



City of San Mateo

Objective Design Standards for Multi-Family Projects Community Workshop #1

Questions and Answers

The following is a compilation of questions received from the virtual “Objective Design Standards for Multi-Family Projects” community workshop, held on June 1, 2021 as a Zoom meeting. These questions were asked by participants during the “Questions + Answer Session” following the main presentation. Several questions were submitted via chat during this session as well. All questions and responses are listed below:

From Questions and Answer session:

1. **What differentiates “large projects” and what qualifies this?**
 - This will be defined through the objective design standards process. State law only addresses “multi-family” through the law.
2. **Will there be objective design standards for large projects?**
 - There will be objective design standards for anything that is not a single-family home.
3. **How detailed can objective design standards be in regulating design?**
 - It varies. The level of detail a city or county deemed appropriate for the standards to apply depends on how they want to implement them and regulate design. Some jurisdictions may require detailed standards while others may opt to keep them more flexible.
 - Another important detail to consider is how these standards are applied. Per State law, standards shall be written to where two reasonable people must agree to what a standard says.
4. **Will this process cover standards for projects that are five stories or greater?**
 - Yes. Objective standards will be created for all multi-family residential and mixed-use type develop with residential uses proposed.
5. **Is the discretionary review track still a choice for projects?**
 - Yes. Anything larger than a single-family project that does not comply with the objective design standards may opt to follow a discretionary track.

From chat:

1. **What is the definition of mid-rises (heights) in San Mateo?**
 - In the context of this discussion, mid-rise projects are loosely defined as apartments or mixed-use developments that are four (4) or more floors. The upper threshold of the range typically describing mid-rise projects is 12 stories, though this is not applicable to the context of San Mateo as height limits currently prevent developments of this height.
2. **How is design quality and architectural compatibility maintained in the Downtown Historic District if qualitative standards do not apply?**
 - a. Objective Standards will not apply to anything within planning areas that provide objective standards through their provisions (e.g., a specific plan).
3. **What does the State law allow for addressing neighborhood concerns since council and planning commission are not included in the approval?**
 - a. Concerns could include adequate parking, adequate composting/recycling processes, construction too large for a lot and thus too close to a neighbors' homes.

- The objective design standards aim to create and implement standards that address these a variety of contexts. Part of this process is to seek out what some concerns are in order to tailor the objective design standards in a way that leads to development that is compatible with the community.
- Objective design standards are “on top” of other existing standards, including parking and floor area ratio (FAR), which are in the City’s zoning code. This project does not aim to modify these existing standards.

