

Objective Design Review Standards for Multi-family Residential Development

APPLICABILITY

The Objective Design Review Standards apply to buildings that contain three or more residential units. They also apply to groups of three or more attached townhomes (row houses), regardless of whether multiple townhomes occupy the same lot or each townhome is located on a separate lot. The standards also apply to mixed-use buildings that include multi-family residential units.

All development must comply with the Zoning Ordinance (Alameda Municipal Code Chapter XXX, Development Regulations). The Objective Design Review Standards supplement the development standards in the Zoning Ordinance and further the goals, policies, and actions of the General Plan, which encourage high quality design and the quality of life that an enhanced built environment fosters.

The Objective Design Review Standards serve as minimum requirements for multi-family residential development, as well as for mixed-use development that contains residential uses. The standards will be mandatory for any qualifying residential project for which a streamlined approval process is requested pursuant to state law provisions that reference objective design standards. For any developer of a qualifying project seeking exceptions to these standards, or any of the City's applicable design guidelines, the City's existing discretionary design review process is available.

STANDARDS

1. STREET CONNECTIVITY.

- A. **Internal Connectivity.** New streets must form a continuous vehicular and pedestrian network within the development.
- B. **External Connectivity.** Streets within any proposed subdivision or development site shall be aligned with existing and planned streets in adjacent neighborhoods so as to create a continuous street pattern. All streets, alleys, and pedestrian pathways in any subdivision or development site shall connect to other streets and to existing and planned streets outside the proposed subdivision or development.
- C. **Cul-de-sacs and Dead-end Streets.** Any cul-de-sac or other dead-end street longer than 300 feet shall be connected to other streets by a pedestrian path.
- D. **No Gates/Barriers.** Streets into multi-family residential developments shall not be gated or closed off to the public.

- E. Block Length/Mid-Block Pedestrian Connections.** Blocks shall not exceed 600 feet in length, measured from street centerline to street centerline, unless mid-block pedestrian connections are provided at intervals of no more than 350 feet apart. Such pedestrian connections shall include a walkway at least 10 feet wide.

Corresponding existing design guidelines and policies on street connectivity:

- Alameda General Plan Transportation Element policies 4.1.1.j and 4.1.1.k;
- Alameda Point Town and Waterfront Precise Plan block design guidelines;
- Northern Waterfront General Plan Amendment Policy 10.6.a;
- NAS Alameda Community Reuse Plan Planning Guideline One.

2. PARKING LOCATION AND ACCESS.

- A. Parking Location.** Off-street parking serving multi-family residential development shall be located in one of the following facilities:
- Surface parking lots, garages, or carports located to the side or rear of residential buildings in relation to adjacent streets. (If a site fronts on two or more streets, the standard shall apply on the street with the highest classification in the General Plan. If a site fronts on two public streets of equal classification, the project applicant may determine on which frontage to meet the standard.)
 - Garages with side entries, in which the face of the garage door is generally perpendicular to the fronting street.
 - For row houses, individual garage doors that face the street but do not occupy more than 50 percent of the width of any street-facing building façade. Where this option is used, garages shall be set back at least five feet behind the front façade of the dwelling or the front of a covered porch.
 - Parking structures in which parking is located underground or the exterior facades are treated according to the standards of Section 4B, Façade Articulation, of these Objective Design Review Standards.
- B. Maximum Parking Frontage.** The total width of parking areas visible from the street, including open parking, carports, and garages, but excluding underground parking and parking located behind buildings, may not exceed 30 percent of any street frontage. This limitation does not to frontages along alleys.
- C. Access to Parking.** Curb cuts and driveways providing access to parking facilities shall be from an alley or secondary street, rather than from the principal street, wherever such alley or secondary access is feasible.

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.

3. CHILDREN'S PLAY AREAS.

- A. Required Play Areas.** Developments that include 25 or more dwelling units and provide common open space within the development shall include at least one play area for children. Such play area shall:
- Have a minimum dimension of 15 feet in any direction and a minimum area of 600 square feet.
 - Contain play equipment, including equipment designed for children age five years and younger.
 - Be visible from multiple dwelling units within the project.
 - Be protected from any adjacent streets or parking lots with a fence or other barrier at least four feet in height.
- B. Exemptions.** The play area requirement shall not apply to any development that is:
- Age-restricted to senior citizens; or
 - Located within 300 feet of a public park.

4. BUILDING MASS AND ARTICULATION.

- A. Maximum Building Length.** Buildings shall not exceed a length of 200 feet on any side.
- B. Façade Articulation.** All building facades that face or will be visible from a public street shall include one or more of the following treatments.
- Variety in Wall Plane.** Exterior building walls vary in depth through a pattern of offsets, recesses, or projections.
 - Variety in Height or Roof Forms.** Building height is varied so that a portion of the building has a noticeable change in height; or roof forms are varied over different portions of the building through changes in pitch, plane, and orientation.
 - Façade Design Incorporates Architectural Detail.** The building façades incorporate details such as window trim, window recesses, cornices, belt courses, and other design elements.

- C. Vertical Articulation for Tall Buildings.** In buildings of four or more stories, upper and lower stories shall be distinguished by incorporating one or more of the following features. These features may be applied to the transitions between any floors, except where otherwise specified.
- i. A change in façade materials, along with a change in plane at least one inch in depth at the transition between the two materials.
 - ii. A horizontal design feature such as a water table, belt course, or bellyband.
 - iii. A base treatment at the ground floor consisting of a material such as stone, concrete masonry, or other material distinct from the remainder of the façade and projecting at least one inch from the wall surface of the remainder of the building.
 - iv. Setting back the top floor(s) of the building at least five feet from the remainder of the façade.
- D. Façade Transparency/Limitation on Blank Walls.** At least 20 percent of the area of each street-facing facade of a residential building (50 percent if located within the planning area of the Alameda Point Town and Waterfront Precise Plan) must consist of windows, doors, or other openings. No wall that faces a sidewalk, pedestrian walkway, or publicly accessible outdoor space shall run in a continuous plane of more than 30 feet without a window, door, or other opening.

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, and 2.2.H Courtyard Housing.*

5. BUILDING ORIENTATION AND ENTRIES.

A. Main Entry Orientation.

- i. A primary building entry shall face the street or be oriented to within 45 degrees of parallel to the street. Direct pedestrian access shall be provided between the public sidewalk and such primary building entry. Where a site is located on two or more public streets, the primary building entry shall be oriented toward the street with the highest classification in the General Plan. If a site fronts two public streets of equal classification, the project applicant may determine on which frontage to meet the standard.

- ii. In courtyard-style developments in which residential buildings are located in the interior of a block, entries may face interior courtyards, walkways, and paseos. However, those buildings or portions of buildings adjacent to the public street shall include a primary entry facing the street, with direct pedestrian access between the entry and the public sidewalk.
- B. Dwelling Unit Access/Configuration of Entries to Units.** Exterior entrances to residential units shall be in the form of individual or shared entrances at the ground floor of the building. Exterior entrances to individual units on upper floors are also permitted; however, in order to avoid a “motel-style” appearance, no exterior access corridor located above the ground floor and visible from the street may provide access to four or more units.
- C. Entry Area and Cover.** Exterior entrances serving multiple units must have a roofed projection or recess with a minimum depth of five feet and a minimum area of 60 square feet. Exterior entrances serving a single unit must have a roofed projection or recess with a minimum depth of at least five feet and a minimum area of 25 feet.

Corresponding existing design guidelines and policies on building orientation and entries:

- *Northern Waterfront General Plan Amendment Policy 10.8.d;*
- *Citywide Design Review Manual guidelines in 2.2.E Stacked Flats, 2.2.F Multiplex, 2.2.G Rowhouse, 2.2.H Courtyard Housing, 3.2.C Formal Entry, 3.2.D Stoop, and 3.2.E Frontyard;*
- *Guide to Residential Design, New Construction, Site Plan Considerations.*

6. WINDOW DETAILS.

- A. Window Recess.** Windows must be recessed at least three-quarters (3/4) of an inch from the surrounding wall, measured from the exterior wall to the glass surface. Window surrounds shall not count toward the recess dimension.
- B. Divided Lites/Mullions.** Divided-lite windows, where utilized, may consist of true/full divided lites or simulated divided lites, in accord with the following standards:
 - i. Muntins or grids shall project at least three-eighths (3/8) of an inch from the glass surface.
 - ii. Muntins or grids shall be used on both the exterior and interior of the glass.
 - iii. For simulated divided lites, spacers shall be used between panes.

- iv. Sandwich muntins, where muntin material is located between two panes of glass, but not on the exterior or interior of the window, are prohibited.
- v. Roll-on or tape muntins are prohibited.

Corresponding existing design guidelines and policies on window details:

- *Guide to Residential Design, Section III, Building Materials and Detailing;*
- *Citywide Design Review Manual 4.2.6, Windows.*

7. SCREENING.

- A. Equipment Screening.** All exterior mechanical and electrical equipment shall be screened or incorporated into the design of buildings so as not to be visible from the street. Equipment to be screened includes, but is not limited to, all roof-mounted equipment, air conditioners, heaters, utility meters, cable equipment, telephone entry boxes, backflow preventions, irrigation control valves, electrical transformers, pull boxes, and all ducting for air conditioning, heating, and blower systems. Screening materials shall be consistent with the exterior colors and materials of the building.

Corresponding existing design guidelines and policies on screening:

- *Citywide Design Review Manual 4.2.12, Mechanical Equipment and Screening.*

8. ADDITIONAL STANDARDS FOR MIXED-USE DEVELOPMENT. Mixed-use buildings that include residential uses shall meet the Objective Design Review Standards for multi-family dwellings, as well as the following additional standards.

- A. Ground-floor Height.** Any building with commercial uses on the ground floor shall have a ground-floor height of least 14 feet, measured from floor to ceiling.
- B. Entry Area and Cover.** Pedestrian entries to ground-floor and upper-floor commercial uses shall meet at least one of the following standards:
- i. The entrance is recessed in a vestibule three to five feet in depth.
 - ii. The entrance is covered by an awning, portico or other architectural projection that provides weather protection.
- C. Ground-floor Transparency.** For ground-floor commercial uses, exterior walls facing a street shall include windows, doors, or other openings for at least 75 percent of the building wall area located between two and eight feet above the level of the sidewalk. For office, hotel, and convertible ground-floor uses, transparency shall be at least 50 percent. No wall may run in a continuous plane for more than 10 feet without an opening. Openings fulfilling this requirement shall have transparent glazing and provide views into work areas, sales areas, lobbies, or similar active spaces, or into window displays at least five feet deep.

- D. Storefront Base Treatment.** Storefront windows shall be supported by one of the following types of bases:
- i. Bulkheads at least 18 inches in height, measured from the adjacent sidewalk.
 - ii. A base treatment (bottom frame element) at least four inches in height.
- E. Window Recess.** Windows on commercial portions of a building shall be recessed from building walls according to the following standards:
- i. Windows must be recessed at least two and one-half (2½) inches, measured from the exterior wall to the glass surface. Window trim and surrounds shall not count toward this recess dimension.
 - ii. For mixed-use buildings with residential uses, where at least 50 percent of the residential units will be affordable units, windows must be recessed at least three-quarters (¾) of an inch, measured from the exterior wall to the glass surface.

Corresponding existing design policies and guidelines:

- *Citywide Design Review Manual 2.2.A, Commercial Block, 2.2.B, Workplace Commercial, 3.2.A Storefront, 3.2.C Formal Entry, and 4.2.6 Windows;*
- *Alameda Point Town and Waterfront Precise Plan, Building Design, Fenestration and Transparency.*