



MULTI-FAMILY AND
MIXED-USE RESIDENTIAL
OBJECTIVE DESIGN STANDARDS
PLANNING COMMISSION STUDY SESSION

AUGUST 8, 2023

PROJECT TEAM

CITY OF SAN MATEO – COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPT.

Manira Sandhir, Planning Manager and Zoning Administrator

Laura Richstone, Associate Planner

Wendy Lao, Associate Planner

MIG

Laura Stetson, Principal

Christine Scott Thomson, Senior Planner and Designer



AGENDA

1. PROJECT OVERVIEW AND PURPOSE OF OBJECTIVE DESIGN STANDARDS (ODS)
2. PROGRESS DRAFT ODS
3. QUESTIONS FOR THE PLANNING COMMISSION
4. SCHEDULE

THE PROCESS

PHASE I DISCOVERY

Research Best Practices

Analyze Existing Guidelines and Specific Plans

Focus Group Meetings

Planning Commission Study Session

Spring 2020 –
Summer 2021

PHASE II PUBLIC INSIGHTS

Define ODS Approach for San Mateo

Residents' Input

Development Community Input

Summer 2021 –
Summer 2022

PHASE III PUBLIC REVIEW - Draft Standards

Draft Objective Design Standards

Draft Graphics/Exhibits

Planning Commission Study Session

Summer 2022 –
Summer 2023

PHASE IV ADOPTION

Final Revisions

Planning Commission Hearings

City Council Hearings

Summer - Fall 2023

THE PROCESS



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

1. Does building wall variation result in a building feeling appearing less massive? What is the right amount? Can there be too much?

2. What is the best way for the roof form to reduce the apparent massing? What forms are most effective?

3. What other techniques can reduce massing? Are colors/materials effective? Other?

Use setbacks to reduce massing in the street wall of projects.

Incorporate roof/ roof garden/ community gardens on roofs.

Use the Duplex Design Guidelines as a guide.

Need setbacks in Downtown area. Use other cities that have done this well as examples.

For roof areas of setbacks would like to utilize that space for balconies/patios/open space.

Some architectural design elements are good use of setbacks, but avoid that.

More allowance for flexibility in architectural styles.

Environmental aspects of construction should be considered.

Don't like big box feel of new developments.

wall offsets break up massing.

Want standards that address how building aesthetics relate to other surrounding buildings. For example, we have art deco buildings downtown that surrounded by "modern" design.

Would like to see projects that can connect with existing neighborhoods - particularly with windows - right now there is a lot of gazing in contemporary architectural developments.

Mixed-use buildings in Downtown are getting a push to 5-story buildings, concerned about massing, losing the sun and increased shading because of larger buildings.

Upper story setbacks that force adjacent low-rise residential buildings can be problematic, adjacent residents may feel they are being observed from above and losing privacy.

Want bolder, braver design (especially in Downtown). San Mateo should be a world class city.

How can massing breaks be applied to duplexes and fourplexes? Can they be simplified to address affordability?

Incorporate traditional neighborhood elements into new developments.

- Community/Developer Workshop Series #1
- Planning Commission Study Session #1
- Community/Developer Workshop Series #2
- Draft ODS published for public review
- Written public comments
- Planning Commission Study Session #2

- Summer 2021
- Summer 2021
- Spring 2023
- July 2023
- 4 comment letters
- August 2023



PROJECT OVERVIEW

OBJECTIVES + OUTCOMES



OBJECTIVES + OUTCOMES

- Create and adopt new standards to regulate the **design** of multi-family residential and mixed-use residential development projects in San Mateo
- Meet criteria required by State law
- Implement Housing Element policy
- Listen to and learn from the community
- Confirm priorities to guide superior multi-family residential design in San Mateo





WHAT ARE OBJECTIVE DESIGN STANDARDS?

- Why is the city creating ODS?
- What types of projects require ODS?
- Where do ODS apply?

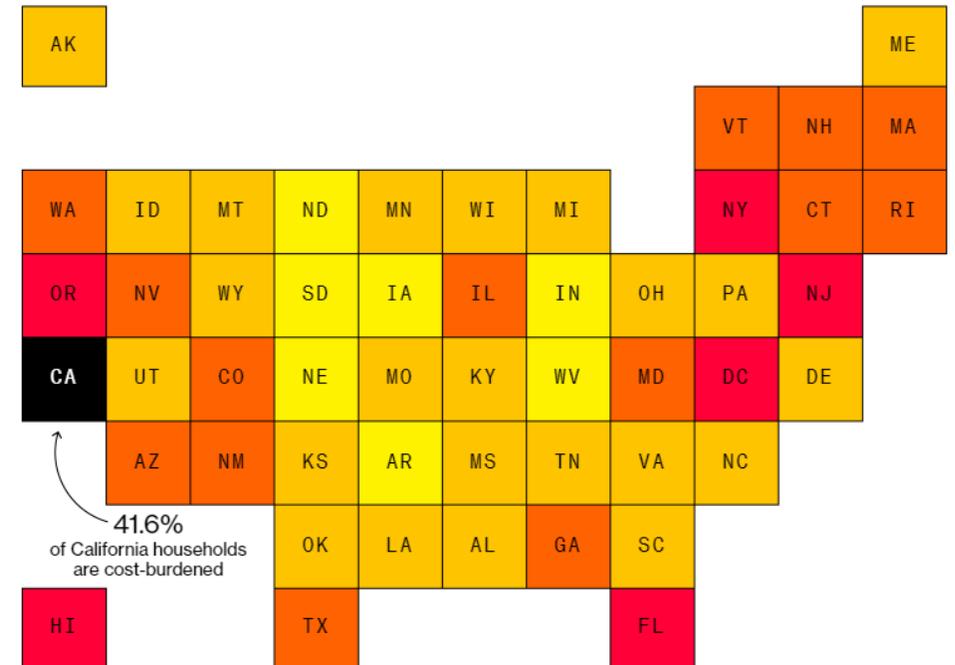
WHY DO WE HAVE OBJECTIVE DESIGN STANDARDS?

- Address supply shortage of affordable and rental units
- Remove hurdles created by the discretionary process to streamline development of multi-family units
- Address recent State laws
 - HAA: Housing Accountability Act
 - SB 35: Streamlined Approval Process
 - SB 330: Housing Crisis Act of 2019
 - AB 2011 and SB 6 - Residential Uses in Commercial Zones
 - Housing Element programs

Cost Burdened

For both owners and renters, California has the highest share of households spending more than 30% of their income on housing

Percentage of cost-burdened households:



Source: Harvard Joint Center for Housing Studies

CITY POLICY FOUNDATION

- Strive San Mateo: General Plan 2040 Update: <https://strivesanmateo.org>
- Housing Element Programs/Actions

Program Measure: Adopt Objective Design Standards to expedite production of housing.

Implementation Action: Adopt Objective Design Standards for multi-family residential projects and mixed-use projects with a residential component.



Housing Element of the General Plan 2023-2031

Adopted January 24, 2023



WHAT DEVELOPMENTS QUALIFY?

All Multi-Family residential and Mixed-Use projects, including:



Two Houses on
One Lot (e.g.,
SB9)



Duplexes
+
Triplexes



Townhouses
+
Rowhouses



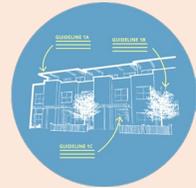
Mid-Rise and
High-Rise
Apartments +
Condominiums



Mixed-Use
Developments
with 2/3
Residential
Component

HOW DO WE CREATE OBJECTIVE DESIGN STANDARDS AND GET THEM RIGHT?

Assess existing applicable standards



Specific Plans

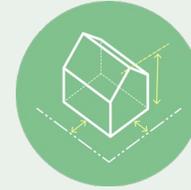


Zoning Ordinance



Multi-Family and MU Objective Design Standards

Create objective standards from subjective Design Guidelines



Multifamily Design Guidelines



- Apply community input
- Review best practices
- Gain insights from developers and architects

HOW WILL THE OBJECTIVE DESIGN STANDARDS BE IMPLEMENTED?

TABLE OF CONTENTS

01. ORGANIZATION

02. PURPOSE AND APPLICABILITY

- 2.1 Purpose
- 2.2 Applicability
- 2.3 Types of Buildings Regulated

03. SITE PLANNING

- 3.1 Building Siting, Orientation, and Frontage Features
- 3.2 Pedestrian Access and Accommodations
- 3.3 Parking, Access, and Driveways

04. BUILDING DESIGN AND ARCHITECTURE

- 4.1 Massing and Articulation
- 4.2 Ground Floor Requirements
- 4.3 Additional Standards for Mixed-use Buildings
- 4.4 Transitions and Screening
- 4.5 Roof Form
- 4.6 Windows, Doors, Entry Design, and Security
- 4.7 Materials and Colors
- 4.8 Additions to Existing Structures

05. LANDSCAPING, OPEN SPACE, AND EXTERIOR LIGHTING

- 5.1 Landscaping and Open Space
- 5.2 Exterior Lighting

06. OTHER SITE FEATURES

- 6.1 Accessory Structures and Enclosures
- 6.2 Utilities and Mechanical Equipment
- 6.3 Required Screening

07. SPECIFIC PLAN AREA STANDARDS

- 7.1 Mid and South El Camino Real
- 7.2 El Camino Real Master Plan Area
- 7.3. Downtown Retail Core and Historic District
- 7.4 Vision of the Gateway
- 7.5 San Mateo Rail Corridor Transit Oriented Development Plan Area
- 7.6 Hillsdale Station Area
- 7.7 Mariner's Island Specific Plan Area

08. DEFINITIONS

02

PURPOSE AND APPLICABILITY

2.1 PURPOSE

These Objective Design Standards (ODS) are established to:

- i. Streamline the review of qualifying multi-family and mixed-use development projects to address housing needs of all income levels;
- ii. Ensure new development fits contextually into surrounding neighborhoods and districts by incorporating quality design in architectural styles, building massing, detailing, articulation, and materials/colors that contribute established character; and
- iii. Ensure that pedestrians and pedestrian movement are considered foremost in the massing, placement, and design of new development.

2.2 APPLICABILITY

- i. The ODS set forth in this document apply to new multi-family residential development, residential mixed-use development, and additions to multi-family and mixed-use development pursuant to any provision of state law which references objective design standards, including but not limited to Government Code Section 65589.5 (Housing Accountability Act) and Section 65913.4, as may be amended from time to time.
- ii. These ODS apply to private development projects on private property. The ODS may work in conjunction with adopted City of San Mateo documents that regulate use of and required improvements to public property abutting a development site.
- iii. These ODS are additive to the requirements of the zoning district in which a development site is located,

provisions of this document and Title 27, the more restrictive provisions shall apply.

- iv. In the event of any contradiction in this document between citywide standards and standards applicable to a specific plan area, the specific plan area standards shall apply. Also with regard to specific plans, in the event of any contradiction between the standards contained in this document and provisions in a particular specific plan, the standards in this document shall apply.

2.3 TYPES OF BUILDINGS REGULATED

- i. These standards establish regulations for three general building types: low-rise, mid-rise, and high-rise buildings. As used in these regulations:
- ii. Low-rise shall mean buildings up to three (3) stories but no more than thirty-five (35) feet in height.
- iii. Mid-rise shall mean buildings between four (4) and seven (7) stories but not more than ninety (90) feet in height.
- iv. High-rise shall mean buildings eight (8) or more stories or more than ninety (90) feet in height.
- v. Where these regulations do not state which particular standards apply to a particular building type, the standards shall apply to all building types. In other instances, the regulations may indicate that additional standards apply to mid-rise and high-rise buildings.

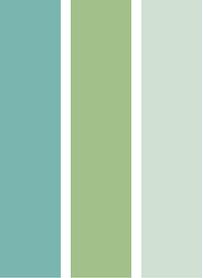




PROGRESS DRAFT

SCOPE OF ODS + PRIORITY STANDARDS





TOPICS ADDRESSED

1. Site Planning
2. Building Design + Architecture
3. Landscaping, Open Space, Exterior Lighting
4. Other Site Features
5. Additional Standards for Specific Plan Areas

TOPICS ADDRESSED

Site Planning

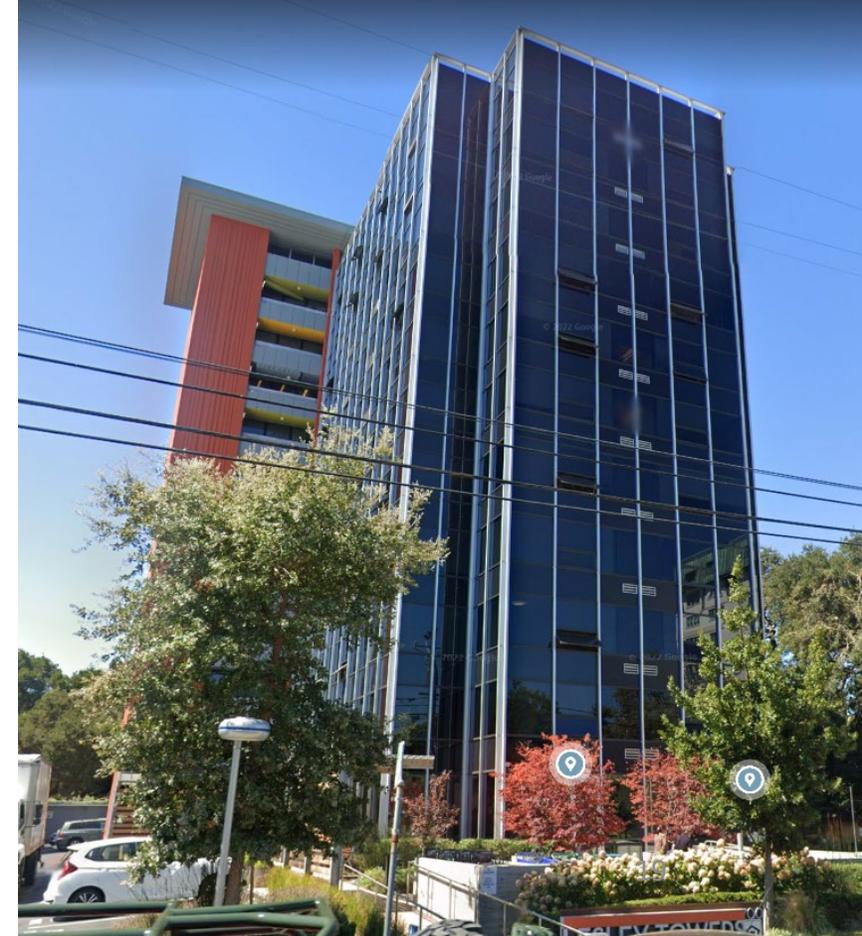
- Building siting, orientation, frontage
- Pedestrian access and accommodations
- Parking, access, driveways



TOPICS ADDRESSED

Building Design + Architecture

- Massing and articulation
- Transitions and screening
- Roof form
- Windows, doors, entry design, security
- Materials and colors
- Additions to existing buildings



*City of San Mateo;
internet image*

TOPICS ADDRESSED

Landscaping, Open Space, Exterior Lighting

- Landscaping and open space
- Open space requirements
- Exterior lighting



TOPICS ADDRESSED

Other Site Features

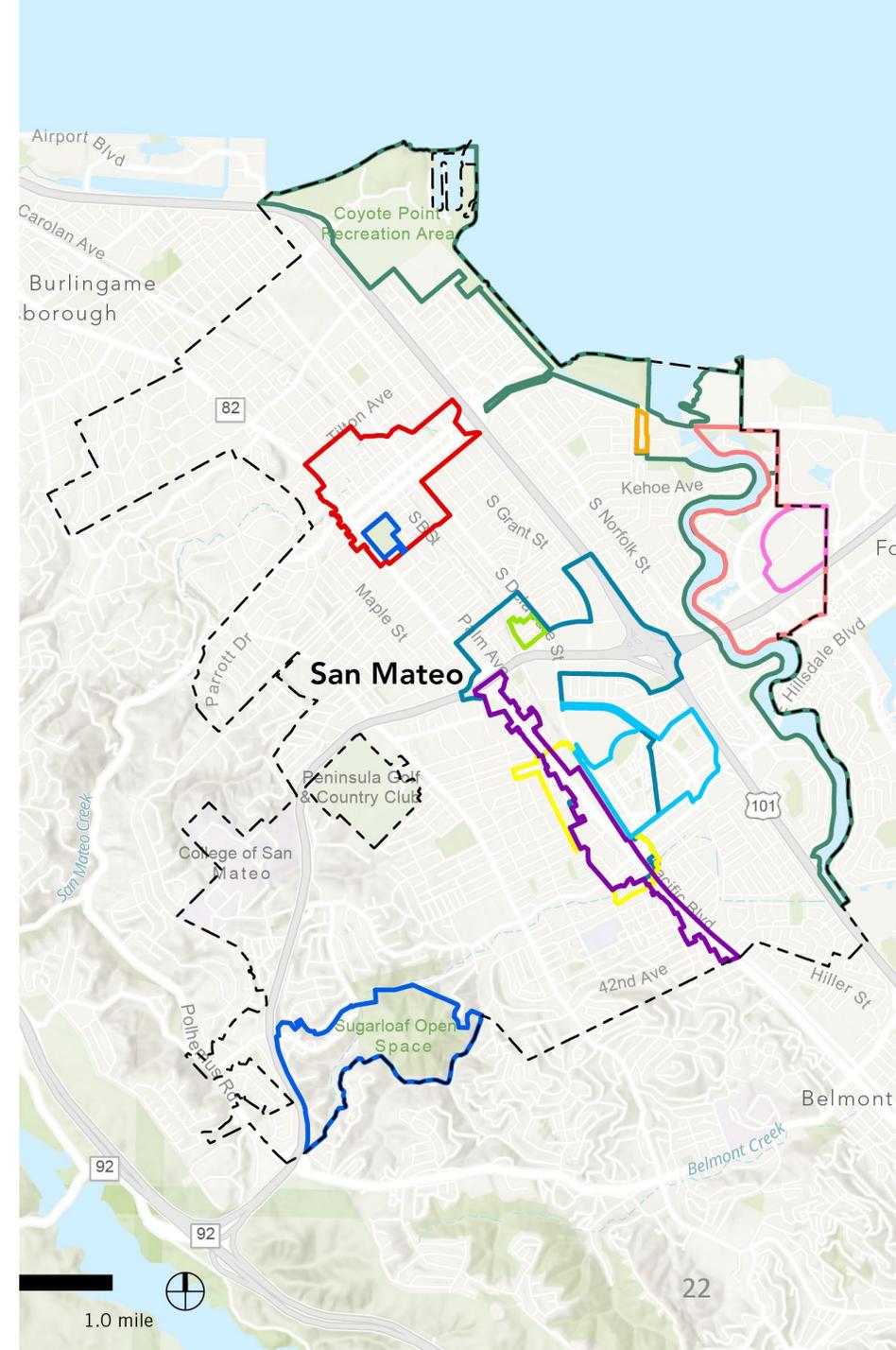
- Accessory structures and enclosures
- Utilities and mechanical equipment



TOPICS ADDRESSED

Objective Standards for Specific Plan Areas

- Mid and South El Camino Real
- El Camino Real Master Plan Area
- Downtown Retail Core and Historic District
- Vision of the Gateway
- San Mateo Rail Corridor Transit Oriented Development Plan Area (inc., Station Park Green)
- Hillside Station Area
- Mariner's Island Specific Plan Area



BUILDING TYPOLOGIES

1. Low-Rise (1-3 stories)
2. Mid-Rise (4-7 stories)
3. High-Rise (8+ stories*)

*Applicable only to density bonus projects



EMPHASIS ON FLEXIBILITY

- Accommodate diversity of architectural styles
- Avoid mandates; provide choices
- Provide a path to deviate from standards

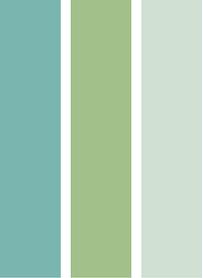


*City of San Mateo;
internet image*



DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS – TERMS TO KNOW





OBJECTIVE STANDARDS

- *Wall Plane Offset*
- Stepback
- Transition
- Color
- Other



Wall Plane Offset



Wall Plane Offset

Wall Plane Offset



Wall Plane Offset



751



City of Berkeley, CA

Wall Plane Offset



Wall Plane Offset

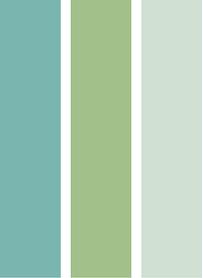


Wall Plane Offset



Wall Plane Offset





OBJECTIVE STANDARDS

- Wall Plane Offset
- *Stepback*
- Transition
- Color
- Other

Stepback – above 3rd Floor



City of Emeryville, CA

Stepback – above 3rd Floor



Stepback – above 2nd Floor





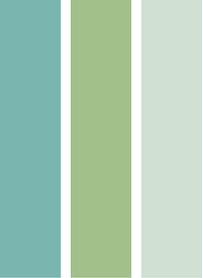
Stepback – above 2nd Floor

Los Robles Av

TRUCK
ROUTE
↑

Stepback – above 2nd Floor





OBJECTIVE STANDARDS

- Wall Plane Offset
- Step Back
- *Transition*
- Color
- Other



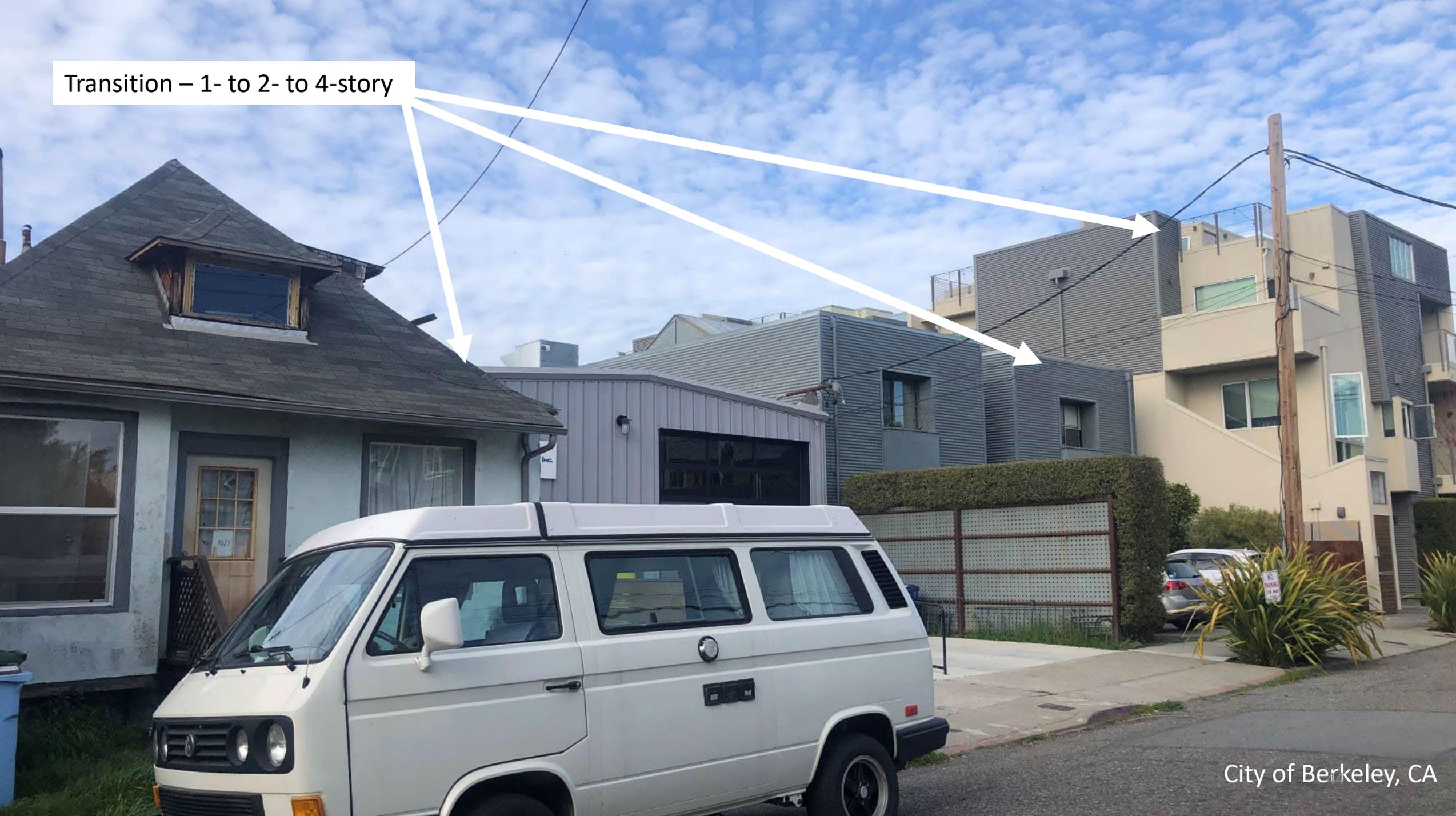
Transition – 1- to 4- story

Stepback after
3rd story

Transition – 1- to 3- to 5-
story



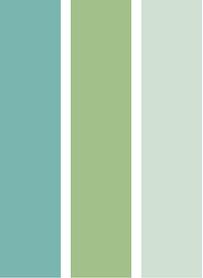
Transition – 1- to 2- to 4-story





Attached Homes next to
Detached Single-Family
Homes

Landscape
Screening



OBJECTIVE STANDARDS

- Wall Plane Offset
- Stepback
- Transition
- *Color*
- Other

Contrasting Colors



2901 S. EL CAMINO REAL

ENTER



Contrasting Colors



Contrasting Colors



Contrasting Colors



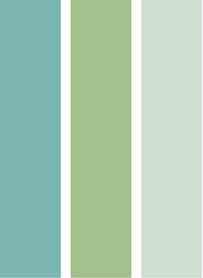
Contrasting Colors



City of San Mateo, CA



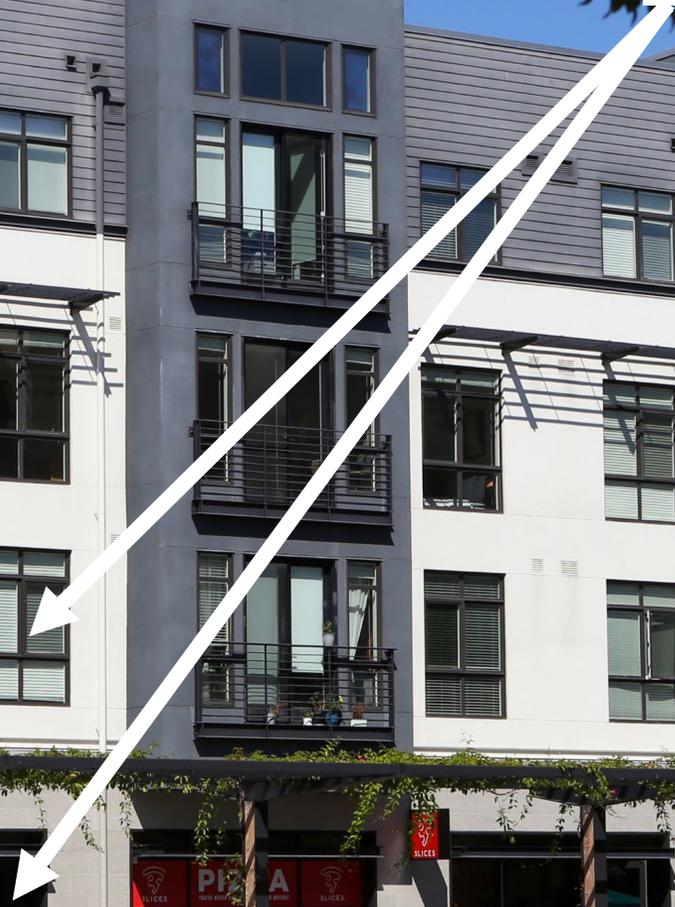
Contrasting Colors



OBJECTIVE STANDARDS

- Wall Plane Offset
- Stepback
- Transition
- Color
- *Other...Commercial/Residential*

Residential over Commercial



Residential over Commercial



City of San Mateo, CA

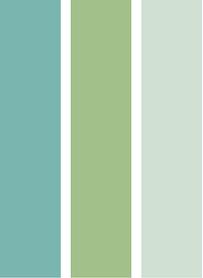


Residential over Commercial

HIGHWATER

HIGHWATER APARTMENTS NOW OPEN

City of Redwood City, CA



OBJECTIVE STANDARDS

- Wall Plane Offset
- Stepback
- Transition
- Color
- *Other...Entry Recessed Doorway*

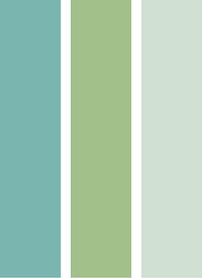
Recessed Doorway





Recessed Doorway





OBJECTIVE STANDARDS

- Wall Plane Offset
- Stepback
- Transition
- Color
- *Other...Parking Garage Treatments*

Entry – Parking Screen

UNAUTHORIZED VEHICLES PARKED
IN DESIGNATED ACCESSIBLE
SPACES NOT DISPLAYING
DISTINGUISHING PLACARDS OR
SPECIAL LICENSE PLATES ISSUED
FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES
WILL BE TOWED AWAY
AT THE OWNER'S EXPENSE

TOWED VEHICLES
MAY BE RECLAIMED AT
BERKELEY P.D.
OR BY TELEPHONING
510-644-6743

741
743
745
747

739

FOR LEASE

FOR LEASE

WINKLER
REAL ESTATE GROUP
510-528-2200

741 743 745 747



Entry – Parking Screen



RESIDENT PARKING

Parking garage wall treatment





WORKING DRAFT STANDARDS - HIGHLIGHTS

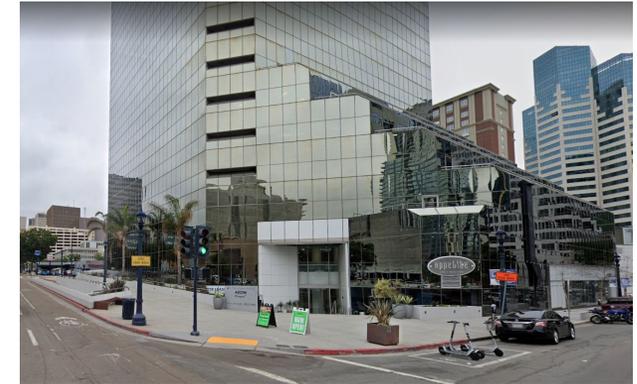


3. SITE PLANNING

3.1 FRONTAGE TREATMENTS

3.2 PEDESTRIAN ACCOMMODATIONS

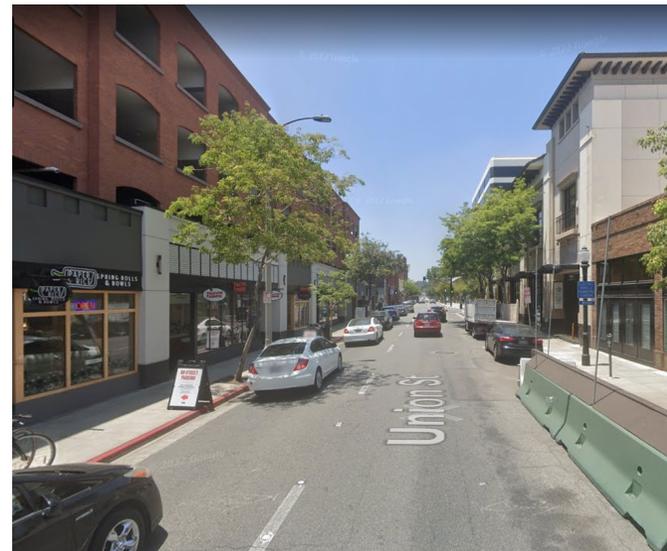
- In CBD: plaza or seating area required along street frontage
- Clearly delineated pedestrian paths
- Paseos when >600 linear feet of frontage



3. SITE PLANNING

3.3 PARKING, ACCESS, AND DRIVEWAYS

- Screening of surface parking lots along a street frontage
- Parking structure frontages: either active uses or attractive treatments



Internet images

4. BUILDING DESIGN AND ARCHITECTURE

4.1 MASSING AND ARTICULATION - DETAILING

Required use of at least 2 (for low- and mid-rise) and 3 (for high-rise) on all facades

- Bay windows
- Eaves, overhangs, cornices
- Balconies
- Recessed windows
- Projecting or recessed rooms
- Horizontal moldings



City of San Mateo, CA

4. BUILDING DESIGN AND ARCHITECTURE

4.1 MASSING AND ARTICULATION – LOW-RISE BUILDINGS

Wall plane breaks required – at least 2 feet in depth for every 15 to 30 feet



Internet image

4. BUILDING DESIGN AND ARCHITECTURE

4.1 MASSING AND ARTICULATION – MID-RISE BUILDINGS

- *For 6- to 7-story building, must have base/body/top* →
- Horizontal wall plane breaks required – at least 2 feet deep for every 20 to 40 feet
- Vertical wall plane break – select 2 of 4 options
- Distinctive corner treatment required



City of Redwood City, CA

4. BUILDING DESIGN AND ARCHITECTURE

4.1 MASSING AND ARTICULATION – MID-RISE BUILDINGS

- For 6- to 7-story building, must have base/body/top
- *Horizontal wall plane breaks required – at least 2 feet deep for every 20 to 40 feet*
- *Vertical wall plane break – select 2 of 4 options*
- Distinctive corner treatment required



Internet image; City of San Mateo

4. BUILDING DESIGN AND ARCHITECTURE

4.1 MASSING AND ARTICULATION – MID-RISE BUILDINGS

- For 6- to 7-story building, must have base/body/top
- Horizontal wall plane breaks required – at least 2 feet deep for every 20 to 40 feet
- Vertical wall plane break – select 2 of 4 options
- *Distinctive corner treatment required*



Internet image

4. BUILDING DESIGN AND ARCHITECTURE

4.1 MASSING AND ARTICULATION – HIGH-RISE BUILDINGS

- *Must have base/body/top*
- Horizontal and vertical wall plane breaks required – select 3 of 4 options
- Distinctive corner treatment required



Top

Body

Base

Internet image

4. BUILDING DESIGN AND ARCHITECTURE

4.1 MASSING AND ARTICULATION – HIGH-RISE BUILDINGS

- Must have base/body/top
- *Horizontal and vertical wall plane breaks required – select 3 of 4 options* →
- *Distinctive corner treatment required* →

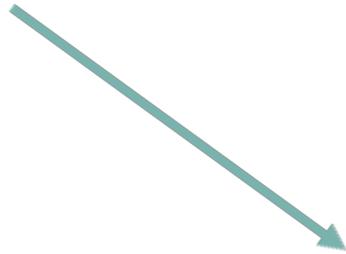


Internet image

4. BUILDING DESIGN AND ARCHITECTURE

4.2 GROUND FLOOR REQUIREMENTS

- *Mixed use: at least 75% glazing*
- *Mixed use: minimum 15-foot-high ceilings*
- Residential: raised 18 to 48 inches above the sidewalk

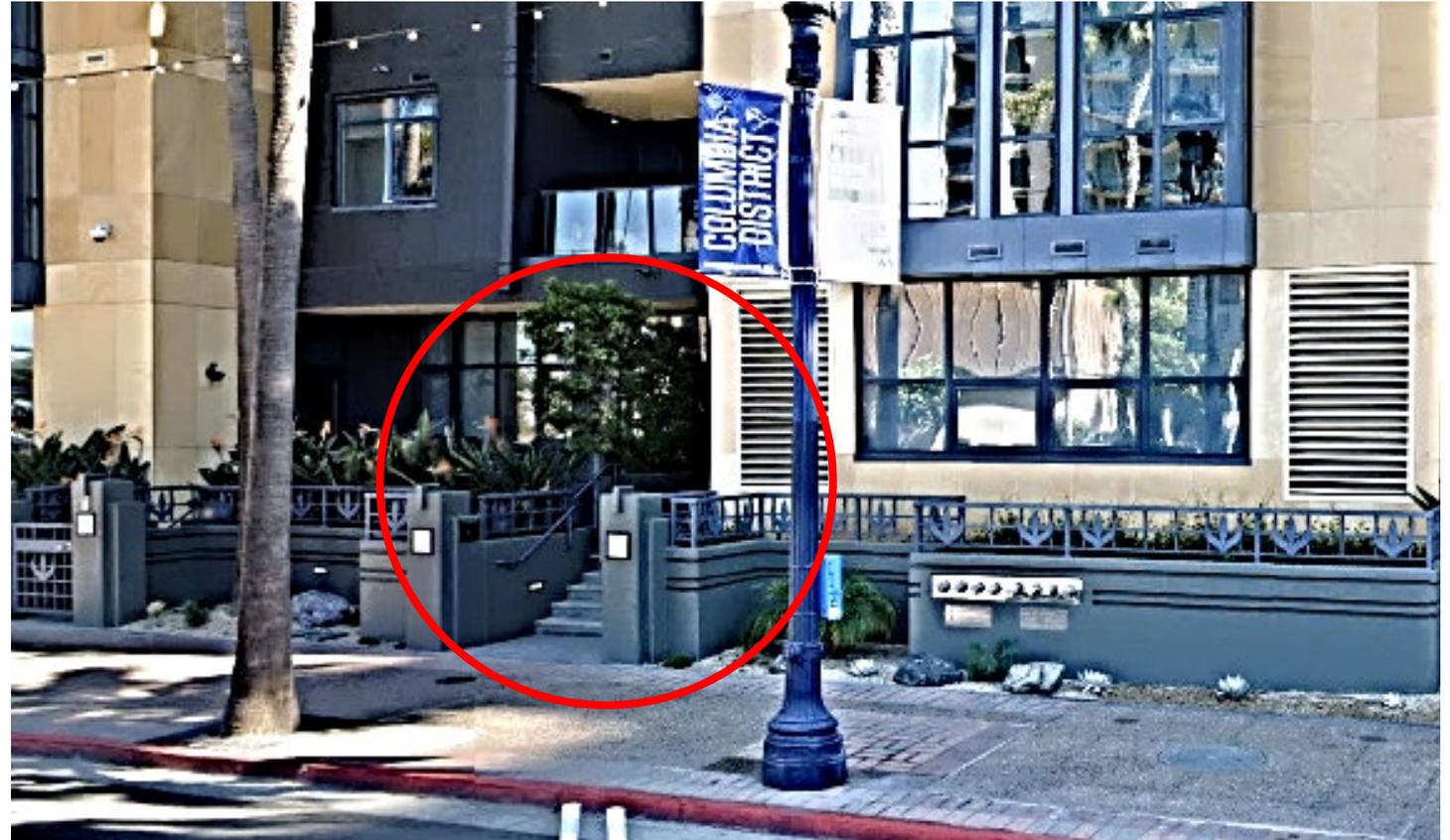


Internet image

4. BUILDING DESIGN AND ARCHITECTURE

4.2 GROUND FLOOR REQUIREMENTS

- Mixed use: at least 75% glazing
- Mixed use: minimum 15-foot-high ceilings
- *Residential: raised 18 to 48 inches above the sidewalk*



City of San Diego, CA

4. BUILDING DESIGN AND ARCHITECTURE

4.4 TRANSITION AND SCREENING

Adjacent to R1 and R2

- Low-rise: 5 feet for floors above 1st story; option for 12 feet for all floors
- Mid-rise and High-rise: 10 feet for 3rd floor and above if within 30 feet; option for 40 feet for all floors
- Evergreen trees to be planted along property line



Example image from Edmonds, WA

4. BUILDING DESIGN AND ARCHITECTURE

4.5 ROOF FORM

- Variation in height and/or form required for low-rise and mid-rise
- No more than two variations
- Flat roofs require a minimum 2-foot-high parapet and edge treatments



Internet images, annotated by MIG

4. BUILDING DESIGN AND ARCHITECTURE

4.6 WINDOWS, DOORS, AND ENTRIES

Internet images

- *Windows must have minimum 6-inch recess or must protrude*
- *Must use 2 of 4 window treatments (trim, lintel, sill, sash)*
- At least one entry door on each street frontage
- *Commercial entries to be inset or protrude*
- Garage doors to be inset at least 6 inches
- No exterior stairways (except as required by code)



4. BUILDING DESIGN AND ARCHITECTURE

4.7 MATERIALS AND COLORS

- Must use at least 4 in any combination but no more than 6
- Each to cover at least 15% of the building
- Neon colors prohibited
- Materials list provided for walls, base, window frames, roof
- Specifically prohibited materials identified
- Sustainable materials requirement for minimum 25% of exterior building materials



City of San Mateo

5. LANDSCAPING, OPEN SPACE, AND LIGHTING

- Must incorporate 3 of 5 landscaping/open space features
- Green roofs are acceptable open space features
- Dog runs and community gardens are acceptable (when 50+ units)
- All lighting must be downward directed



Internet image

6. OTHER SITE FEATURES

- Accessory structures to match primary structures' materials/colors and style
- *Transformers to be placed underground or if not possible, not within required open space areas*



Hedge used to screen transformer.
See picture to the right.

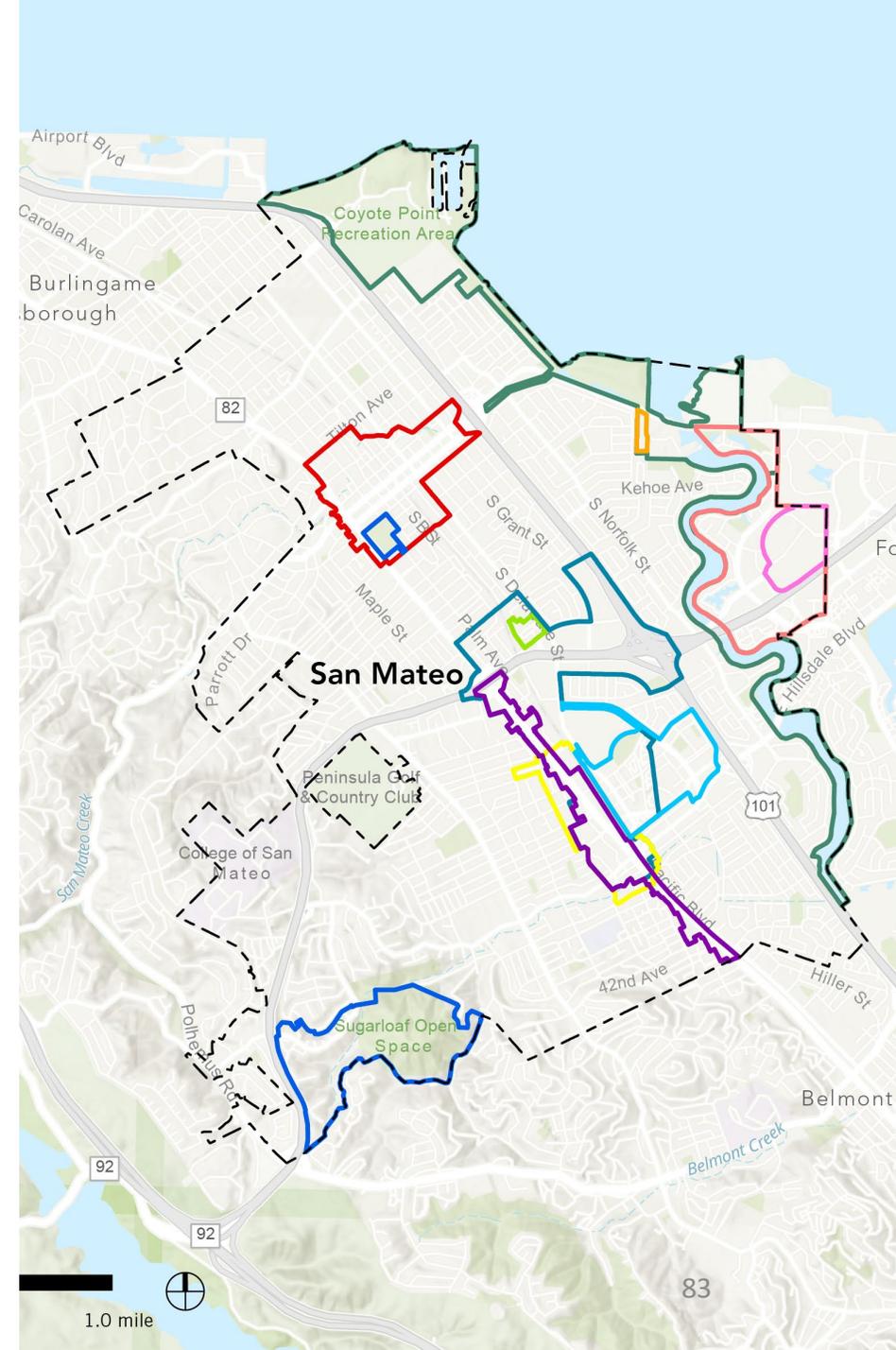


Hedge is installed outside clearance area.

Anaheim, CA
Above Ground Equipment Screening Manual

SPECIFIC PLAN AREAS

- Subjective design standards for private properties rewritten to be objective without changing intent
- Applicants will still need to consult both a specific plan and the ODS





NEXT STEPS

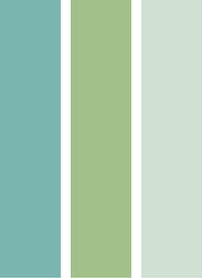


THE PROCESS





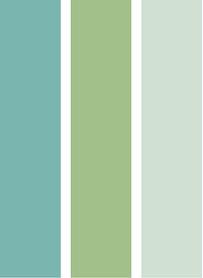
QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION



QUESTION #1 A: MASSING AND TRANSITION

The ODS provide options to reduce massing and increase visual interest through articulation. This includes standards for façade breaks (horizontal and vertical massing breaks), stepbacks, and use of detailing (windows, balconies, awning etc.).

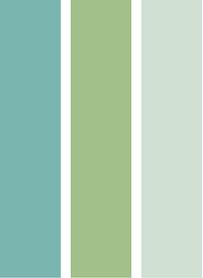
Are there articulation options that may have been overlooked, need refinement, or are unnecessary?



QUESTION #1B: MASSING AND TRANSITION

Current transitional elements for projects adjacent to R1 or R2 zoned parcels include increased stepbacks above the second story for all building types or increased setbacks and landscaping screening requirements.

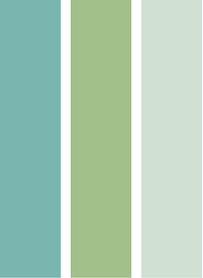
Are these appropriate transition treatments adjacent to R-1 and R-2 districts? Should other transitional elements be considered?



QUESTION 2: COLORS AND MATERIALS

Is the proposed approach of requiring a combination of at least four and a maximum of six different colors and/or materials too constraining?

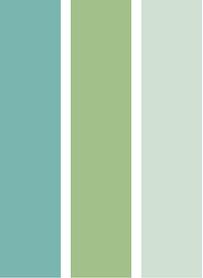
Is prohibiting neon colors too constraining?



QUESTION 3: DOWNTOWN

Have existing subjective standards of the Downtown Retail Core and Historic Design District Guidelines been effectively translated to objective standards?

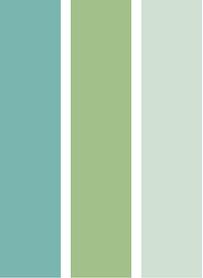
Are there other architectural options that may have been overlooked that should be included in the ODS to meet the intent of the Downtown Design Guidelines?



QUESTION 4: OPEN SPACE

Community members and developers shared a similar interest in using stepback space as open space opportunities. The ODS includes provisions for green roofs, decks, and community gardens in such spaces.

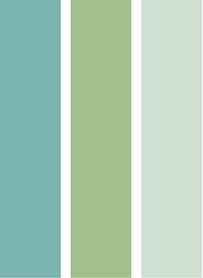
Are there other design features that could be counted towards open space requirements?



QUESTION 5: FLEXIBILITY

Flexibility was a key theme that emerged in both the community workshop and the developers' roundtable. The ODS aim to provide flexibility to implement required standards by differentiating standards for different scales of development and providing a menu of options for compliance.

Do the ODS provide adequate flexibility to address community concerns?



FOR MORE INFORMATION

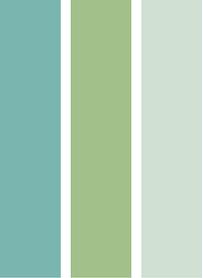
CITY OF SAN MATEO – COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPT.

Laura Richstone, Associate Planner

LRichstone@cityofsanmateo.org

(650) 522-7205

<https://www.cityofsanmateo.org/4526/Objective-Design-Standards---Multi-Famil>



QUESTIONS

1. Massing/Articulation: Are there articulation options that may have been overlooked, need refinement, or are unnecessary? Are these appropriate transition treatments adjacent to R-1 and R-2 districts? Should other transitional elements be considered?
2. Colors/Materials: Is the proposed approach of requiring a combination of at least four and a maximum of six different colors and/or materials too constraining? Is prohibiting neon colors too constraining?
3. Downtown: Have existing subjective standards of the Downtown Retail Core and Historic Design District Guidelines been effectively translated to objective standards? Are there other architectural options that may have been overlooked that should be included in the ODS to meet the intent of the Downtown Design Guidelines?
4. Open Space: Are there other design features that could be counted towards open space requirements?
5. Flexibility: Do the ODS provide adequate flexibility to address community concerns?



MULTI-FAMILY AND
MIXED-USE RESIDENTIAL
OBJECTIVE DESIGN STANDARDS
PLANNING COMMISSION STUDY SESSION

AUGUST 8, 2023