how the existing standards may be revised in light of current regulations, staff and community feedback, and recent project designs.

Together with staff and community input gathered over the course of this Project, the analysis presented in this Memo will set the direction for the development of the updated objective design standards.

1 Regulatory Framework

This section provides an overview of the Town's existing regulatory framework, including General Plan policies, development standards from Chapter 29 (Zoning Regulations) of the Code of the Town of Los Gatos, and the North 40 Specific Plan which includes standards and guidelines for multi-family residential and mixed-use development.

2040 General Plan

Adopted in 2022, the Los Gatos 2040 General Plan provides the long-term vision for the Town's physical form and development. The General Plan consists of policies that govern and guide Town actions on development regulations and decisions. This section documents existing guiding principles and policies related to the design of multi-family residential and mixed-use development.

In April 2024, the Los Gatos Town Council voted to rescind the Land Use and Community Design Elements of the 2040 General Plan. The 2020 Land Use and Community Design Elements, adopted in 2011, are referenced below.

Land Use Element (2020 General Plan)

The Land Use Element guides the location, form, pattern, and character of new development in the Town.

- **Goal LU-1:** To preserve, promote, and protect the existing small-town character and quality of life within Los Gatos.
 - **Policy LU-1.2:** Ensure that new development preserves and promotes existing commercial centers consistent with the maintenance of a small-scale, small-town atmosphere and image.
- **Goal LU-6:** To preserve and enhance the existing character and sense of place in residential neighborhoods.
 - **Policy LU-6.7:** Continue to encourage a variety of housing types and sizes that is balanced throughout the Town and within neighborhoods, and that is also compatible with the character of the surrounding neighborhood.
 - **Policy LU-6.8:** New construction, remodels, and additions shall be compatible and blend with the existing neighborhood.
- **Goal LU-10:** To preserve Downtown Los Gatos as the historic center of the Town, with goods and services for local residents, while maintaining the existing Town identity, environment, and commercial viability.
 - **Policy LU-10.4:** Encourage mixed uses to increase residential opportunities in commercial zones Downtown, taking into consideration potential impacts to loss of commercial opportunities.
- **Goal LU-13:** To promote appropriate and compatible development along Los Gatos Boulevard that complements the whole Town and serves residents and families.
 - **Policy LU-13.4:** New development along Los Gatos Boulevard shall be designed to minimize adverse impacts on adjacent residential areas.

Community Design Element (2020 General Plan)

The Community Design Element aims to preserve the small-town character of Los Gatos through physical design elements.

Town-Wide Design Principles

- **Goal CD-1:** Preserve and enhance Los Gatos's character through exceptional community design.
 - **Policy CD-1.1:** Building elements shall be in proportion with those traditionally in the neighborhood.
 - **Policy CD-1.2:** New structures, remodels, landscapes, and hardscapes shall be designed to harmonize and blend with the scale and rhythm of the neighborhood and natural features in the area.
 - **Policy CD-1.3:** Buildings, landscapes, and hardscapes shall follow the natural contours of the property.
 - **Policy CD-1.4:** Development on all elevations shall be of high quality design and construction, a positive addition to and compatible with the Town's ambiance. Development shall enhance the character and unique identity of existing commercial and/or residential neighborhoods.

- **Goal CD-3:** To require utilities, landscaping and streetscapes to contribute to Los Gatos’s high-quality character.
 - **Policy CD-3.4:** Encourage the use of landscaping such as trees, large shrubs, and trellised vines to mitigate the effects of building mass, lower noise, and reduce heat generation.
 - **Policy CD-3.5:** All landscaping shall be carefully reviewed to ensure that it is aesthetically pleasing, compatible with its neighborhood and natural environment, and water conserving.
 - **Policy CD-3.6:** Utility connections and meters shall be visually unobtrusive from the street.
 - **Policy CD-3.7:** Roof mounted mechanical equipment shall be screened and such screening shall be considered as part of the structure for height limitations.
 - **Policy CD-3.8:** Solid fencing over 3 feet high shall be designed such that it does not isolate the structures from the street, or shall be set back and landscaped.
 - **Policy CD-3.9:** Parking structures and facilities shall have a low profile, be screened from view, and be aesthetically pleasing.
- **Goal CD-4:** To preserve existing trees, natural vegetation, natural topography, riparian corridors and wildlife habitats, and promote high quality, well designed, environmentally sensitive, and diverse landscaping in new and existing developments.
 - **Policy CD-4.5:** New development shall promote visual continuity through tree planting, consistent use of low shrubs, and ground cover.
 - **Policy CD-4.6:** Encourage mixtures of tree species, both deciduous and evergreen, to screen projects, add variety, create a more natural environment, and avoid future problems of insect infestation or other blights that might destroy the desired tree cover.

Residential Neighborhoods

- **Goal CD-6:** To promote and protect the physical and other distinctive qualities of residential neighborhoods.
 - **Policy CD-6.1:** Reduce the visual impact of new construction and/or remodels on the Town and its neighborhoods.
 - **Policy CD-6.4:** New homes shall be sited to maximize privacy, livability, protection of natural plant and wildlife habitats and migration corridors, and adequate solar access and wind conditions. Siting should take advantage of scenic views but should not create significant ecological or visual impacts affecting open spaces, public places, or other properties.
- **Goal CD-7:** To preserve the quality of the private open space throughout Los Gatos.
 - **Policy CD-7.1:** Maximize quality usable open space in all new developments.
 - **Policy CD-7.2:** Multi-family residential developments shall include common open space suitable for group gathering.
 - **Policy CD-7.3:** All residential developments shall include private open space in proportion to the building size.

Historic Preservation

- **Goal CD-12:** To preserve significant historic and architectural features within the Town.
 - **Policy CD-12.6:** New structures within historic districts shall be designed to blend and harmonize with the neighborhood.

Public Facilities, Services, and Infrastructure Element

The Public Facilities, Services, and Infrastructure Element describes the provision and maintenance of public facilities, services, and infrastructure.

Utilities and Alternative Energy

- **Goal PFS-7:** Promote green buildings that minimize consumption of energy and natural resources.
 - **Policy PFS-7.4:** Green Roofs and Community Gardens. Encourage new multi-family construction to include green roofs and common space for community gardens.

Open Space, Parks, and Recreation Element

The Open Space, Parks, and Recreation Element addresses open space for outdoor recreation facilities and preservation.

Parks and Recreation

- **Goal OSPR-7:** Create and maintain open space areas and parks that complement and enhance natural habitats and neighborhoods.
 - **Policy OSPR-7.7:** Recreation Space for Young Children. Encourage new multi-family residential development of eight units or more to include tot lots or similar shared off-street recreation space for young children.

Zoning Code Regulations

Development standards for zoning districts that support multi-family residential and mixed-use development in the Code are summarized below. Table 1 summarizes standards for districts within the Housing Element Overlay Zone (HEOZ), and Table 2 summarizes standards for districts outside of the HEOZ.

Table 1: Standards for Districts Supporting Multi-sFamily and Mixed-Use Development (HEOZ Zones)							
District	R-1:8:HEOZ	R-M:HEOZ	C-1:HEOZ	C-2:HEOZ	CH:HEOZ	CM:HEOZ	NF-SP: HEOZ
Density	0-5 du/ac	Where GPLU is HDR, 30-40 du/ac; where GPLU is MRD, 14-22, 5-12 du/ac in VHFSZ	10-20	20-30	30-40 du/ac	-	30-40 du/ac
FAR	n/a	n/a	1.0	2.0	3.0	-	-
Lot Coverage	50%	75%	n/a	n/a	n/a	50%	Mixed-use: 50%; Residential-only: None

Table 1: Standards for Districts Supporting Multi-sFamily and Mixed-Use Development (HEOZ Zones)

District	R-1:8:HEOZ	R-M:HEOZ	C-1:HEOZ	C-2:HEOZ	CH:HEOZ	CM:HEOZ	NF-SP: HEOZ
Height	30 ft	Where GPLU is HDR: 45 ft Where GPLU is MRD: 35 ft	35 ft	45 ft	45 ft	35 ft	35 ft; 45 ft for mixed-use w/ min. 40% affordable; 25 ft w/in 50 ft of Los Gatos Blvd or Lark Ave
Yard, Front	25 ft ¹	25 ft	15 ft; 25 ft abutting or facing an R zone; +1 ft for each foot over 20 ft.	10 ft; 15 ft abutting or facing an R zone; +1 ft for each foot over 20 ft	15 ft; 25 ft abutting or facing an R zone; +1 ft for each foot over 20 ft	25 ft, +1 ft for each foot over 20 ft.	Varies by right-of-way ²
Yard, Street Side	15 ft	20 ft	15 ft, +1 ft for each foot over 20 ft		15 ft, +1 ft for each foot over 20 ft		
Yard, Interior Side	8 ft	Two-family: 8 ft; Multi-family: 10 ft, 12 ft w/ bedroom windows, 20 ft w/ living room windows	None; 20 ft abutting or facing an R zone, +1 ft for each foot over 20 ft	None; 20 ft abutting or facing an R zone; +1 ft for each foot over 20 ft	None; 15 ft abutting or facing an R zone, +1 ft for each foot over 20 ft	25 ft	Mixed-use on interior streets: none Elsewhere: not specified
Yard, Rear	20 ft	20 ft			None; 20 ft abutting or facing an R zone, +1 ft for each foot over 20 ft	None; 20 ft abutting or facing an R zone, +1 ft for each foot over 20 ft	Mixed-use on interior streets: none; Elsewhere: not specified
Private Open Space	-	120 sf/unit for ground-floor units; 60 sf/unit for upper-story units	-	-	-	-	some form of useful private open space is required
Common Rec. Space	-	100 sf/unit + 2% of non-residential sf	-	-	-	-	100 sf/du (condos) 200 sf/du (other multi-family)

Notes:

¹ Where an entire side of a block is being developed at one time, the minimum front yard requirements may be reduced by 5 feet to create a staggered building line, provided the average of the front yards equals the requirements of this section.

² 40 ft (Lark Ave); 20 ft (Los Gatos Blvd with Market Hall at edge); 30 ft (Los Gatos Blvd in all other areas); 12 ft (North A St, Noddin Ave, Burton Rd, C2 Street); 24 ft (South A Street, Lark District); 15 ft (Neighborhood Street); 25 ft (South A Street, Transition District); per Architecture and Site Review (residential on interior streets)

Table 2: Standards for Districts Supporting Multi-Family and Mixed-Use Development (Outside the HEOZ)

District	R-M	C-1	C-2	CH	O
Density	5-12 du/ac (R-M:5-12 zone); 5-20 du/ac (R-M:5-20 zone)	-	-	-	-
FAR	-	0.6 when in a parking assessment district	0.6	-	0.6 when in a parking assessment district
Lot Coverage	40%	50%	-	50%	40%
Height	30 ft	35 ft	45 ft	35 ft	35 ft
Yard, Front	25 ft	15 ft; 25 ft abutting or facing an R zone; +1 ft for each foot over 20 ft.	10 ft; 15 ft abutting or facing an R zone; +1 ft for each foot over 20 ft	15 ft; 25 ft abutting or facing an R zone; +1 ft for each foot over 20 ft	25 ft
Yard, Street Side	20 ft	15 ft, +1 ft for each foot over 20 ft		15 ft, +1 ft for each foot over 20 ft	15 ft
Yard, Interior Side	Two-family: 8 ft; Multi-family: 10 ft, 12 ft w/ bedroom windows, 20 ft w/ living room windows	None; 20 ft abutting or facing an R zone, +1 ft for each foot over 20 ft	None; 20 ft abutting or facing an R zone; +1 ft for each foot over 20 ft	None; 15 ft abutting or facing an R zone, +1 ft for each foot over 20 ft	10 ft
Yard, Rear	20 ft			None; 20 ft abutting or facing an R zone, +1 ft for each foot over 20 ft	20 ft
Private Open Space	120 sf/unit for ground-floor units; 60 sf/unit for upper-story units	-	-	-	-
Common Rec. Space	100 sf/unit + 2% of non-residential sf	-	-	-	-

North 40 Specific Plan

The North 40 Specific Plan, adopted in 2015, establishes a comprehensive framework for a 44-acre neighborhood that offers a mix of residential, commercial, and open space uses. The Specific Plan is an opportunity to address the community's needs and preferences in housing, retail, outdoor amenities, and the natural environment while maintaining a small-town feel. The document includes design guidelines that address all residential and mixed-use development in the Specific Plan area. The following is a summary of design guidelines related to high-quality building design, architectural style, and height transitions.

Mixed-Use Design

- **Building Form.** Exterior wall planes should be varied in depth and direction with minimized blank walls and visual bulk. Retail linkages along retail-oriented side streets shall be achieved through corner entries and adjacent display windows.
- **Building Elements and Articulation.**
 - o *Architectural Details.* Buildings should include details and elements that add visual interests and alleviate the look of blank walls with unified design around all sides of buildings.
 - o *Entrance Design.* Building entries should be well defined and incorporate vestibules.
 - o *Window Design and Transparency.* Display windows should provide sufficient transparency. Windows should complement the architectural style of the building and avoid dark or reflective glazing.
 - o *Protection.* Install awnings and trellises when weather and sun exposure protection are desired.
 - o *Colors and Materials.* Wood window frames are encouraged. Avoid strong colors.

Residential Design

- **Building Elements and Articulation.**
 - o *Building and Roof Forms.* Avoid boxy forms with large massing by using a variety of building forms and roof shapes with variations in height, setback, shape, and roof lines.
 - o *Entrance Design.* Emphasize entries via projecting porches or other entry elements.
 - o *Façade Articulation.* Buildings should include horizontal and vertical offsets and well-defined base, middle, and top to prevent bulk. Avoid repetition of identical façades and roof lines.
 - o *Architectural Materials and Details.* All materials and details should be carried around all sides of the building. Architectural features such as bay windows and cornices are encouraged. Provide pedestrian-oriented elements and details on facades facing sidewalks.
 - o *Window Design.* The size and proportion of the windows should be appropriate to the building. Window articulation such as sills and trim should be applied.

2 Community Input to Date

This section documents public input and takeaways related to community design from the Town's previous community engagement efforts and subsequent public meetings regarding the need to update the standards.

Community Design Workshop (2020)

In 2020, the Town hosted an online community workshop as part of the 2040 General Plan Update. The objective of the workshop was to collect community input on the topic of community design to inform the Community Design Element of the General Plan. The workshop included a visual preference survey on participants' design priorities. The planning team collected the following observations about multi-family residential and mixed-use project examples:

- Larger buildings need upper-story step-backs that break up the massing and serve as open space. However, certain participants worried that step-backs might waste floor space and create more underutilized decks and patios.
- New construction should incorporate a mix of high-quality materials and colors and avoid a cheap and overly uniform look.
- Building façades should be well articulated to achieve a balanced look without looking too “chopped up.”
- New buildings need sufficient transparency and high-quality window design.
- Participants were divided over architectural styles. While some believed that new developments should feature historic-inspired styles compatible with the existing built environment, especially in and near downtown, others preferred more contemporary styles with clean and simple lines.

Objective Design Standards Community Meetings (2022)

In 2022, the Town held two community meetings to discuss the Town’s current objective design standards. At these meetings, the community articulated the following priorities related to design:

- Buildings need to provide shading and weather protection.
- There needs to be different standards for various roof types. Standards should allow for diverse roof forms to avoid the uniform look.

Town Council Meeting (2024)

On September 6, 2024, the Town Council discussed the effectiveness and shortcoming of the Town’s existing objective sign standards. Key input gathered at that meeting included the following:

- Many of the nine projects that have been subject to the objective standards (SB 330 projects) have requested waivers. This has included waivers for public bike parking, some specific design features, and dimensions of required open space/balconies.
- The standards document does not include specific standards for small multi-family projects. Most Housing Element sites are anticipated to support small multi-family, so this is an oversight.
- The Council is concerned about protecting the character of Los Gatos and is interested in additional standards focused on
 - o Height transitions/massing: make sure tall residential buildings are not located too close to single-family homes
 - o Architectural style: make sure things don't look out of place
 - o High-quality design: ensure that façade materials reflect existing character
 - o Small multifamily housing (on the scale of 3 to 8 units). Since the standards seem written for larger developments, there is concern about creating loopholes for smaller projects.
- We need to make sure there attention is paid to details, and that the standards don't take a "one size fits all" approach.

Staff Input on 2023 Objective Design Standards

Last updated in 2023, the Town of Los Gatos Objective Design Standards are the Town's guiding framework for new multi-family and mixed-use residential development projects. The standards aim to preserve the Town's unique character through high-quality architectural and environmental design that integrates with the surrounding built environment. The document includes Purpose and Applicability statements; a glossary of key terms; two sections of design standards; and two appendices.

Below is a summary of the two sections of design standards along with needed revisions and additions as indicated by Town planning staff.

Site Design

- **A.1 Pedestrian Access** – Pedestrian connectivity throughout site plan and within parking areas.
 - 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)** – Short-term bicycle rack design and dimensions, location and weather coverage requirements, and ratio.
 - Ratio is too high. Suggest revising to one short-term bike space per four units. Cite rates from other cities to justify.
 - Permanent solid-roofed weather protection structure is frequently waived for applicants.
- **A.3 Long-Term Bicycle Parking (Class I)** – Long-term bicycle parking facility design, location requirements, and ratio.
 - Add flexibility on location requirement – consider revising to allow the facilities to be located in below-grade parking garages.
 - Applicants are finding difficulty in sourcing a locker that meets these specific dimensions. Revise to increase flexibility based in products on the market.
 - This additional space between aisle and long-term bicycle parking spaces has proven onerous. Reconsider, and revise diagrams as needed.
- **A.4 Vehicular Access** – Internal circulation requirements for off-street parking lots.
- **A.5 Parking Location and Design** – Location and design requirements for parking sites.
- **A.6 Parking Structure Access** – Design criteria to minimize conflicts (access and congestion) between drivers and pedestrians.
- **A.7 Utilities** – Pedestrian-scale lighting; screening of utilities and mechanical equipment.
 - Revise to increase flexibility to allow integrated fixtures such as lights embedded in walls.
 - Revise to recognize the constraints of traffic view areas, and location and clearance requirements dictated by utilities.

- **A.8 Landscaping and Screening** – Measures to buffer residential properties and reduce visibility of surface parking lots.
 - o Clarify standard’s reference to setback
 - o Hyperlink to Master Street Tree List.
- **A.9 Fencing** – Location, height, materials, and transparency of fences and gates.
- **A.10 Retaining Walls** – Height, configuration, and visual treatment of retaining walls.
- **A.11 Landscaped, Private, and Community Recreation Spaces** – Size, dimensions, and distribution of landscaped areas, private recreation spaces, and community recreation spaces for qualifying projects.
 - o Add graphic/example.
 - o Note that any changes to the standard will require a Code change as well.
- **A.12 Building Placement** – Placement of buildings relative to property lines and site amenities in front setback areas for mixed-use developments.
 - o Provide internal clarification on the required “build-to zone” (requirement for building to be located within a specified distance of the minimum setback line).
 - o Graphic A.11.1 should be A.12.1.
 - o Add graphic/examples showing site amenity elements.

Building Standards

- **B.1 Massing and Scale** – Form and layout of street-facing building façades to break up massing and reduce the visual scale of multi-story buildings. This standard requires compliance with at least three out of a menu of six design options.
 - o Reduce to two solutions to incorporate breaks in building mass.
 - o Edit 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.”
 - o Revise [b.] to state that the depth changes need to be applied to the full vertical extent of the façade.
 - o Delete (d) and figures. Generally, arcades are a poor design choice that hides storefronts or ground floor facades.
 - o The standard € should emphasize that the intent is to introduce articulation to the massing. Clarify if each “open area” must be 60 sq ft. Clarify that the open areas can be landscaped.
 - o Add graphic for 1.2.
- **B.2 Parking Structure Design** – Façade treatment, transparency, and street-facing design of parking structures.
 - o Clarify if 2.2 applies to each opening or across the entire façade. Is it limited to each elevation? Add graphic.
 - o Remove, “landscaping between the building façade and the street, or” (2.3).
- **B.3 Roof Design** – Roof form, features, and materials to create variation and consistency with primary structures.

- o Add graphic for 3.1.
- **B.4 Façade Design and Articulation** – Building façade composition, material transitions, entry design, and architectural features for all sides of a building, with specific standards for street-facing façades and adjacent residential uses. Standard 4.1, which regulates differentiation of the base, middle and top, requires compliance with at least two out of a menu of five design options. Standards 4.3, which regulates variation in street-facing façade planes, requires a total of 16 points, which may be achieved through a combination of a range of design options with a value of 3 to 8 points each.
 - o For 4.1a-d, clarify whether/how standards apply to the base, middle, and/or top. Add dimensions to the exhibits.
 - o Remove “arcade or gallery along the ground floor” in 4.3.
 - o Add dimensions to the diagram 4.6b.
 - o Add diagram for 4.7.
 - o For 4.9b, revise language to mirror Commercial Design Guideline 3.3.8(e).
 - o The intent of standard 4.11 was to try and eliminate privacy intrusions created by balconies. Develop approach on how best to protect privacy while requiring private recreation space and using balconies as an element of articulation.
 - o Reconsider 4.12. Is this redundant? Most of it is addressed elsewhere.

3 Example Projects

This section provides information on several recent multi-family residential and mixed-use projects. All but one are located on sites included in the site inventory of the Town’s 6th Cycle Housing Element Update. The profile for each project is summarized in Table 3 below, followed by a brief summary of design features and elements that may inform the revised design standards.

Table 3: Select Multi-Family Residential and Mixed-Use Development Projects					
	151 E. Main St (Café Dio)	14789 Oka Road	15367 Los Gatos Blvd (Los Gatos Green, Genuine Automotive)	50 Los Gatos-Saratoga Rd (The Lodge)	16492 Los Gatos Blvd (Happy Cleaners)
Type	Mixed-Use	Multi-family	Multi-family	Multi-family	Mixed-use
Zone	C-2	R-1	CH: HEOZ	CH	C-1
HE Site Inventory Area	n/a	Lark Avenue	Los Gatos Boulevard	Los Gatos Lodge	Los Gatos Boulevard
Lot Area (ac)	0.43	6.71	1.56	8.8	0.60 (over 5 lots)
Units	30	138	55	155	14
Residential Density (du/ac)	71	20.6	35	17.6	16.6
Commercial FAR	0.13 (2,416 sq ft)	-	-	-	0.06 (1,695 sq ft)

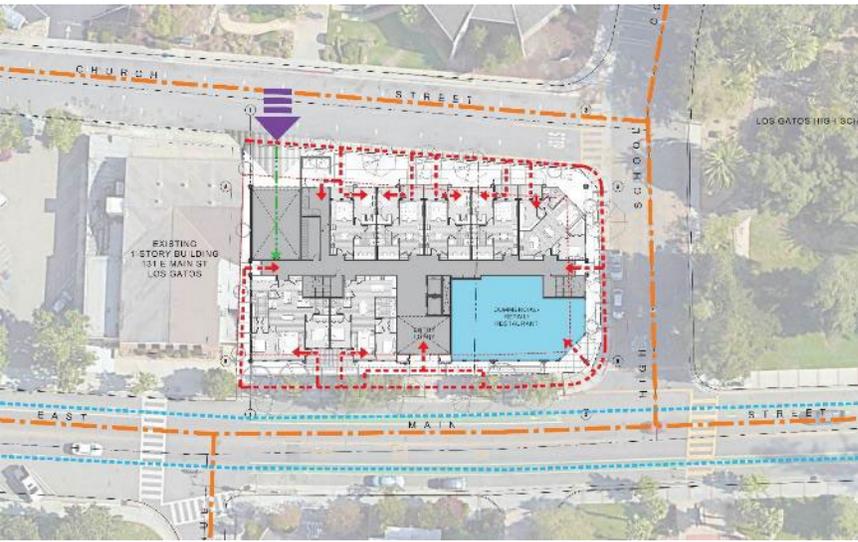
Table 3: Select Multi-Family Residential and Mixed-Use Development Projects

	151 E. Main St (Café Dio)	14789 Oka Road	15367 Los Gatos Blvd (Los Gatos Green, Genuine Automotive)	50 Los Gatos-Saratoga Rd (The Lodge)	16492 Los Gatos Blvd (Happy Cleaners)
Height	52' / 4 stories	40'-9" / 3 stories	45' / 3 stories	37'-3.5" / 3 stories	35'-11" / 3 stories
Residential Parking Ratio (spaces/du)	1.6 (opt 1) or 1.3 (opt 2)	2.1/unit (2.0/unit + 20 guest)	1.2/unit (1.0/unit + 9 guest)	2.1/unit	2.0/unit

151 E. Main St (currently Café Dio)



151 E. Main Street, perspective rendering



151 E. Main Street, siteplan

This project at 151 E Main Street may help inform the following design standards, among others:

- Street-facing elevations: how standards may (or may not) vary for facades and other street-facing elevations. This may include design and quality of windows, horizontal articulation, architectural details, and other building elements.
- Upper story step-backs: street wall height, symmetry of step-backs, usability of rooftop space.
- Roof form: incorporating multiple roof forms in one building (e.g., cornice and hip).
- Entry features: dimensions with respect to the rest of the building façade.

- Architectural style: whether particular choices must accompany others (e.g., design integrity/adherence to a recognized style).

14789 Oka Rd



14789 Oka Road, perspective rendering



14789 Oka Road, siteplan

This project at 14789 Oka Road may help inform the following design standards, among others:

- Materials and colors: allowed and prohibited for primary, secondary and accent.
- Ground floor design: required separation between sidewalk elevation and entrance elevation.
- Ground floor vs. upper-story design: height (whether ground floor height must exceed that of upper stories) and articulation specific to the ground floor (building base elements).
- Townhome design: standards for rows of units with identical or similar floor plans. May include variation of units; staggering of units in plan; design of “end” units; vehicular approach/access; entrance design, spacing, and width with respect to façade width; garage door design, spacing, and cumulative width with respect to façade width.

15349 - 15367 Los Gatos Blvd (Los Gatos Green, currently Genuine Automotive)



15349-15367 Los Gatos Boulevard, perspective rendering



15349-15367 Los Gatos Boulevard, siteplan

This project at 15349-15367 Los Gatos Boulevard may help inform the following design standards, among others:

- Transitions in height: step-backs in height adjacent to and/or facing lower-density residential zones.
- Building length: maximum length adjacent to and/or facing lower-density residential zones.
- Materials, textures, and colors: allowed and prohibited for primary, secondary and accent.
- Site design: building separation.
- Townhome design: standards for rows of units with identical or similar floor plans. May include variation of units; staggering of units in plan; design of “end” units; vehicular approach/access; entrance design, spacing, and width with respect to façade width; garage door design, spacing, and cumulative width with respect to façade width.
- Open space design: amenities, dimensions, landscaping.

50 Los Gatos-Saratoga Rd (currently The Lodge)



*50 Los Gatos-Saratoga Road,
perspective rendering*



*50 Los Gatos-Saratoga Road,
siteplan*

This project at 50 Los Gatos-Saratoga Road may help inform the following design standards, among others:

- Architectural style: whether particular choices must accompany others (e.g., design integrity/adherence to a recognized style).
- Site design: building separation.
- Entry design: shared units and individual units.
- Open space design: amenities, dimensions, and landscaping in private open space and common open space.

16492 Los Gatos Blvd (currently Happy Cleaners)



16492 Los Gatos Boulevard, perspective rendering



16492 Los Gatos Boulevard, siteplan

This project at 14692 Los Gatos Boulevard may help inform the following design standards, among others:

- Garage design: visibility from the right-of-way, garage width with respect to façade width.
- Building articulation: vertical and horizontal.
- Entry design: shared units and individual units.
- Materials, textures, and colors: allowed and prohibited for primary, secondary and accent.
- Window design: size, shape, consistency across one or more elevations.

4 Initial Analysis

High-Quality Building Design

The following existing direction and guidance related to building design quality can be expanded upon and illustrated to become objective in nature:

- *Colors and Materials.* Wood window frames are encouraged. Avoid strong colors.

- *Architectural Materials and Details.* All materials and details should be carried around all sides of the building. Architectural features such as bay windows and cornices are encouraged. Provide pedestrian-oriented elements and details on facades facing sidewalks.
- New construction should incorporate a mix of high-quality materials and colors and avoid a cheap and overly uniform look.

Existing standards can be updated, and new standards can be introduced, to become specific in terms of allowed and prohibited material and color palettes for primary, secondary and accent materials and colors, and architectural details (e.g., eave depth, trim, brackets, windows details, columns/pilasters, etc.). Standards may also vary based on zone, location, scale, architectural style, or other features of the development. Specific revisions will reflect community and decision-maker input gathered during the Project's community outreach efforts.

Architectural Character and Details

The following existing direction and guidance related to architectural details and overall character can be expanded upon and illustrated to become objective in nature:

- *Window Design and Transparency.* Display windows should provide sufficient transparency. Windows should complement the architectural style of the building and avoid dark or reflective glazing.
- Design workshop participants were divided over architectural styles. While some believed that new developments should feature historic-inspired styles compatible with the existing built environment, especially in and near downtown, others preferred more contemporary styles with clean and simple lines.

Existing standards can be updated, and new standards can be introduced, to speak to building character, whether or not the building reflects any particular recognizable architectural style. This may involve defining the character-defining features of, and illustrating, design elements that are traditionally found in and appropriate for Los Gatos. Standards may also vary based on zone, location, scale, or other features of the development. Specific revisions will reflect community and decision-maker input gathered during the Project's community outreach efforts.

Height Transitions

Existing direction and guidance related to height transitions is limited to the following:

- *Building and Roof Forms.* Avoid boxy forms with large massing by using a variety of building forms and roof shapes with variations in height, setback, shape, and roof lines.
- *Height Step-back standards.* Step-back requirements in the C-1, CH and CM zones abutting or across from lower-intensity uses or zones.

Existing standards can be updated, and new standards can be introduced, to address all adjacency conditions, anticipating where sites are likely to support development that uses density bonus and exceeds applicable building height limits. Height transition standards may address building length and bulk, sunlight access, and privacy, among other transition concerns. Standards will vary based on zone, location, and specific adjacency. Specific revisions will reflect community and decision-maker input gathered during the Project's community outreach efforts.

Small-Scale Multi-Family Development

Existing direction and guidance related to height transitions is limited to the following:

- *Policy LU-1.2:* Ensure that new development preserves and promotes existing commercial centers consistent with the maintenance of a small-scale, small-town atmosphere and image.

The standards can be updated to small projects that are on the sale of a large single-family house and small apartment building, as well as various configurations of townhomes, cottage court development and other medium-density models that are appropriate in Los Gatos neighborhoods. Design elements may include the location and design of shared vs. individual entries; the location and design of private open space and common open space; vehicular access and circulation; and variation of units. Standards may vary based on zone, location, and specific adjacency. Specific revisions will reflect community and decision-maker input gathered during the Project's community outreach efforts.

Other

Other limitations of the current objective design standards and related requirements include:

- *Clarity and usability for the applicant.* There is a need for graphics that reflect typical Los Gatos development forms and configurations. This may involve updating, replacing, or adding to existing graphics.
- *Clarity and usability for the Town staff.* There is a need for applicants to prepare and submit a drawing that specifically demonstrates compliance with the required standards, wherever compliance can be shown graphically. The Appendix checklist may be modified to note which standards must be shown graphically on the required drawing.

MEMO

To: Sean Mullin, Town of Los Gatos
 From: Lisa Wise Consulting, Inc. (LWC)
 Date: October 22, 2025
 Re: Town of Los Gatos Updated/Additional Objective Design Standards for Qualifying Multi-Family and Mixed-Use Residential Development: DRAFT 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 will guide the development of the Draft Standards, 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
- The body of Community input gathered to date on the 2023 Objective Design Standards, 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

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.
 - 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.
- **A.5 Parking Location and Design**
 - Rename to Surface Parking Location and Design.
- **A.6 Parking Structure Access**
 - Rename to Parking Structures Access and Visibility.
 - Confirm the requirements for parking structure placement and visibility based on recent project examples.
- **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.
- **A.8 Landscaping and Screening**
 - Clarify reference to building setback established by zone.
 - Ensure that tall buildings are “softened: by enhanced trees and landscaping
 - Add hyperlink to Master Street Tree List.
- **A.9 Fencing** – No change
- **A.10 Retaining Walls** – No change
- **A.11 Landscaped, Private, and Community Recreation Spaces**
 - Add text to clarify that changes to the standards will require a Code change as well.
 - Add a standard to ensure that required upper-story building step-backs are designed to be usable open space (decks, patios, etc.).
 - Add flexibility to required dimensions for required shared and private open spaces, including balconies.
- **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.
 - Require buildings to “match” the setback of adjacent lower-intensity uses for a specified distance from the abutting lot.

Section B: Building Standards

- **B.1 Massing and Scale**
 - Require compliance with two instead of three building mass strategies.
 - 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).
- Re-visit standard B.1.1 to:
 - Clarify its relationship with the existing upper-story setback standards applicable in 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.
 - 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.
 - Add standards to address height transitions (e.g., where a multi-family or mixed-use zone abuts a single-family zone).
- **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.
- **B.3 Roof Design**
 - Consider reducing the 40-foot maximum linear dimension allowed without a change in roof form or height.
- **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.
 - 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.
 - 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).

- **Add Section B.5 Entrance Design**
 - Move standards B.4.1.c, B.4.6.a, and B.4.7 to this new section.
 - Add dimensions to ensure spaces are appropriately scaled and usable.
- **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.
- **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.
 - 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.
 - Establish limits on the number of materials and colors used on any one structure.

Graphics Updates

- Update graphics to reflect typical Los Gatos forms and configurations. This will involve updating existing graphics to be more reflective of Los Gatos project design, replacing graphics, and adding to the set of graphics.
- 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 graphics for standard B.3.1 (roof design) to illustrate design options.
- 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.

Implementation Updates

- Discuss with the Town and community the effectiveness of the point system for standard B.4.3, consider eliminating.

- Require a drawing that specifically demonstrates compliance with the Objective Design Standards, wherever compliance can be shown graphically. The Appendix checklist may be modified to note which standards must be shown graphically on the required drawing.

MEMO

To: Sean Mullin, Town of Los Gatos
From: Lisa Wise Consulting, Inc. (LWC) and Urban Planning Partners (UPP)
Date: December 18, 2025
Re: Community Open House Summary Memo

As part of the community outreach effort for the Update to the Multi-Family and Mixed-Use Objective Design Standards, the Town of Los Gatos held a Community Open House on December 4, 2025 at the Adult Recreation Center, located at 208 E. Main Street. The Open House took place prior to the drafting of the updated standards, with the objective of gathering community input to help inform the upcoming standards. Town staff conducted outreach to publicize the event through a posting on the project webpage; an email sent to a group of local architects, designers, and members of the public that have signed up for notifications from the Town; and through various media and social media resources. A total of seven community members participated.

Shortly after 6:00 pm, the Town and Consultant Team gave a brief presentation to describe the project, objectives, and progress as well as to introduce the format of the Open House. At about 6:30, the group began to circulate at four topical “stations” set up around the room by the Town and the Consultant Team. Each station included two to three detailed presentation boards to focus the conversation and provide graphic context for the topics at hand. Attendees were urged to share their thoughts in a casual, informal style. The four stations were:

- **Station 1: Project Overview.** The boards prompted participants to review project objectives and design topics and to record initial visual preferences.
- **Station 2: High Quality Building and Site Design.** The boards prompted participants to consider exactly what “high-quality design” means in Los Gatos. The presentation boards focused on a range of topics in site design, roof form and articulation, and windows.
- **Station 3: Building Massing and Height Transitions.** The boards prompted participants to identify their priorities for regulating building massing. The presentation boards focused on building length, upper-story step-backs, and options for transitions to lower-intensity residential areas.
- **Station 4: Architectural Character and Details.** The boards prompted participants to consider the details of design—specifically, four different “detail palettes,” details of façade articulation, building entry design, and ranges of building materials and colors—and lend input into which options are the best fit for new development in Los Gatos.

In addition, at each station was a blank flip-chart for recording discussion notes and community feedback. Community participants and planning team members alike noted thoughts and ideas directly on the boards (see p. 5) as well as on flip charts (see p. 9). Below is a summary of the community input.

Summary of Open House Input

Building Placement

- A maximum setback is not seen as critical because it's unlikely a developer would waste that space.

Massing and Articulation

- More articulation is preferred. We should avoid long, straight, unbroken lines, particularly along roof lines and facades.
- Avoid boxy, "chock-a-block" design.
- Building "modules" should break up bulky facades. Modules should be used in combination with step-backs.
- Step-backs for second and third stories are supported, but not with balconies occupying the stepped-back space.
- Support for street-facing step-backs starting at the second story, similar to 1001 Oak Hill in Lafayette.
- Strong preference for courtyards that break up the massing of larger buildings.
- Of the different step-back options presented, there was a preference for a height limit imposed within a certain distance of an abutting residential property line.
- Usable balconies are preferred over Juliet balconies, except on Spanish-style buildings.
- Recessed balconies are preferred over projecting balconies.
- Balconies should consider the safety of pedestrians and passers-by below.
- Preference for an emphasized building base with a material change and a cornice marking the top of the base.
- Privacy should be considered for all new development.

Roof Design

- False mansard roofs are acceptable if they wrap around all sides of the building and do not have a steep slope.
- All sloped roofs should have eaves.
- Flat roofs without a parapet are discouraged.
- Preference for a well-articulated cornice and overhangs.

Windows

- Windows should have charm. This includes details, trim, lintels, porticos, and awnings. Avoid windows that are flush with the building.
- Flat window frames should not be allowed.
- Trim, recessed windows, or lintels are preferred.

- Support for arched windows.
- Window trim should not be stucco.
- Preference for windows with sills.

Entry Design

- Individual Residential Entries
 - Preference for entries that are emphasized with a recess or projection; however, thin shed-roof overhangs without columns are insufficient and look cheap.
 - Support for two-story porches.
 - Entries should be no more than three steps up from the sidewalk.
- Shared Entry Residential
 - Shared entries below a floating balcony are not supported.
 - Preference for entries that are articulated with gable-end roofs and columns.
- Commercial Frontages
 - Preference for seating and planter boxes to define ground floor commercial frontages.
 - Preference for awnings, recessed entries, and terraces.

Building Materials

- Materials should be mixed; should be used to break up facades and prevent monotony
- Too much variation without any rhyme or reason can look chaotic. For example, townhouses should have material and color changes that correspond to the different units.
- Preference for siding, shakes, brick, and stone.
- Board-form concrete should be used only on a small portion of the building.
- There should be a maximum percentage of stucco allowed on any one façade; too much stucco can create boring facades.
- Metal panels, reflective materials, glass curtain walls, and corrugated metal should not be allowed.

Building Colors

- Muted, earthy, natural colors are preferred. Color palettes should cohere with those of neighboring buildings.
- Bright, saturated colors are not a good fit in Los Gatos.
- No blinding white.

Style and Character

- New development should be consistent with the small-town, cottage-style, Craftsman vibe of Los Gatos.
- Avoid any new development that is “too Modern.”

- Preference for Neoclassical and Italianate styles. Spanish and modern Craftsman/Farmhouse also liked. When Spanish style is used, there shouldn't be repeating bays.
- Contemporary style and agricultural-looking buildings (corrugated siding, minimal windows, shallow eaves) are not liked/not appropriate.
- Support for courtyard-style buildings.
- Avoid big buildings; strong preference for "compact design."
- Developers are often willing to listen to neighbors and refine proposals accordingly.

Parking

- Although we're a small town, people do drive and need parking.
- Parking should be underground, hidden from view, and/or located to the rear of buildings. Safeway is good example.
- Surface parking should be screened from view from the right-of-way with landscaping and two access driveways should be provided where possible.

Landscaping

- More trees and shrubbery.
- Preferences for an expanded sidewalk, and not just in the Downtown.

Public Art

- Murals and public art is a priority. The new Whole Foods is a good example.

Open Space

- Small open spaces, parklets, and shared public spaces should be encouraged/required. Consider seating, barbeque areas, etc. The Newton building is a good example.
- Common open spaces should not be allowed where they can overlook a single-family yard.

Safety/Evacuation

- The Town should consider evacuation strategies when approving any new development.

Infrastructure

- Los Gatos does not have the civil infrastructure to support much/any new residential development.

Affordability

- The project should consider that additional design requirements may impact affordability.
- The Town should be able to negotiate to reduce the burden on developers to produce more affordable housing.

Presentation Boards with Feedback (11 total)

UPDATED OBJECTIVE DESIGN STANDARDS
FOR MULTI-FAMILY AND MIXED-USE RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

Station 1: Project Overview

Project Background

OBJECTIVES

The Multi-Family and Mixed-Use Objective Design Standards (ODS) Update Project is an effort to update the Town's existing ODS by refining design standards to respond to Town Council and community feedback.

PROJECT TIMELINE

Project Milestone	Site Plan and Developer Plans	Final Design	Permitting Review	Construction Start	Construction Completion	Final Inspection	Occupancy	Handover
	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov
	2025							

WHAT ARE THE ADVANTAGES OF OBJECTIVE DESIGN STANDARDS FOR RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT?

State law, specifically SB330 (the Housing Crisis Act of 2019), requires a ministerial review pathway for residential projects. Objective design standards (ODS) can be used as approval criteria for this ministerial pathway. ODS:

- Should be easy to understand, feasible to implement, consistent with the General Plan and Municipal Code, and reflective of community character.
- Remove the uncertainty of discretionary review. If an applicant follows the standards, no design review is required.
- Lead to predictable results. Because the standards are known and quantifiable, the community can anticipate how new development will look.

THE TOWN'S EXISTING OBJECTIVE DESIGN STANDARDS

The existing Objective Design Standards for Qualifying Multi-Family and Mixed-Use Residential Development were adopted on January 31, 2023. The document includes two sections:

- Site Design, including site layout and building placement; vehicular access and parking; and outdoor areas and amenities.
- Building design, including building form and massing; façade articulation; materials; and roof design.

WHAT IS THE FOCUS OF THE UPDATES TO THE STANDARDS?

After about two years of use, Town Staff and the Los Gatos community have found that the existing design standards have room for improvement in how they address and regulate new development—specifically:

- **High-Quality Building Design**
 - Façade articulation, pedestrian orientation, and visual interest.
 - Building materials and colors that convey a sense of quality and durability and that are consistent with existing buildings.
 - Usable open spaces that complement the building and create a comfortable public realm.
- **Height Transitions**
 - Ensuring smooth transitions to adjacent lower-density neighborhoods.
- **Architectural Character and Details**
 - Integrity in building composition and details.
 - Elements of the base, middle and top of the building; roofline design; and ground floor design.

TOWN OF LOS GATOS | COMMUNITY OPEN HOUSE | THURSDAY, DECEMBER 4, 2025

UPDATED OBJECTIVE DESIGN STANDARDS
FOR MULTI-FAMILY AND MIXED-USE RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

Station 1: Project Overview

Selected Design Topics

SITE DESIGN

Vehicular Access: Internal circulation within off-street lots.

Pedestrian Access: Pedestrian connectivity throughout site and within parking areas.

Landscaping and Screening: Residential buffers and limits on surface for visibility.

Parking Structure Access and Visibility: Minimizing conflicts between drivers and pedestrians.

Private, Common and Public Open Spaces: Size, dimensions, and distribution of landscaped areas, private recreation spaces, and community recreation spaces.

Building Placement and Setback Design: Placement of buildings relative to property lines and design of areas between building and property line.

BUILDING DESIGN

Roof Design: Roof form, slope, features, and materials.

Massing and Scale: Options for breaking up massing/reducing perceived scale of multi-story buildings.

Façade Articulation:

- Variation in street-facing planes through awnings/canopies, windows, balconies, trellises, material changes, window boxes/planters, and mousing/corbelled cornices.
- Building material and color palettes.
- Recessed garage doors.
- Transparency of ground-floor commercial uses.
- Equal façade treatment on all building elevations.

Building and Entry Design:

- Differentiation of the base, middle and top through façade recesses/projections, balconies, entry design, material transitions, top-story height.
- Balcony location and residential privacy.
- Recessed or covered building entries.

Parking Structure Design: Access, façade treatment, visibility.

TOWN OF LOS GATOS | COMMUNITY OPEN HOUSE | THURSDAY, DECEMBER 4, 2025

UPDATED OBJECTIVE DESIGN STANDARDS
FOR MULTI-FAMILY AND MIXED-USE RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

Station 1: Project Overview

Visual Preferences

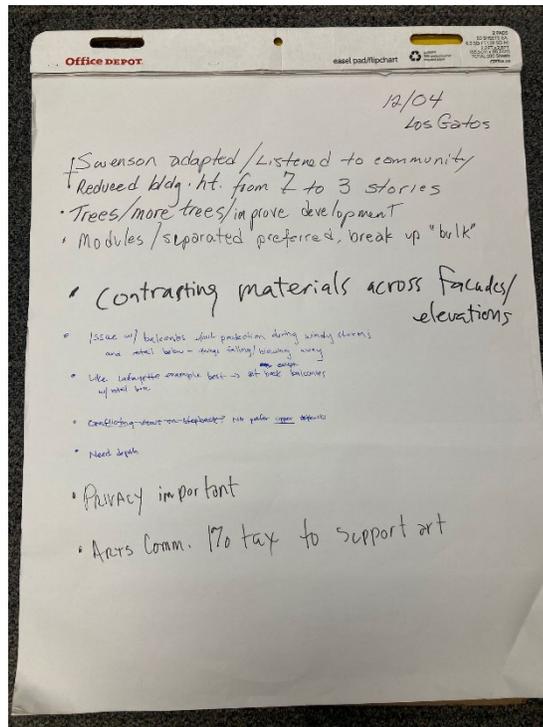
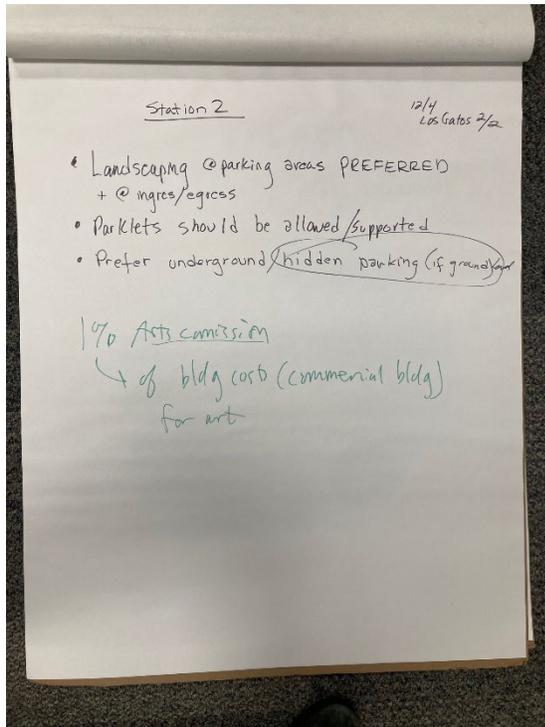
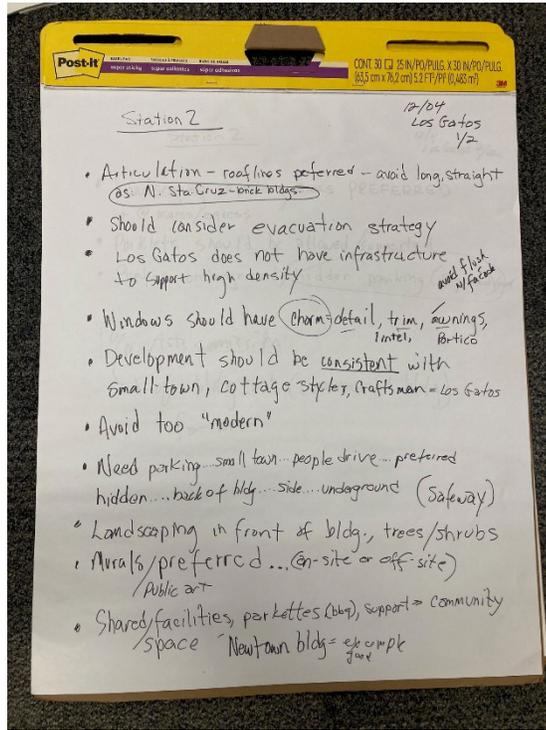
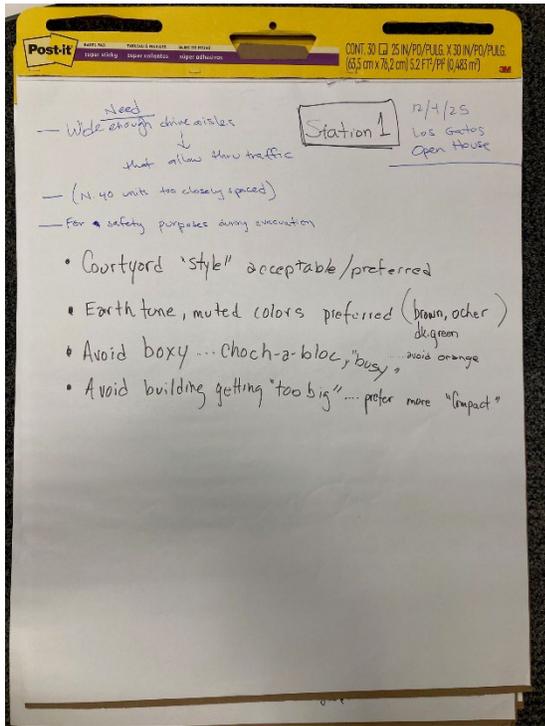
THE IMAGES BELOW SHOW A RANGE OF BUILDING AND SITE DESIGNS. WHICH DESIGNS ARE MOST PREFERRED FOR LOS GATOS? (NO REPRESENTATION AT ALL)

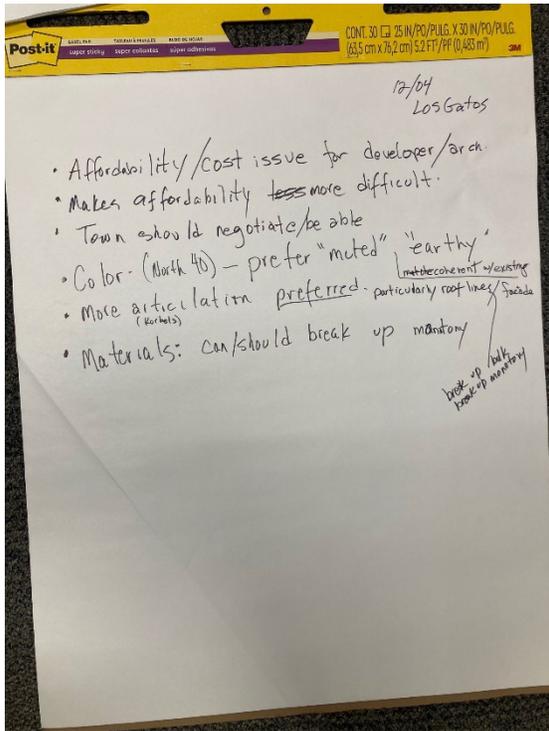
Visual preferences board featuring 12 images of building and site designs with handwritten feedback and annotations. The board includes a grid of images and a list of preferences:

- **Visual Preferences:** A grid of 12 images showing various building and site designs.
- **Handwritten Feedback:** Includes notes such as "like the way the building is set back", "like the way the building is set back".
- **Color Coding:** Red and blue dots are used to mark preferred designs.
- **Annotations:** Includes phrases like "like the way the building is set back", "like the way the building is set back".

TOWN OF LOS GATOS | COMMUNITY OPEN HOUSE | THURSDAY, DECEMBER 4, 2025

Flip Chart Pages





Objective Design Standards

Town of Los Gatos, CA

Joint Town Council/Planning Commission Study Session

The March 17th Joint Study Session on the Revised Los Gatos Objective Design Standards for Multi-Family and Mixed-Use Objective Design Standards (ODS) will provide the consulting team with Town Council, Planning Commission, and community input and direction prior to the preparation of the Administrative Draft Revised Objective Standards.

At the public joint Study Session with the Town Council and Planning Commission, the consulting team, led by Lisa Wise Consulting, will introduce the Objective Design Standards Update project; provide an overview of community outreach and feedback; and present several topics for consideration by the Council, Commission, and community. The feedback and direction from the Study Session will be essential in shaping the Administrative Draft ODS to follow. Below is a draft outline of the Study Session:

1. Project Overview

- a. **Project Background and Schedule.** Brief overview of existing design standards and project schedule.
- b. **Project Objectives.** The update to the existing ODS for Multi-Family and Mixed-Use Residential Development will focus on following topics:
 - i. High-Quality Building Design
 - ii. Height Transitions
 - iii. Architectural Character and Details
- c. **Comply with Town Policy and State law.** This update will implement the Town's General Plan goals and ensure compliance with SB 330 and other relevant laws.
- d. **Community Feedback.** The ODS updates will incorporate the values and goals expressed by the community at previous engagement efforts:
 - i. Focus Groups – September, 2025 – brief summary of input
 - ii. Open House – December, 2025 – brief summary of input

2. Design Topics

- a. For each topic, the Consultant Team will include an overview of relevant existing standards, feedback from Town staff, and opinions voiced by community members in order to solicit feedback on options for approaches to specific standards.
- b. Standards to Discuss:

- i. **Site Design** – maximum setbacks and the design of required setbacks
- ii. **Height Transitions** - adjacency to single-family residential; using height limits, step-backs, or other approaches
- iii. **Apartments/Stacked Flats** – multiple options for quality and variety without “chaos”
 - 1. Massing
 - 2. Materials
- iv. **Townhomes** – potential to differentiate from apartments/stacked flats
 - 1. Massing
 - 2. Materials
- v. **Roof Design** – eaves, overhangs, and other possible requirements
- vi. **Windows** – trim, recesses, and lintels
- vii. **Entry Design** – more flexible vs more prescriptive standards
- viii. **Colors** – high saturation vs low saturation; primary, secondary, and accent
- ix. **Parking** – existing standards and screening options

3. Discussion



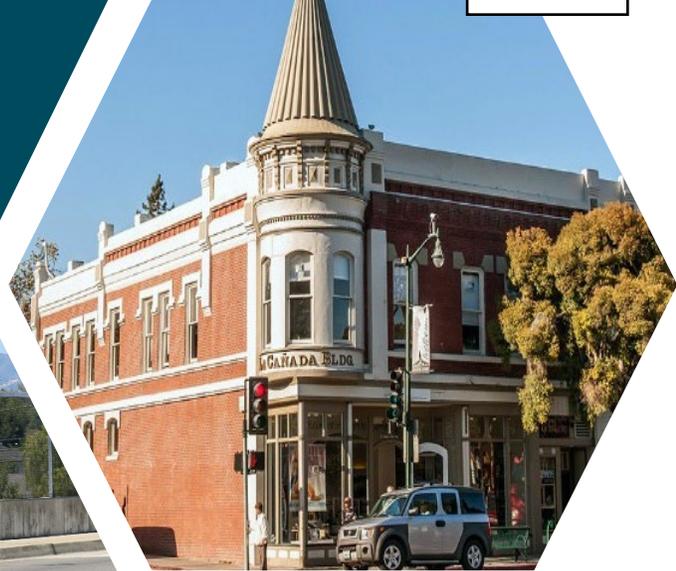
Town of Los Gatos
Multi-Family and Mixed-Use Objective Design Standards Update

**Joint Planning Commission/
Town Council Study Session**

Tuesday, March 17, 2026, 5:00 p.m.

Los Gatos Town Hall

ITEM NO. 1.



Town Staff

- **Joel Paulson**, Community Development Director
- **Sean Mullin**, Planning Manager

Lisa Wise Consulting, Inc. (LWC)

- **Monica Szydlik**, AICP, Senior Associate
- **Cal Kurtz**, AIA, Lead Associate

Project Objectives

- Update the Town's existing **2023 Objective Design Standards for Multi-Family and Mixed-Use Residential Development** by refining design standards to respond to Town Council and community feedback and priorities.
- Implement the Town's General Plan goals
- Ensure compliance with State law (SB 330)
- Focus on:
 - ✓ High-Quality Building Design
 - ✓ Height Transitions
 - ✓ Architectural Character and Details

What are Objective Standards?

- 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 and public official** prior to submittal.

Subjective

Development must be compatible with the character of the neighborhood.

Objective

Blank walls (without doors and windows) of more than 20 linear feet are prohibited along any street-facing elevation.

- **Set clear expectations for approval.**
- **Streamline the review process.**

Project Process and Schedule

2025

2026



Project Process and Schedule

2025

2026



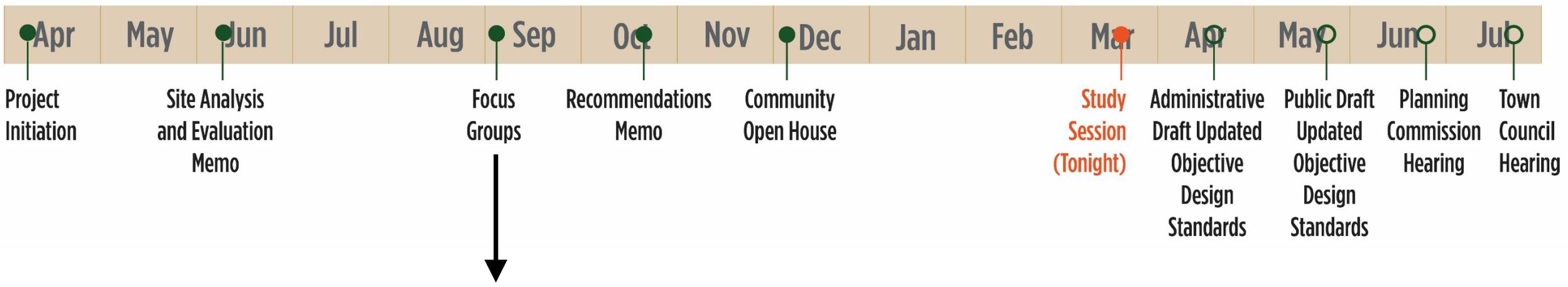
Documented:

- *Zoning Code development standards*
- *2040 General Plan relevant policy direction*
- *North 40 Specific Plan*
- *Record of community and Council input*
- *Staff input and issues*
- *Analysis of example projects*

Project Process and Schedule

2025

2026

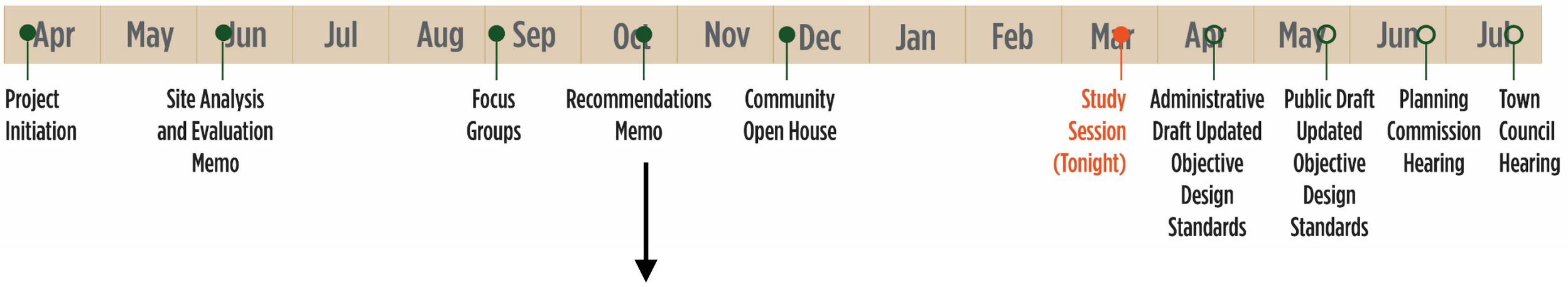


- 8 groups / 29 individuals
- September 2025
- Residents, architects, developers
- Some areas of consensus:
 - Standards do not adequately address different building types/configurations.
 - The current ODS's points system is not working out as anticipated.
 - Concern about buildings "sticking out," not reflecting Los Gatos character
 - Dislike of unarticulated and monotonous designs

Project Process and Schedule

2025

2026



- Draws on findings from:*
- *Site Analysis and Evaluation Memo*
 - *Focus Groups*
 - *Staff input*

Project Process and



Draws on findings from:

- *Site Analysis and Evaluation Memo*
- *Focus Groups*
- *Staff input*

Section A: Site Design

ITEM NO. 1.

A.1 Pedestrian Access

A.2 Short Term Bicycle Parking

A.3 Long-Term Bicycle Parking

A.4 Vehicular Access

A.5 Parking Location and Design

A.6 Parking Structure Access

A.7 Utilities

A.8 Landscaping and Screening

A.9 Fencing

A.10 Retaining Walls

A.11 Landscaped, Private, and Community Recreation Spaces

A.12 Building Placement

← Minor edits

← More substantive edits

Section B: Building Standards

B.1 Massing and Scale

B.2 Parking Structure Design

B.3 Roof Design

B.4 Façade Design and Articulation

B.5 Entrance Design

B.6 Windows and Doors

B.7 Materials, Colors, and Architectural Details

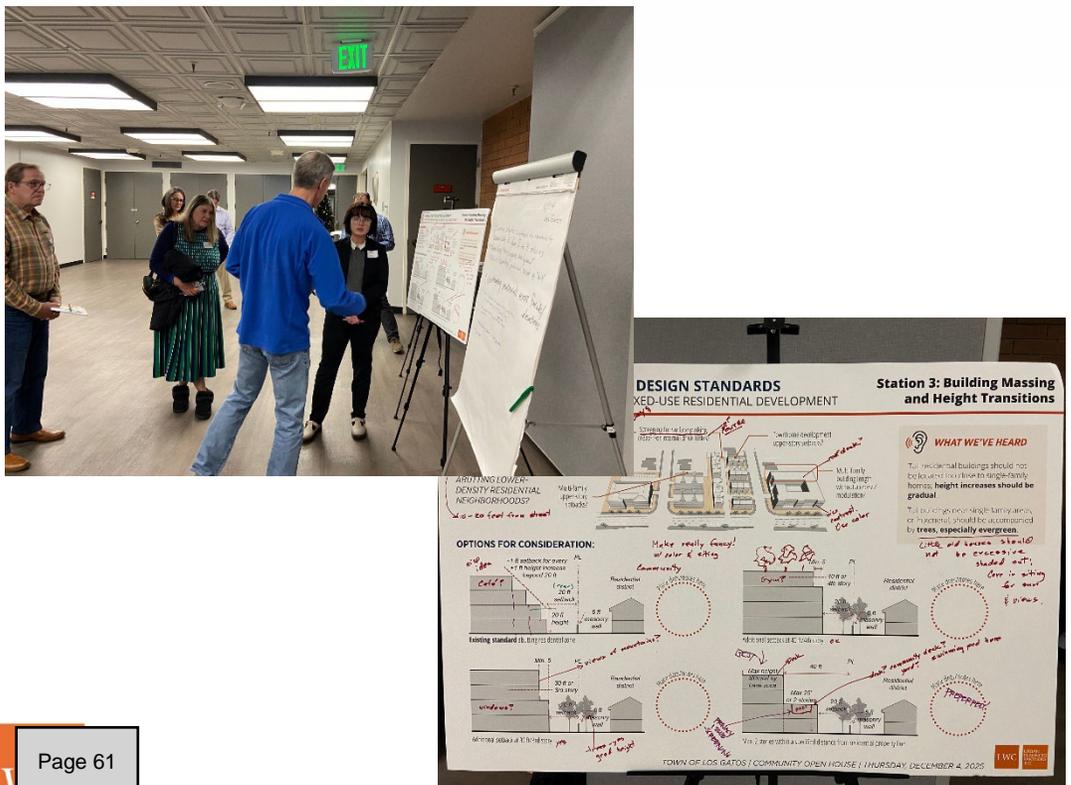
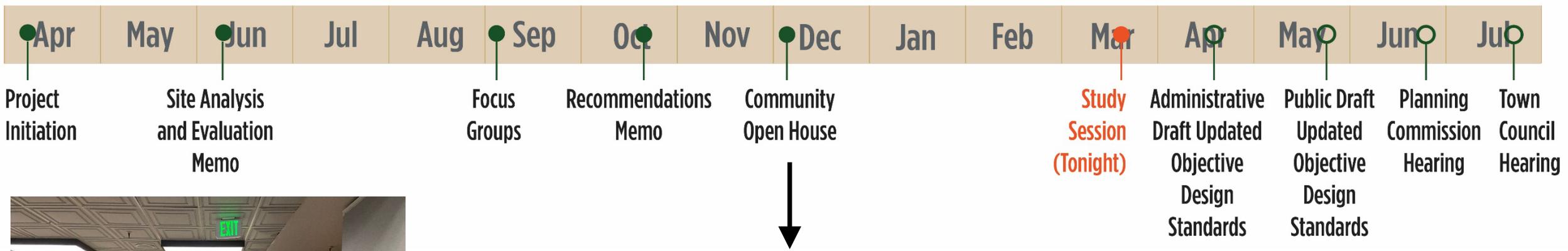
← New sections

Project Process and Schedule

ITEM NO. 1.

2025

2026

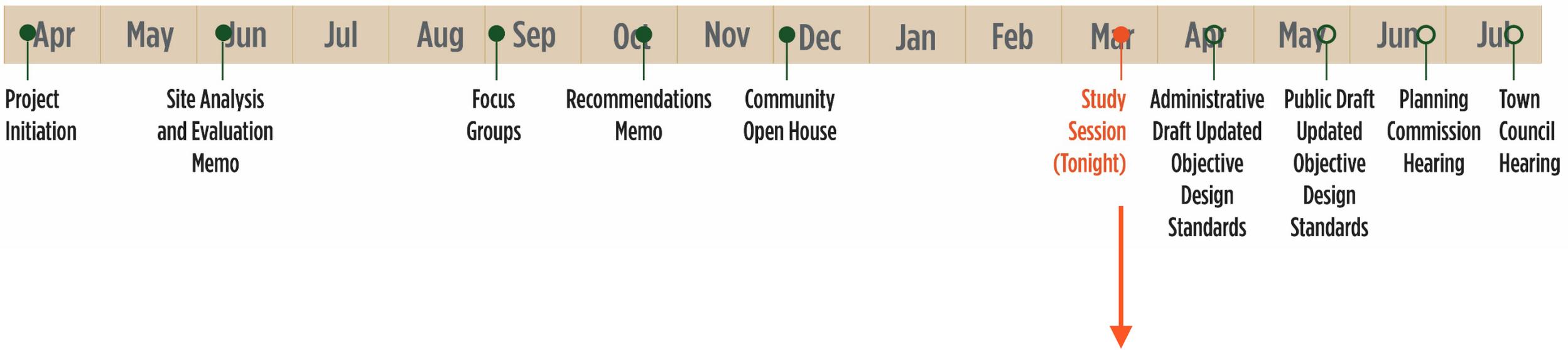


- December 4, 2025 at the Adult Recreation Center
- 11 boards at 4 topical stations
- Focus on:
 - Building placement
 - Design of street-facing setbacks and site perimeter
 - Building massing and articulation
 - Roof types and details
 - Height transitions
 - Window design and entrance design
 - Building materials and colors
 - Architectural character

Project Process and Schedule

2025

2026



- ***Feedback from all outreach and input informed working design ideas and questions.***
- ***Consider: How should we reflect the community's goals in the updated standards?***

Existing Massing Standards

Street-facing facades must incorporate at least 3 of the following:



- A Maximum 30-foot façade interval
- B Minimum two-foot change in depth for a minimum length of two-feet

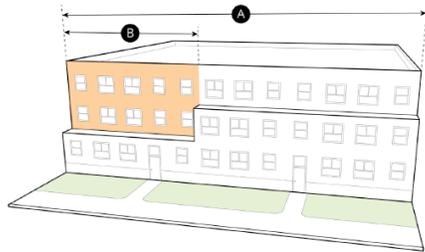


- Ground floor open area with a minimum of 60 square feet



- Recessed entries, 24 square-foot minimum

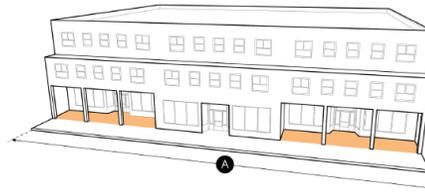
The above standards may be too similar, resulting in similar breaks in massing.



- A Total street-facing façade length
- B Minimum five-foot upper floor setback for 40 percent of façade length



- A Full height of building base or ground floor, whichever is greater
- Vertical elements, such as columns or pilasters, that protrude a minimum of one-foot from the façade



- A Total façade length 50 feet or greater.
- Walkway sheltered by a ground floor arcade with a minimum eight-foot depth on a minimum of 65 percent of the street-facing façade.

Upper story step-backs may be appropriate adjacent to single-family. Pilasters (middle) and arcades (right) may not adequately break up massing.



What we've heard

Existing massing standards:

- Are **inadequate**
- Do not address **adjacency to single-family residential**

Massing - Multi-family

Working design standard
Establish new/different massing options for multi-family buildings.

Consider one or more of the following...



40% of upper story/stories stepped-back



A publicly accessible forecourt



Limitations on building size/length where abutting single-family

Massing - Townhomes

Working design standard

Establish specific massing requirements for townhome development.



Massing changes that correspond to different units?



Massing changes unrelated to units?



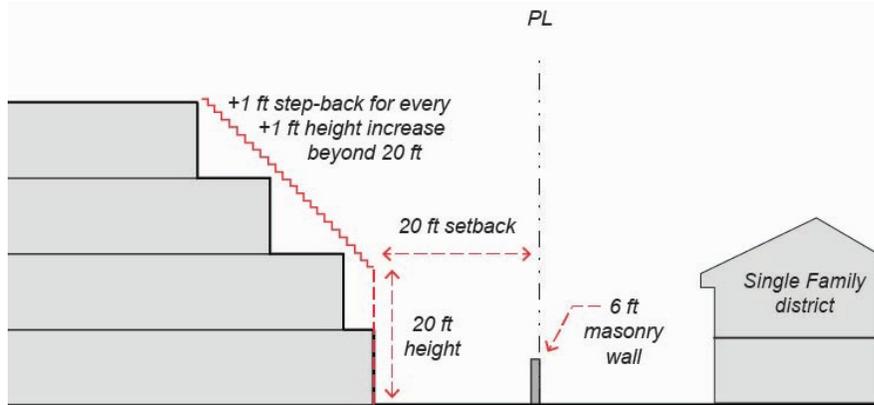
Minimal or no massing changes?

Height Transitions

Working design standard

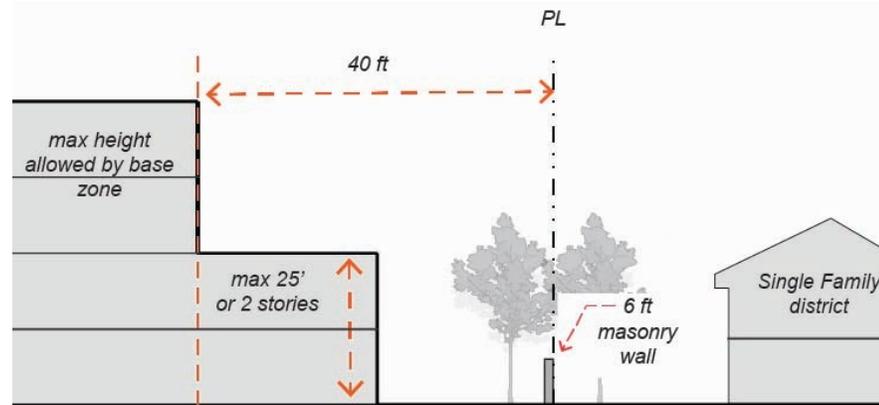
Establish maximum heights adjacent to or facing single-family.

Existing Base Zone Standards: C-1, C-2, CH, CM



Some zones already require every foot of building height above 20 ft to be stepped-back by 1 ft.

Open House Preference



*How should we regulate **height next** to single-family districts? Require angled planes? Upper-story step-backs instead?*

What we've heard

- There should be a **maximum height within a specific distance** of a shared property line
- Existing standard is expensive/onerous for builders

Materials & Colors

ITEM NO. 1.

Working design standard

Regulate primary, secondary, and accent materials.



Primary, secondary,
& accent?

Primary ~ 60%
Secondary ~ 25%
Accent ~ 15%



Variation without
hierarchy?

Brown ~ 30%
Beige ~ 30%
Stone ~ 25%
Blue/grey ~ 15%



*What we've
heard*

- The community dislikes **too few** material changes but also dislikes **too many** material changes
- Materials should be used to **break up monotony** in project design
- Changes in material and color should be **orderly**, not chaotic
- Bright colors are not a good fit in Los Gatos

Materials & Colors

Working design standard

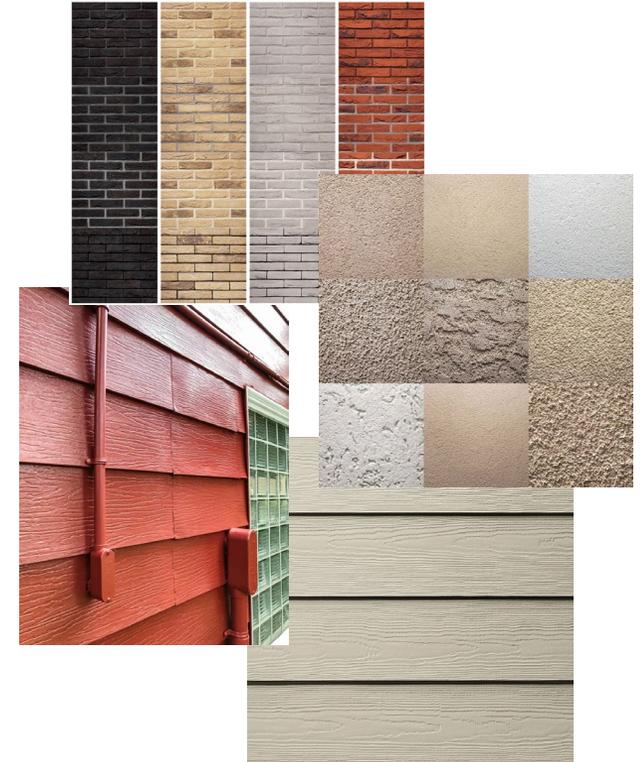
Regulate how and what materials are used.



Require material changes between townhome units?



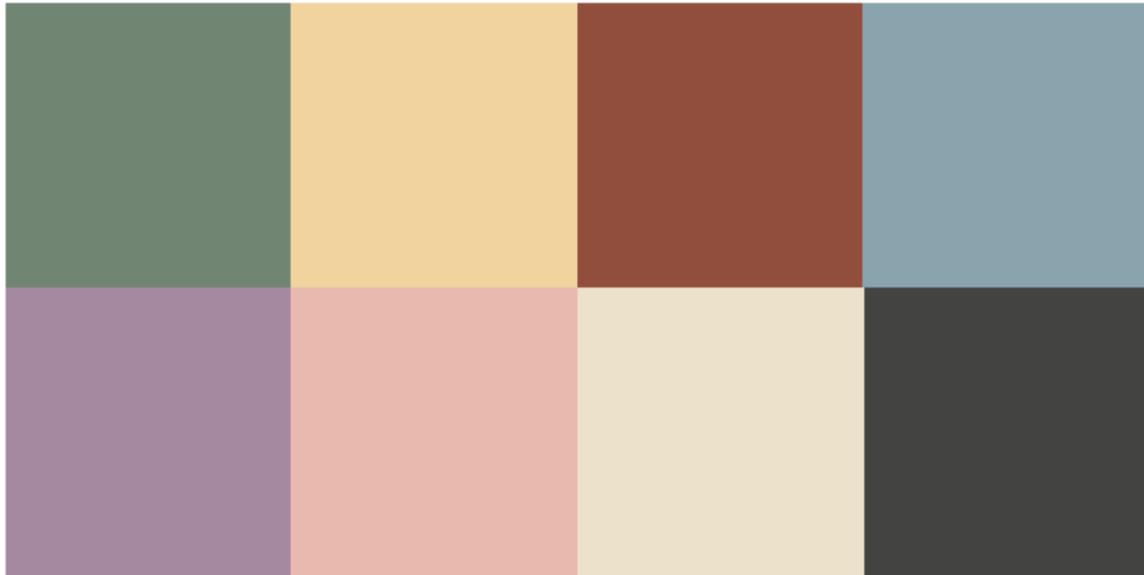
Or allow material changes independent of units and massing changes?



Any materials that should be prohibited?

Working design standard

Regulate color by Saturation and Light Reflecting Value (LRV).



Potential allowed color ranges: Saturation of $< 70\%$ or $< 35\%$ for pinks and purples; LRV between 5 and 80



Potential prohibited color ranges: Saturation of $> 70\%$ or $> 35\%$ for pinks and purples; LRV outside 5 and 80

Roof Design

Working design standard
Establish a minimum dimension for eaves and cornices.



*Require a **minimum eave depth**?*

*Require a **cornice or overhang** on parapets?*



What we've heard

- No/little support for roofs without eaves or with shallow eaves
- No/little support for parapets without architectural detail
- Reconsider max. length allowed without change in roof form or height

Windows

Working design standard

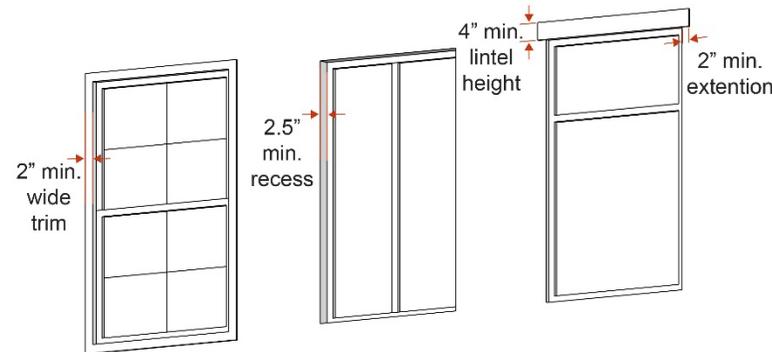
Require trim, recesses, or lintels for windows.

Flat windows



Prohibit flat windows?

Trim, Recesses, and Lintels



*Require **trim**, **recesses**, or **lintels** for some or all windows? Appropriate dimensions?*

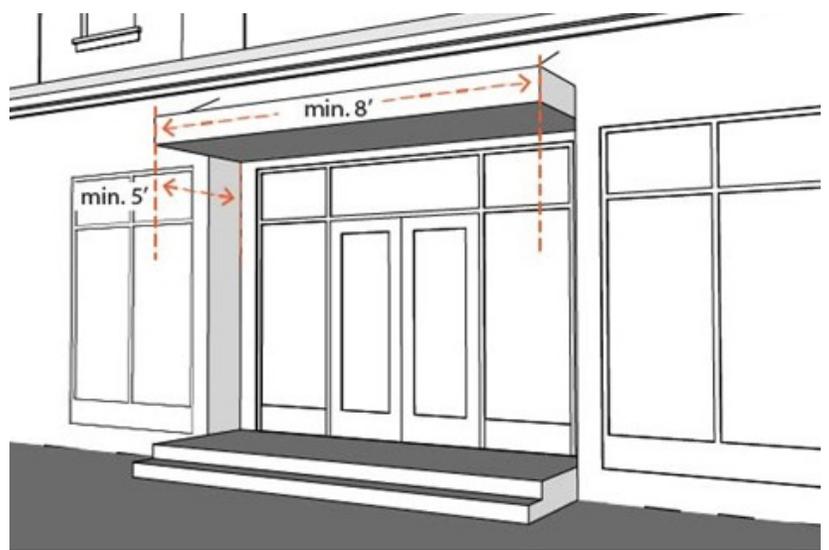


What we've heard:

- No/little support for flat, unarticulated window design

Entry Design

Working design standard
Establish standards for entry design features and dimensions.

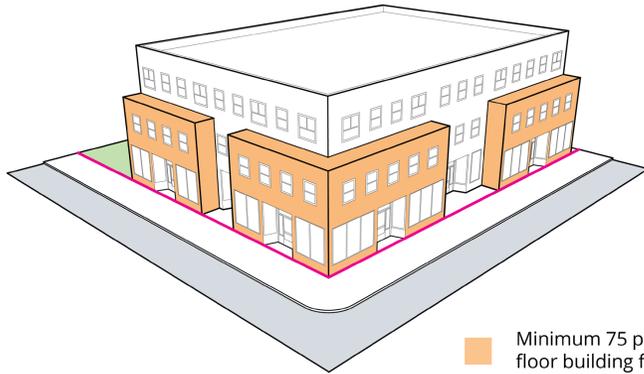


Be flexible, requiring min. dimensions for overhang or recess for weather protection only?

*...Or be **more prescriptive**, requiring design features from a list (e.g., columns, transom features, elevation change, corresponding height changes, other features)*

Existing Standards

Placement



- Minimum 75 percent of total ground floor building frontage
- Front or side setback

Private Recreation Space

- Min. 60 sq ft; min. 6 ft dimension, min. 8-foot vertical clearance
- Accessible from unit

Landscaping

- 50% front yard landscaped; 20% total site landscaped
- Landscape buffer with a wall and trees between multi family/ mixed-use and residential zones

Community Recreation Space

- Min. 100 sq ft /unit; min dimension 10 ft
- 60% open to the sky; 15% shaded



What we've heard

- There is a need for **improved setbacks/expanded sidewalk** areas
- Standards should facilitate/encourage **elevated open spaces**
- There is a preference for **smaller open spaces**

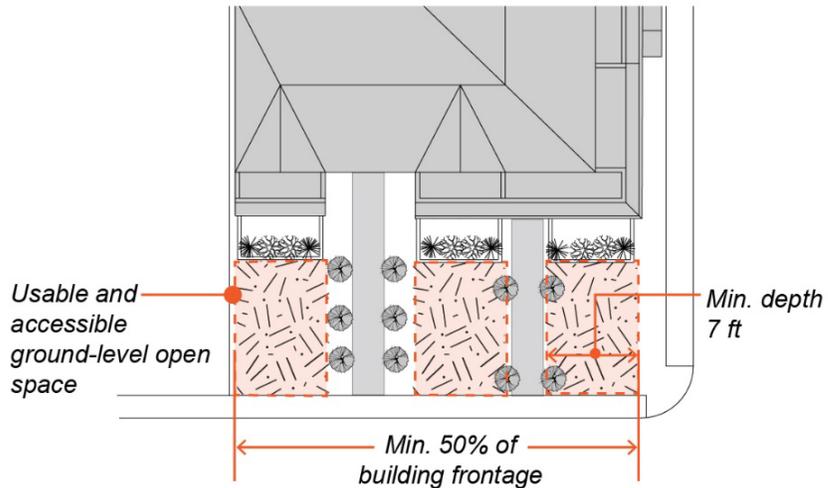
Building Placement, Landscaping, and Open Space

ITEM NO. 1.

Working design standard

Enhance usable open space, landscaping, screening.

Setback improvements



Require **specific improvements** to setback areas?

Landscaping, screening



Require more **landscaping** along front and side property lines?

Elevated open spaces



How to best regulate **elevated open spaces** (placement, visibility)?

Thank you!