

INTRODUCTION

PURPOSE

The Amended and Restated Objective Design Review Standards (Objective Design Review Standards) serve as minimum architectural and site design requirements intended primarily for housing development projects (i.e., uses consisting of any of the following: residential units only, mixed-use development consisting of residential and nonresidential uses where at least two-thirds of the square footage is designated for residential use, and transitional or supportive housing).

The Objective Design Review Standards supplement the development standards of the Zoning Ordinance and further the goals, policies, and actions of the Alameda General Plan, which encourages high-quality design and the quality of life that an enhanced built environment fosters.

APPLICABILITY

The Objective Design Review Standards apply to housing development projects, including the following:

- Affordable housing projects eligible for streamlined ministerial review pursuant to SB 35 (Section 65913.4 of the Government Code).
- “Housing development projects” as defined by the Housing Accountability Act (Section 65589.5 of the Government Code), which means uses consisting of any of the following:
 - Residential units only;
 - Mixed-use developments consisting of residential and nonresidential uses with at least two-thirds of the square footage designated for residential use; or
 - Transitional housing or supportive housing.
- Any other housing projects that current or future State law provides may only be reviewed against objective standards.

The Objective Design Review Standards were adopted by the Planning Board on February 22, 2021 and supersede the initial set of Objective Design Review Standards adopted by Planning Board Resolution No. PB-20-04 on February 10, 2020. The revised standards will go into effect as of the date of adoption.

Ministerial Design Review

Where California law requires that the design of a project be reviewed only against objective standards, the Objective Design Review Standards will serve as the standards for design review. Ministerial design review will be processed by Planning staff per the Design Review Procedure set forth in AMC Section 30-36.

Discretionary Design Review

If a project that would be eligible for ministerial design review does not meet one or more of the Objective Design Review Standards, and the applicant wishes to propose an alternative design, the applicant may elect to go through the discretionary design review process described in Section 30-36, Design Review Procedure, of the Alameda Municipal Code (AMC). In such case, the project will be reviewed for conformance with the Citywide Design Review Manual and any other design guidelines that apply to the site. Discretionary design review may only be approved if the findings for design review approval of Section 30-37.5, Findings, of the AMC are made.

RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER REGULATIONS

All development must comply with the standards of Alameda Municipal Code Chapter XXX, Development Regulations (the Zoning Ordinance). Accordingly, projects subject to these Objective Design Review Standards must also comply with the Zoning Ordinance.

DOCUMENT ORGANIZATION

This document is organized into six topic areas related to site and architectural design. Each section includes statements of design principles, followed by specific standards related to the principles. **The principles are provided for orientation and reference only; they are not criteria for review. By contrast, the standards are requirements that must be met.**

DESIGN PRINCIPLES AND STANDARDS

1. SITE DESIGN

Principles

Vehicle access and parking do not dominate street frontages. Instead, they are subordinate in location and appearance to other site elements such as buildings, pedestrian facilities, landscaping, and yards.

Children's play areas are designed with adequate facilities and protection. Residential projects are designed to provide visibility into children's play areas.

Appropriate landscaping enhances the built environment and provides environmental benefits.

Standards—Site Design	Project Complies		
	Yes	No	N/A
1A. No Gates/Barriers. Public and private streets into new developments shall not be gated or otherwise closed off to vehicles.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1B. Parking Location.			
1. Surface Parking and Carports. Surface parking areas and carports must be located behind or to the side of residential buildings. They may not be located between the front façade of any building and a street. For purposes of this regulation, the front façade shall mean the building elevation that faces the front yard as defined by the Alameda Municipal Code (AMC).	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Garages.			
a. Parking Entry Location. If a project site fronts on two or more streets, vehicle entries to parking garages shall be located on a secondary street.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. Street-facing Garages. Any garage door facing and visible from a primary street ¹ shall meet the following standards:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

¹ **Primary and Secondary Streets.** For lots with frontage along more than one street (e.g., corner lots, through lots), the primary street will be considered the street abutting the “front yard,” as defined in AMC Section 30-2. The other street shall be considered the secondary street. However, Park and Webster streets will always serve as primary streets, regardless of the location of the subject property’s front yard.

Standards—Site Design	Project Complies		
	Yes	No	N/A
i. Width. Garage doors shall not occupy more than 50% of the width of any building façade. This limitation does not apply to detached garages located in the rear half of a lot.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
ii. Recess. Garage doors shall be recessed at least six inches from the surrounding wall surface.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
c. <i>Rear and Side Garages</i> . Garage doors located on side or rear façades shall be no wider than two cars' width, or a maximum of 18 feet.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1C. Landscaping.			
1. <i>Landscaping of Street-facing Yards</i> . In accord with Section 30-5.7 of the AMC, front yards and corner side yards shall be landscaped, except for areas used for walkways, driveways, and staircases. (For treatment of required yards for mixed-use development, see Section 5, Mixed-Use Development, of these standards.)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. <i>Materials</i> .			
a. <i>Bay Friendly and WELO Compliance</i> . Planting may consist of any combination of groundcovers, shrubs, vines, and trees that meets the Bay Friendly and Water Efficient Landscape Ordinance (Article IV of Chapter XXX of the AMC).	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
b. <i>Components</i> .			
i. Live Plant Materials. At least 50% of any required landscaped area must include live plant materials rather than be occupied by gravel, cinder, paving stones, or similar non-plant materials.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
ii. Features. Benches, fountains, sculptures, or other ornamental features may be included within and counted as part of landscaped areas.			
3. <i>Trees</i> .			
a. <i>Street Trees</i> . Street trees shall be provided according to the recommendations for species, sizes, and spacing in the City of Alameda Master Tree Plan.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
b. <i>Prohibited Species</i> . Palm trees are not permitted unless the City's solid waste program accepts palm fronds for composting.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
1D. Design of Children's Play Areas. If open space on a project site includes children's play areas, such areas shall be designed to meet the following standards:			
1. <i>Equipment</i> . Play areas shall include equipment for children under the age of five.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
2. <i>Protection</i> . Play areas shall be protected from any adjacent streets or parking lots with a fence or other barrier at least four feet in height.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
3. <i>Visibility</i> . Any dwelling unit abutting the open space containing the play area shall include at least one window located to overlook the open space area.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
4. <i>Facilities for Adults</i> . Benches or picnic tables shall be provided for adults who are supervising children.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Corresponding existing design guidelines and policies on parking location and access:

- Northern Waterfront General Plan Amendment Policy 10.6.v;
- Citywide Design Review Manual policies on auto access in 2.2.A Commercial Block, 2.2.B Workplace Commercial, 2.2.C Parking Structure, 2.2.E Stacked Flats, 2.2.F Multiplex, 2.2.G Rowhouse, and 2.2.H Courtyard Housing;
- Guide to Residential Design, New Construction, Garages.

Corresponding existing design guidelines on landscaping and use of setbacks:

- Citywide Design Review Manual policies on landscape and open space in 5.2 Setback Areas and 5.3 Plant Materials.

2. BUILDING MASS AND ARTICULATION

Principles

Provide façade articulation or significant architectural details in order to create visual interest.

Avoid buildings with a bulky or monolithic appearance.

To create articulation, building facades can be varied in depth through a pattern of offsets, recesses, or projections. Façade articulation elements should be in proportion to building mass. Create buildings that are well proportioned, elegant, cohesive, and harmonious with their surroundings.

Incorporate features that generate interest at the pedestrian level. Avoid blank walls and dull facades that create an uninviting pedestrian environment.

Utilize windows and other transparent openings to provide sufficient light for occupants and create a sense of interaction between residential uses and the public realm.

Standards—Building Mass and Articulation	Project Complies		
	Yes	No	N/A
<i>Projects must meet two or more of the following:</i>			
2A. Façade Articulation. All building facades that face or will be visible from a public street shall be articulated by including features that meet at least two of the following standards:			
1. At least 25% of the area of the façade is offset (through recesses or projections) at a depth of at least two feet from the remainder of the façade.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
2. For every 50 horizontal feet of wall, facades include at least one projection or recess at least four feet in depth, or two projections or recesses at least two feet in depth. If located on a building with two or more stories, the articulated elements must be greater than one story in height.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
3. For every 50 feet of horizontal building wall, there is a vertical feature such as a pilaster at least 12 inches in both width and depth and extending the full height of the building.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
4. Windows are recessed at least four inches from surrounding exterior wall surfaces, measured from window frame to finished exterior wall.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
5. The ground level of the building is distinguished from upper levels through a material such as stone, concrete masonry, or other material that is distinct from the remainder of the façade, along with a change in plane at least one inch in depth at the transition between the two materials.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Standards—Building Mass and Articulation	Project Complies		
	Yes	No	N/A
6. The top floor of the building is distinguished from lower levels by a change in façade materials, along with a change in plane at least one inch in depth at the transition between the two materials.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
7. The building includes a horizontal design feature such as a water table, belt course, or bellyband, applied to the transition between the ground floor and upper floors.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
8. Cornices or similar moldings and caps are provided at the top of building facades.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
2B. Limitation on Blank Walls.	<i>Projects must include one or more of the following three features:</i>		
1. Ground-Floor Features. Any wall (including the wall of a parking structure) that faces a public street, public sidewalk, public pedestrian walkway, or publicly accessible outdoor space shall include at least one of the following features on the ground floor. No wall may run in a continuous plane of more than 15 feet on the ground floor without at least one of the following features.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
a. A transparent window or door that provides views into building interiors, or into window displays at least five feet deep.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
b. Decorative features and artwork, including but not limited to decorative ironwork and grilles, decorative panels, mosaics, or relief sculptures.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
c. A permanent vertical trellis with climbing plants or plant materials.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
2. Minimum Transparency. At least 30 percent of the area of each street-facing facade must consist of windows or other transparent openings. This requirement applies to portions of buildings backed by residential uses. (For ground-floor transparency requirements for commercial portions of mixed-use development, see Section 5, Mixed-Use Development.)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Corresponding existing design guidelines and policies on building mass and articulation:

- *Alameda Point Town and Waterfront Precise Plan, guidelines on bulk, massing, and façade and entry design;*
- *Citywide Design Review Manual guidelines on building articulation in 2.2.A Commercial Block, 2.2.B Workplace Commercial, 2.2.E Stacked Flats, 2.2.F Multiplex, 2.2.G Rowhouse, 2.2.H Courtyard Housing, and 4.2.3 Building Articulation.*

3. BUILDING ORIENTATION AND ENTRIES

Principles

Orient buildings to face streets and open space in order to create a sense of interaction between residential uses and the public realm.

Include prominent building entries that contribute to visual interest and are welcoming and pedestrian friendly. Facilitate pedestrian access to buildings by providing direct connections to primary entrances.

Avoid visually unappealing “motel-style” balcony entrances.

Standards—Building Orientation and Entries	Project Complies		
	Yes	No	N/A
3A. Main Entry Orientation. Building entrances shall be oriented to face the street, according to the following standards.			
1. Entry Location for Different Types of Sites.			
a. If a project site has frontage on only one street, the main building entry shall face the street.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
b. If a project site fronts on two or more streets, the main building entry shall:	<i>Meet one of the following two:</i>		
i. Face the corner; or	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
ii. Face the primary street. ²	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. In courtyard-style developments in which residential buildings are located in the interior of a block, entries may face interior courtyards, common open space, walkways, and paseos. However, those buildings and units that are adjacent to or closest to a street shall have a main entry facing the street.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. In mixed-use buildings with ground-floor commercial space, the main entry to the commercial space must face a street. The entries to residential units are not required to face the street and instead may be located on a side or rear façade.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Qualifying Entries (Doors and Porches). In order to be considered to “face” a street, a main building entry shall consist of a door that either:	<i>Meet one of the following two:</i>		
a. Faces the street; or	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. Opens onto a porch with an entrance that faces the street. The porch shall meet the minimum area specified in 3B below.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Pedestrian Access. Direct pedestrian access shall be provided between the public sidewalk and the main building entry.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

² The primary street will be considered the street abutting the “front yard,” as defined in AMC Section 30-2. The other street shall be considered the secondary street. However, Park and Webster streets will always serve as primary streets, regardless of the location of the subject property’s front yard.

Standards—Building Orientation and Entries	Project Complies		
	Yes	No	N/A
1B. Entry Configuration, Area, and Cover. Building entries shall be configured according to one of the following options:	<i>Project must meet one of the following three:</i>		
1. A shared entry door (serving multiple units) located at the ground floor of the building that has a roofed projection or recess with a minimum depth of five feet and a minimum area of 60 square feet.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
2. Individual entry doors (serving individual ground-floor units) located at the ground floor of the building that have roofed projections or recesses with a minimum depth of at least five feet and a minimum area of 25 feet.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
3. Individual entry doors to individual upper-floor units only if such entrances are not located on street-facing facades or visible from public streets.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
1C. Exterior Access Limitations.			
1. Unenclosed stairways serving upper floors are not permitted on street-facing facades.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
2. Exterior access corridors (motel-style balconies) located above the ground floor and serving two or more units are not permitted on street-facing building elevations. They are permitted on interior side elevations but must be set back at least 15 feet from street-facing elevations.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Corresponding existing design guidelines and policies on building mass and articulation:

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- *Citywide Design Review Manual guidelines on building articulation in 2.2.A Commercial Block, 2.2.B Workplace Commercial, 2.2.E Stacked Flats, 2.2.F Multiplex, 2.2.G Rowhouse, 2.2.H Courtyard Housing, and 4.2.3 Building Articulation.*

2. ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN, DETAILS, AND MATERIALS

Principles

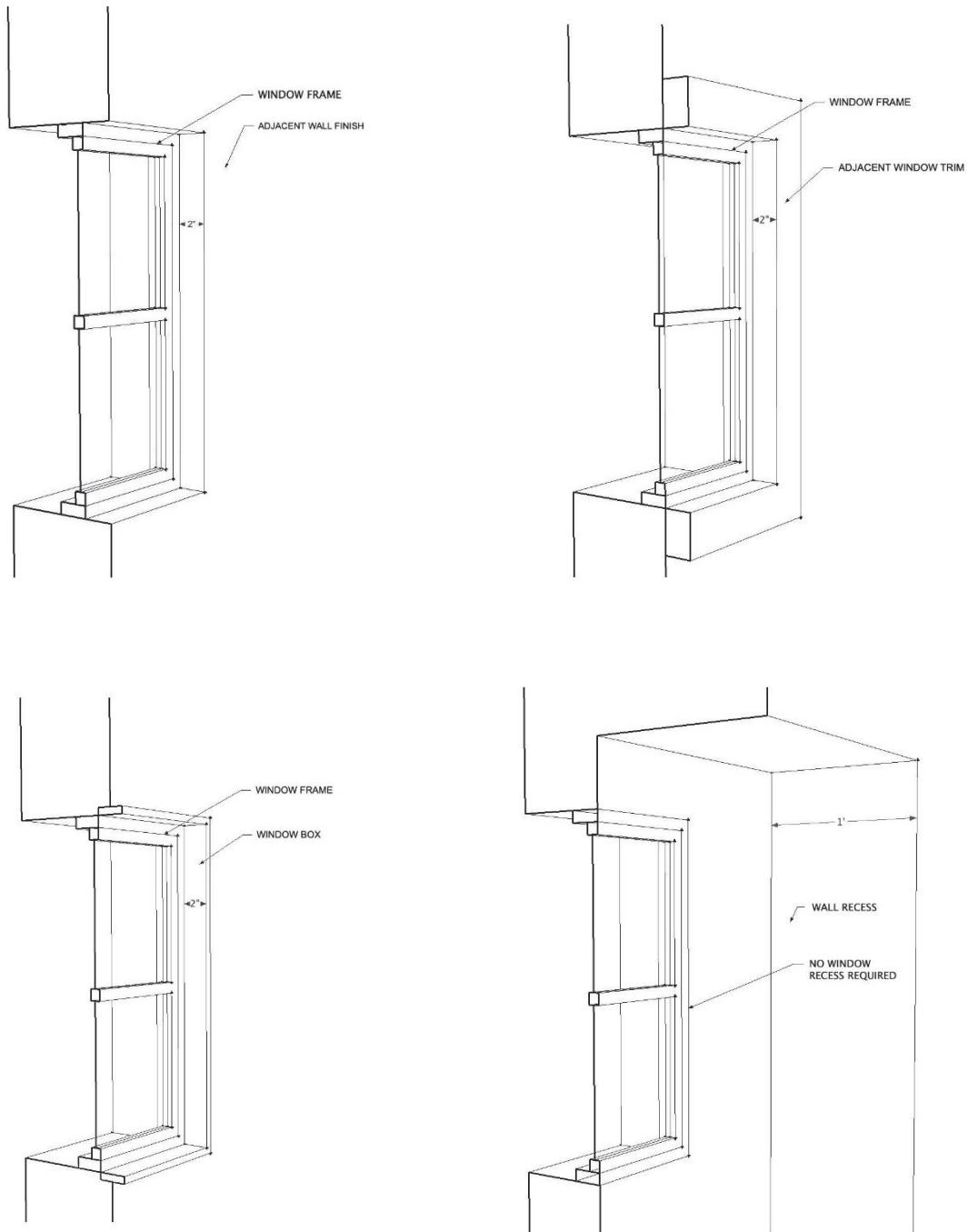
Incorporate architectural details in order to create visual interest and avoid flat or monolithic-looking facades.

Create shadow lines around windows.

Provide exterior materials that enhance architectural character and quality.

Minimize visual clutter by locating mechanical and electrical equipment away from public view, coordinating and integrating such equipment into the design of buildings, or screening it with materials that match building exteriors.

Standards—Architectural Design, Details, and Materials	Project Complies		
	Yes	No	N/A
2A. Equivalent Facade Treatment. Buildings shall carry the same theme on all street-facing elevations, as well as on the first 10 feet of non-street-facing elevations closest to the street. For the purpose of this standard, a theme includes primary (non-accent) materials and colors.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2B. Siding Materials.	<i>Checking "yes" for 1a – 1c indicates that prohibited material is not used.</i>		
1. Prohibited Materials. The following shall not be used as siding materials:			
a. Vinyl (plastic) siding.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
b. Aluminum siding.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
c. T1-11 wood siding.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
2. Specific Requirements for Certain Materials.			
a. <i>Exposed Wood.</i> If exposed wood (other than wood shingles) is used, it shall be painted, stained, or treated and maintained to prevent noticeable weathering.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
b. <i>Thin Brick Veneers.</i> Thin brick veneers, where used, shall be selected to give the appearance of full brick. Wrap-around pieces shall be used at window recesses and building corners.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. <i>Fiber Cement and Other Synthetic Siding.</i> Synthetic siding shall have smooth textures. Simulated wood grain textures shall not be used.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2C. Window Details.			
1. Window Recess. Windows must be recessed at least two inches from the surrounding wall, measured from the face of the finished exterior wall or trim to the window frame. Where trim is used to meet the recess requirement, it shall be at least two inches wide. This requirement applies on all sides of a window, not just on the top and bottom.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
a. <i>Exception.</i> Windows located in a section of wall that is recessed at least one foot from the remainder of the building façade need not be recessed from the wall in which they are located.			



Illustrations by Teresa Ruiz

Standards—Architectural Design, Details, and Materials	Project Complies		
	Yes	No	N/A
2. Divided Lites/Muntins. Divided-lite windows, where utilized, may consist of true/full divided lites or simulated divided lites, in accord with the following standards:			
a. Muntins or grids shall project at least three-eighths (3/8) of an inch from the exterior glass surface.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	✗
b. For simulated divided lites, spacers shall be used between panes.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	✗
c. Sandwich muntins, where muntin material is located between two panes of glass, but not on the exterior or interior of the window, are prohibited.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	✗
d. Roll-on or tape muntins are prohibited.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	✗
2D. Equipment Screening. All exterior mechanical and electrical equipment shall be screened or incorporated into the design of buildings according to the following standards.			
1. Ground-floor mechanical equipment shall be screened with landscaping or with screening materials that match the exterior materials, textures, and colors of the building(s) on the site.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	✗
2. Window-mounted air conditioning units shall not be visible on the primary building façade.	✗	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Roof-mounted equipment shall be:	<i>Meet one or more of the following:</i>		
a. Located so as not to be visible from the pedestrian level of any adjacent street, which shall mean not visible from the sidewalk level of the opposite side of any street fronting the site;	✗	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. Located at least five feet from the edge of any roof of a street-facing building façade; or	✗	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. Screened with a device that matches the color and texture of the building exterior.	✗	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Corresponding existing design guidelines and policies on building mass and articulation:

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- Citywide Design Review Manual guidelines on building articulation in 2.2.A Commercial Block, 2.2.B Workplace Commercial, 2.2.E Stacked Flats, 2.2.F Multiplex, 2.2.G Rowhouse, 2.2.H Courtyard Housing, and 4.2.3 Building Articulation.
- Citywide Design Review Manual 4.2.12, Mechanical Equipment and Screening.