



CITY *of* CALABASAS

PLANNING COMMISSION AGENDA REPORT

MAY 2, 2024

DATE: MAY 2, 2024

TO: PLANNING COMMISSIONERS

**FROM: MICHAEL KLEIN, AICP, COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR
TOM BARTLETT, AICP, CITY PLANNER**

**SUBJECT: DISCUSSION OF A PREFERRED APPROACH FOR DEVELOPING
OBJECTIVE DESIGN STANDARDS FOR MULTI-FAMILY RESIDENTIAL
AND MIXED-USE DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS, WITH A
CORRESPONDING RECOMMENDATION TO THE CITY COUNCIL.**

MEETING DATE: MAY 2, 2024

SUMMARY RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends that the Commission discuss objective design standards, and provide to the City Council a recommendation for preparing objective design standards for use in reviewing proposed multi-family residential and mixed-use development projects.

BACKGROUND:

At the Commission's meeting on April 18, 2024, the Commission discussed options for preparing and making available to the public pre-approved plans for accessory

dwelling units, and the Commission provided direction to staff for carrying the effort forward to the City Council. The subsequent discussion involved objective design standards for use in reviewing proposed residential development projects. Following an initial discussion, the Commission asked Staff to return with categories of objective standards for consideration.

DISCUSSION:

Developing Objective Design Standards

Objective design standards are defined under State law as “standards that involve no personal or subjective judgement by a public official and are uniformly verifiable by reference to an external and uniform benchmark or criterion available and knowable by both the development applicant or proponent and the public official prior to submittal” (California Government Code, Section 65913.4).

At the previous Commission meeting Staff provided the Commission with a list of eight local jurisdictions that have adopted objective design standards. The list is replicated below.

OBJECTIVE DESIGN STANDARDS FOR OTHER LOCAL JURISDICTIONS

Jurisdiction	Has Program?	Complexity	Notes	Links to Documents
Agoura Hills	Y	Very specific	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For multifamily dwellings only Allows streamlined review for qualifying projects Helpful colored elevations & figures are included in the municipal code 	Municipal Code Presentation
LA County	Y		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For multifamily and single-family (p. 19) Not very user-friendly Not enough visuals 	Draft Ordinance
City of San Mateo	Y	Very specific	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Great visuals, very detailed For multifamily/mixed use projects Allows streamlined review for projects up to 25 units 	Website Info Design Standards

Hemet	Y	Not very complex	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visuals/diagrams contained within municipal code; not as separate design document • Standards are clear and simplistic 	Municipal code
Santa Cruz County	Y	Mildly complex	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Described as objective but not necessarily objective/related to streamlined projects • Guidelines for some projects, requirements for others • Great visuals 	Design Guidelines
Santa Cruz City	Y	Not very complex	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All objective standards anywhere within municipal code are compiled into one list with references to sections; not very helpful or user friendly • Multi-family/mixed use standards more user friendly, but not very complex with minimal visuals 	News article List of all objective standards Multifamily/mixed-use standards
Los Gatos	Y	Exceptionally detailed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wide variety of standards are presented in a well-articulated and illustrated fashion. 	Web link - Los Gatos
Arcadia	Y		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Objective design standards within ordinance very specific, but not very detailed or user-friendly • Design guidelines good visual document, but not necessarily objective 	Website Info Design Guidelines

Of the listed examples of objective design standards from other communities, the Commission identified the best potential templates for consideration by Calabasas, to include those developed by the City of San Mateo, the City of Agoura Hills, and the Town of Los Gatos.

From a review of these examples, and based on the initial input from the Planning Commission, the following categories, or groupings, of objectives are offered for discussion and consideration by the Commission.

Building Mass and Scale

Standards regarding building mass and scale could include:

- Height limits
- Setback limits
- Site coverage limits
- Square-footage limits and Floor Area Ratio (FAR)

Building Articulation and Ornamentation

Standards regarding building articulation and ornamentation might include:

- Specifications and allowances for arcades
- Varied setback requirements
- Stepping back of upper floors
- Allowances for pop-outs, balconies, and other architectural features
- Varied heights
- Rustication.

Roof Types and Styles

Standards regarding roofs might include:

- Allowable roof types (e.g., Dutch Gambrel; hipped; flat; straight gable; etc.
- Specified range(s) of allowable roof pitch.
- Allowances for and/or specified parameters for parapets, dormers, vents, and other protrusions and exceptions.
- Roof materials

Windows, Doors, and Other Openings

Standards applicable to windows and doors could address:

- Number (such as a minimum number per elevation)
- Minimum and/or maximum allowable sizes; proportional size(s) requirements
- Recessed openings
- Covered entries and awnings

Colors and Materials

Standards applicable to colors and materials could include:

- Percentage of different (allowable) materials
- Prohibited materials
- Minimum and maximum number (range)
of colors and materials
- Transitions between different materials and colors

Providing a Menu of Measurable Options

For certain aspects of design regulation, a menu of options can facilitate good project design by allowing the project architect to enjoy the freedom to exert greater control over the design, while also satisfying the City's objectives and requirements.

Here is how a menu approach works, using building mass and articulation as the example. With the underlying purpose of using articulation as means of improving visual interest and diminishment of perceived mass, a number of building mass attenuation and articulation standards could be listed, from which the applicant/architect would select the specific standards to which the project will conform. The applicant/architect would be required to select and apply at least a specified minimum number of the listed measurable standards, but could elect to apply and meet more than the minimum. A point system could be applied as well.

Example of a Menu of Standards for Building Mass Attenuation

1. Required Standards
 - a. FAR shall not exceed 0.5 (50%) of the net lot area;
 - b. Site coverage shall not exceed 30% of the net lot area;
 - c. Overall building height shall not exceed 35 feet.
2. Elective Standards -- Applicant must select and incorporate into the building design at least four of the following:
 - a. Building façade step-back
 - b. Vertical intrusions
 - c. Recessed openings
 - d. Horizontal banding

- e. Arcades
- f. Roof overhangs and extended eaves
- g. Pop-outs and balconies

REQUESTED ACTION:

That the Planning Commission discuss options for preparing objective design standards for multi-family residential and mixed-use development projects, and provide a recommendation to the City Council.

ATTACHMENTS:

- Exhibit A: Objective Development Standards for Town of Los Gatos
- Exhibit B: Objective Development Standards for City of San Mateo
- Exhibit C: Objective Development Standards for City of Agoura Hills