



Site Design



Massing



Modulation



Facade Articulation

OBJECTIVE STANDARDS

Multifamily & Mixed Use Housing

June 1, 2022

www.cityofpaloalto.org

AGENDA

- Project Overview
- Council Action 11/8/21
- Revised Ordinance:
 - Part 1: Objective Design Standards (Att. A)
 - Part 2: Other Updates to Title 18 (Att. B)
 - Responses to Council Action



IMPACTS OF STATE LAW ON STREAMLINED PROJECTS

Objective

Zoning Regulations

- Height
- Setbacks
- Daylight Plane
- Floor Area Ratio
- Parking
- Open Space
- Other...

Subjective

Discretionary Review

- Architectural Review Board (ARB) hearings
- Context-Based Design Criteria (e.g., articulation, facade design)
- Architectural Review findings

City does not have objective design standards



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PROJECT OVERVIEW

- Identify the City's design priorities
- Transform existing subjective design criteria (i.e., Context-Based Design Criteria) into objective standards
- Make other changes to Title 18 to remove ambiguity and streamline project review for eligible projects



COUNCIL MOTION

- See Staff Report Table 1 (packet p. 35)
- Identifies *where* and *how* motion items are addressed

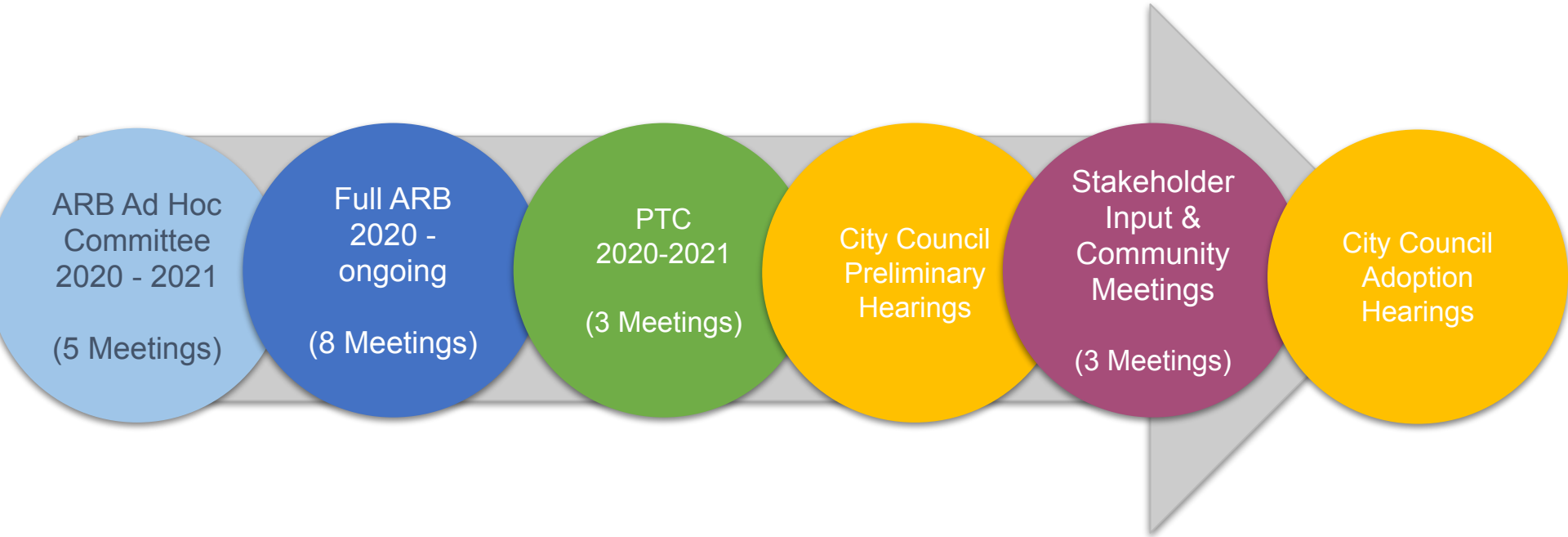
Motion #/Topic	Approved 5/9/22	Addressed in Tonight's Ordinance	Other
A. Take Council feedback on overlays and then take to housing element working group and return to Council for further discussion;		✓ AH Overlay	PF and PTOD changes referred to Housing Element
B. Direct Staff to retain current Context-Based Design Criteria and Chapter 18 laws for development applications that do not fall under the State housing laws requiring objective standards;		✓	
C. Direct Staff to return with proposed objective standards and intent statements and to provide:		✓	
i. A detailed side-by-side comparison of the existing Context-Based Design Criteria and the proposed new laws;		✓ (Attachment C)	
ii. Adoptable changes to existing and proposed laws that would provide standards for privacy and other protections for all residents, regardless of their zones. Regarding privacy, to come back with stronger protections for elevated floors looking into neighboring lots. Stronger definitions of sight lines and how this applies. Address concerns about allowing 15% windows. In RM-40, retain 25' front set back;	✓ (RM-40 setback)	✓ (window and privacy standards)	
iii. Refer to the S/CAP Ad Hoc Committee on the evaluation of approximate GHG impacts in construction;			Referred to S/CAP Ad Hoc

COUNCIL MOTION

- See Staff Report Table 1 (packet p. 35)
- Identifies *where* and *how* motion items are addressed

<i>Motion #/Topic</i>	<i>Approved 5/9/22</i>	<i>Addressed in Tonight's Ordinance</i>	<i>Other</i>
D. Prior to any rezoning of PF to workforce housing, the City Council would re-examine the affordability threshold of workforce housing;			Deferred to Housing Element
E. Hold at least two meetings on the proposed changes before the next Council session for free-form discussion by the general public;			Completed February 1 and March 22, 2022
F. In Building Massing / Facades sections where there is a menu of choices, increase the number of required choices per category;		✓	
G. Put in place a temporary height transition backstop. Initial ordinance should include objective height transition language, for example "No part of the building can be more than X' higher than the lowest adjacent building, up to the applicable height limit". Come back with a specific proposal along these lines for adoption this year and Staff can then propose additional amendments in the future;	✓ (height transition development standards)	✓ (contextual height transitions standards)	
H. Evaluate and return with strengthened language to use "design standards" instead of "design intents";		✓	
I. Evaluate whether "decision by director" option throughout objective standards puts those at risk and should be changed /remove; and		✓	
J. On appeal, consider sending directly to Council if required to meet streamlining requirements.		✓	

PROCESS AND ENGAGEMENT



RECENT PROCESS & SCHEDULE

Motion Item B

ARB Meeting

Privacy,
menu of
options,
contextual
height

January 20,
2022

Community Meeting #2

- Overview & listening session
- Privacy, bulk and adjacency concerns
- Equivalent standards regardless of zoning district

February 1, 2022

ARB Meeting

Privacy,
contextual
height
transitions

March 10,
2022

Community Meeting #3

- Feedback on what we heard, draft changes
- Privacy, bulk and adjacency concerns
- Equivalent standards regardless of zoning district

March 22, 2022

ARB Meeting

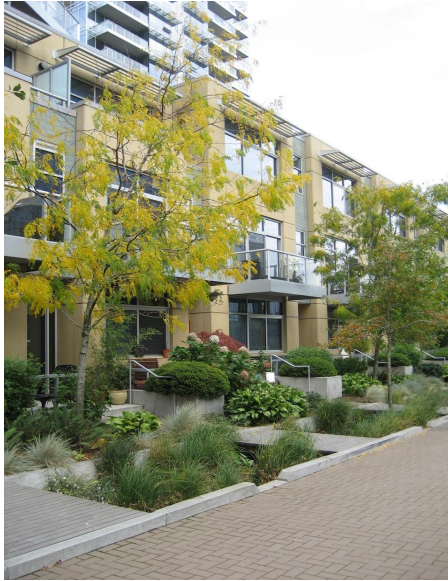
Menu of
options,
crosswalk of
existing and
new standards

April 7, 2022



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Part 1: Objective Design Standards



RECAP: APPLICABILITY

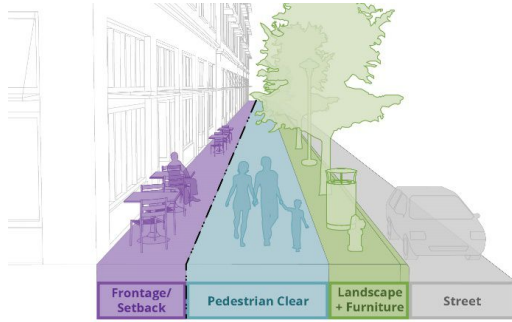


“Housing development projects”

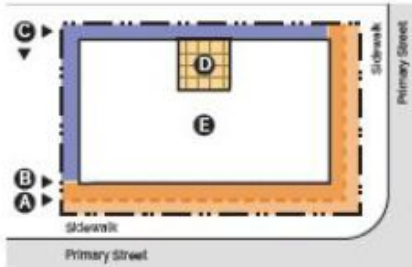
- Multifamily (3+ units)
- Mixed use (at least $\frac{2}{3}$ residential)
- Transitional and supportive housing

→ *In zones that allow multifamily housing
(e.g., RM, CN, CS, CC(2), CD)*

RECAP: SITE DESIGN

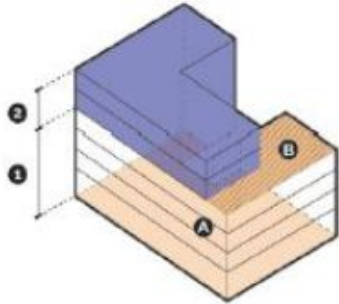


Topic	Section
Site Design	18.24.020: Public Realm/Sidewalk Character
	18.24.030: Site Access
	18.24.040: Building Orientation and Setbacks



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RECAP: BUILDING DESIGN



Variation in Horizontal and Vertical Projections

- Shading Type 1
- Shading Type 2
- Shading Type 3

Topic	Section
Building Design	18.24.050: Building Massing
	18.24.060: Façade Design
	18.24.070: Residential Entries
	18.24.080: Open Space
	18.24.090: Materials
	18.24.100: Sustainability and Green Building

(A) Contextual Design Criteria

- **Subjective** statement to clarify intent
- Drawn from context-based criteria, sometimes verbatim

(B) Objective Standards

- **Objective** measurement, ratio, allowance or prohibition
- Often listed as menu of options

18.24.020 Public Realm/Sidewalk Character

(a) Contextual Design Criteria

To create an attractive and safe public realm and sidewalk space for pedestrians and cyclists through the implementation of design, landscaping, and infrastructure. Publicly accessible spaces and sidewalks should:

- (1) Design the transition between the public and private realm through the coordination of amenities and materials, such as accent paving, tree wells, lighting and street furniture (e.g., benches, bicycle racks, trash receptacles, news racks).
- (2) Complement or match accent paving to existing designs in the Downtown and California Avenue business district.
- (3) Provide sidewalk widths that accommodate landscaping, street trees, furniture, and pedestrian amenities; create a pleasant, desirable place to walk; provide shade; and enable comfortable pedestrian passage.
- (4) Provide amenities, such as parking and repair equipment, for micromobility, such as bicycles and scooters.
- (5) Utilize street parking for visitor or customer parking and to enhance traffic calming.

(b) Objective Standards

(1) Sidewalk Widths

(A) Public sidewalks abutting a development parcel in any commercial mixed-use district (CN, CS, CC, CC(2), CD-C, CD-S, CD-N, PTOD) shall have a minimum sidewalk width (curb to back of walk) of at least 10 feet. This standard may be met with a combination of pedestrian clear path and landscape and furniture strip (see Figure 1), as long as the pedestrian clear path is no less than 8 feet. If the existing public sidewalk does not meet the minimum standard, a publicly accessible extension of the sidewalk, with corresponding public access easement, shall be provided. Notwithstanding the total dimensions required herein, the following streets/locations shall have a minimum sidewalk width as noted:

(i) El Camino Real: 12 ft

(ii) San Antonio Road, from Middlefield Road to East Charleston Road: 12 ft

(B) Publicly accessible sidewalks or walkways, with landscape strips, connecting through a development parcel (e.g., on a through lot) shall have a minimum six-foot width.

(C) Pedestrian walkways that are designed to provide access to bicycles shall have a minimum width of eight feet, with two feet of clear space on either side.

Figure 1: Illustrative Sidewalk Section and Description of Zones



MOTION Ci: DETAILED “CROSSWALK”

- Compares existing context-based criteria to draft objective standards and contextual design criteria (Att. C)
- Helped identify criteria that had not been thoroughly captured in the draft ordinance and have now been added

City of Palo Alto

Objective Design Standards Project

Crosswalk Matrix of Existing and Proposed Design Regulations

April 15, 2022

This document compares existing context-based design criteria and the standards and contextual design criteria proposed to replace them, for “housing development projects.” The context-based design criteria are organized by zoning district, with the existing criteria in the left-hand column and the proposed standard or contextual design criteria in the right-hand column.

- *Blue italics indicate staff comments*, which identify redundancies, proposed deletions, and elements addressed in other sections of the code.
- *Green text indicates contextual design criteria*, which convey contextual design priorities and clarify the intent of design standards.
- Draft standards are shown in normal black text
- Revisions to standards/contextual design criteria compared to the version reviewed by the City Council on November 8, 2021 are shown in underline/~~strikeout~~ format.

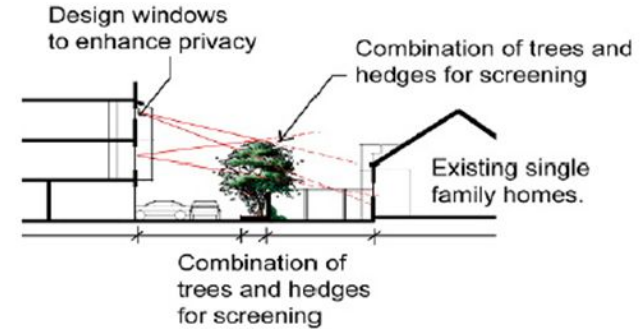
RM Zones - 18.13.060 Multiple Family Context-Based Design Criteria	
Existing Context-Based Design Criteria	Proposed Standard or Contextual Design Criteria
(1) Massing and Building Facades	
Massing and building facades shall be designed to create a residential scale in keeping with Palo Alto neighborhoods, and to provide a relationship with street(s) through elements such as:	18.24.050(a) Building Massing Intent Statement Contextual Design Criteria To create buildings that are compatible with and enhance the surrounding area through the consideration of building scale, massing, and bulk. Massing should create a human-scale environment that is of high aesthetic quality and accommodates a variety of uses and design features. Building massing should include elements that: (1) Break down large building facades and massing to create a human-scaled building that enhances the context of the site (2) Are consistent in scale, mass and character to adjacent land uses and land use designations (3) Reinforce the definition and importance of the street (4) Provide rooflines and massing that emphasize and accentuate significant elements of the building such as entries, bays, and balconies, and shading elements where appropriate. (5) Provide harmonious transitions between abutting properties
A. Articulation, setbacks, and materials that minimize massing, break down the scale of buildings, and provide visual interest (Figure 1-1);	18.24.050(a)(1): Break down large building facades and massing to create a human-scaled building that enhances the context of the site 18.24.050(a)(2): Are consistent in scale, mass and character to adjacent land uses and land use designations 18.24.050(b)(2) When a building abuts a side and/or rear property line with a RE, RMD, R-1, or R-2 zoned parcel or a village residential or existing single-family residential use, the building shall break down the abutting facade by... (B) A minimum facade break of four feet in width, two feet in depth, and 32 square feet of area for every 36 to 40 feet of facade length.

MOTION Cii: PRIVACY & SIGHT LINES

ADD CONTEXTUAL DESIGN CRITERIA

Add to Building Massing - Contextual Design Criteria, based on context-based design criteria:

“(6) Maintain privacy of residential uses through design strategies such as offset windows, reduced glazing, landscape screening, and site planning that extends setbacks to residential uses.”



MOTION Cii: PRIVACY & SIGHT LINES WINDOW STANDARDS

Within 30 feet of facing windows or private open space on an abutting residential building, facing windows shall have:

- **Sill heights** at and above the 2nd floor **at least 5 feet above finished floor**; OR
- **Opaque or translucent glazing** at or below 5 feet above finished floor; OR
- **Angled** to face away from abutting privacy impacts;

AND

- **Landscape screening** shall be 24-inch box size or larger and 8+ feet height at planting; 50% evergreens; and located to align with proposed second floor windows at maturity

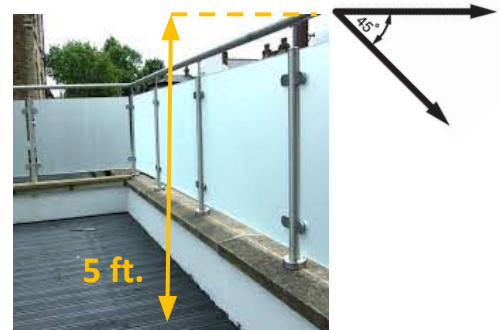


MOTION Cii: PRIVACY & SIGHT LINES

BALCONY STANDARDS

Within 30 feet of residential windows or private open space on an abutting residential building, balconies and decks on the subject site shall be designed to prevent views:

- **No sight lines** are permitted within 5 feet of finished floor and a 45 degree angle downward from balcony railing
- **Submit section view** of proposed balcony/deck and abutting residential windows and/or private open space
- Provide balcony/deck design measure which may include:
 - Minimum 85% opaque railing
 - Obscure glass railing
 - Barrier with min. 18" horizontal depth from railing (e.g., landscape planter)



MOTION Cii: PRIVACY & SIGHT LINES

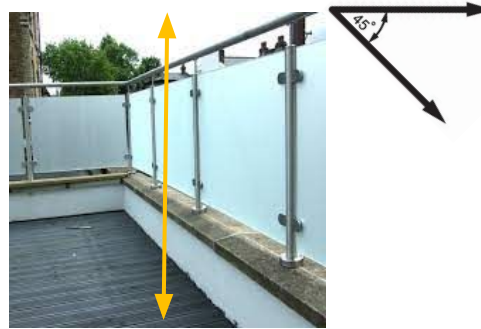
Extend privacy standards previously proposed only to apply to projects abutting single-family zones or uses, to **all residential uses**, regardless of distance between uses:

- Landscape screening - minimum 1 tree per 25 linear feet and continuous shrubbery, minimum 6 feet at planting
- Maximum 15% window glazing
 - Increase above 15% not recommended due to potential conflicts with Fire Life Safety requirements



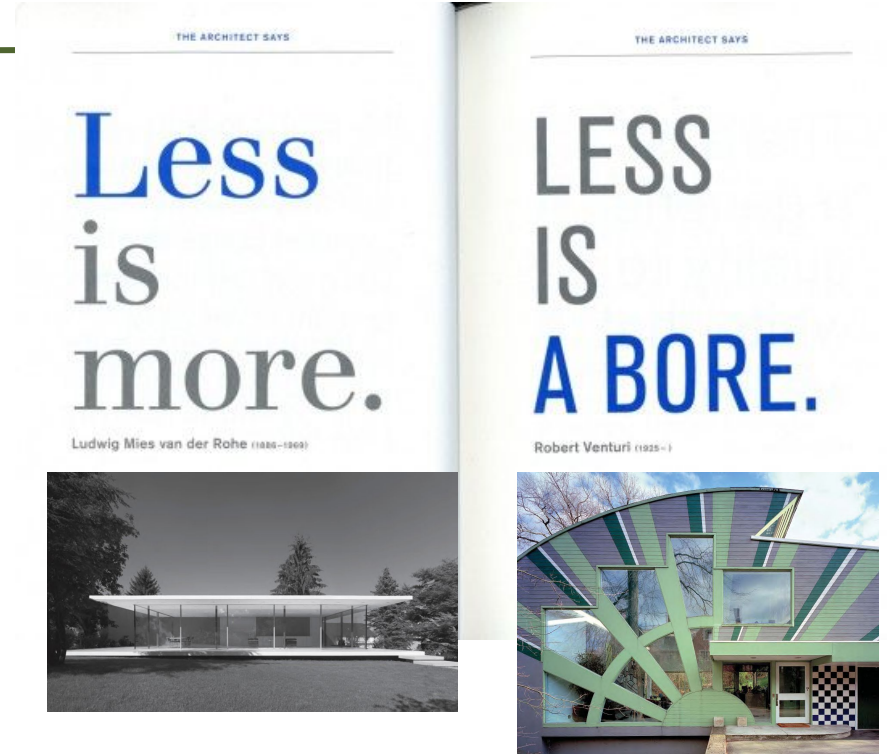
MOTION Cii: PRIVACY & SIGHT LINES SUMMARY

- Standards discourage new buildings from locating close to property lines by layering standards for balcony and window glazing, screening, and siting
- Projects that provide larger separation between buildings would not be subject to such restrictions
- Standards are located in the new 18.24 chapter and would only apply to Housing Development Projects subject to objective standards



MOTION F: MENU OF OPTIONS

- ARB spent hours debating the merits and potential pitfalls
- Expanded menu of options for building facade and massing
- Added options and number of options required



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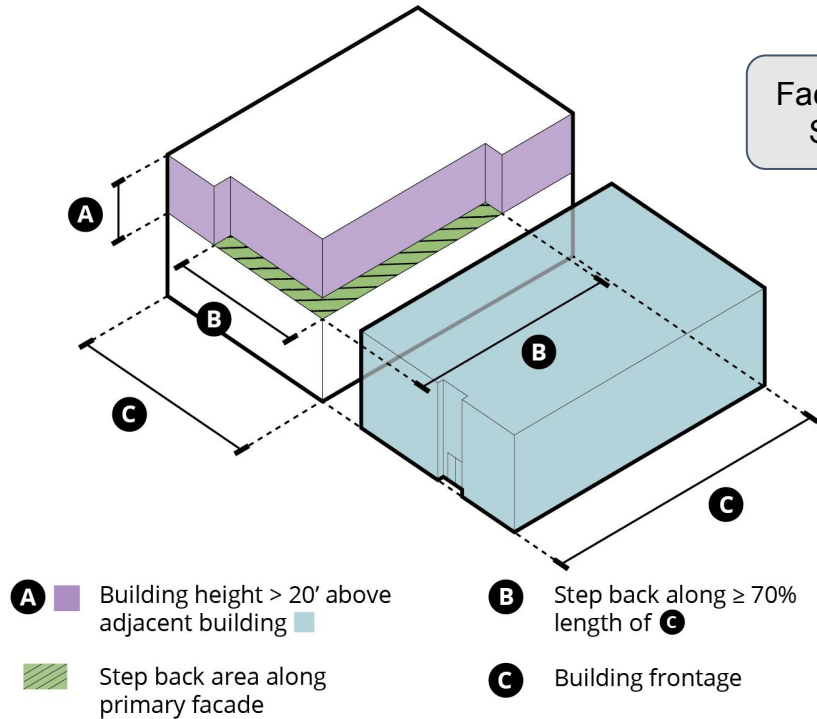
MOTION G: CONTEXTUAL HEIGHT STEP BACKS

When the height of the subject building is more than 20 feet above the average height of an adjacent building and the two buildings are separated by 20 feet or less:

- Upper Story Step Back (**Front** Façade) - min. 6 feet deep; AND
- Upper Story Step Back (**Facing** Façade) - min. 6 feet deep; AND
- Daylight Plane (where does not exist; i.e., abutting commercial mixed use zones)
 - 25 ft. above grade, 45 degrees (no setback unless otherwise required).



MOTION G: CONTEXTUAL HEIGHT STEP BACK FRONT & SIDE STEP BACKS

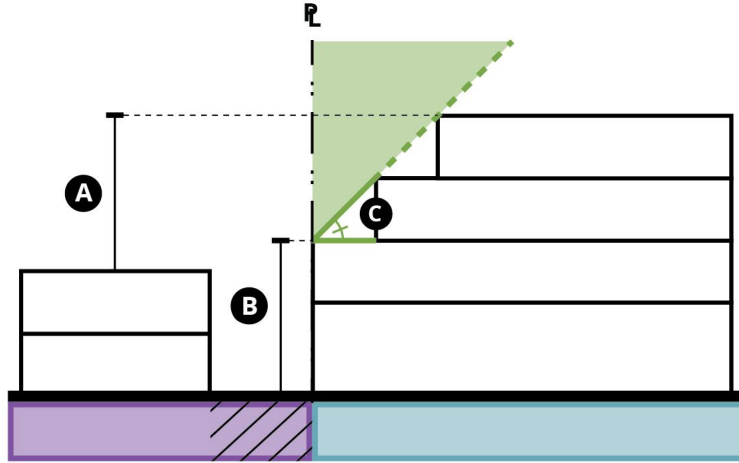


Facing Facade
Step Back

Front Facade
Step Back



MOTION G: CONTEXTUAL HEIGHT STEP BACK DAYLIGHT PLANE



A New building is more than 20' taller than abutting building

\\\\ Interior setback area

--- Property Line

Proposed building

Adjacent property

... Daylight Plane

No-build area

B Initial Height: 25'

C Angle: 45°



MOTION H & I

Motion Item	Response
H. Evaluate and return with strengthened language to use “design standards” instead of “design intents”	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Renamed to “contextual design criteria” to clarify their relationship to the existing context-based criteria and to connote that “criteria” are requirements● Do not recommend referring to subjective regulations as objective “standards” since this is a term of art in State law
I. Evaluate whether "decision by director" option throughout objective standards puts those at risk and should be changed /remove	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Revised Chapter 18.24 to remove all clauses that allowed “similar strategies as approved by the Director”

Part 2: Updates to Title 18



RECAP: STANDARDIZE EXISTING REGULATIONS

- Remove redundancies and consolidate like topics
- Make performance standards applicable to projects regardless of use or location
- Acknowledge changes in technology
- Provide cross-references to handouts which may be updated from time to time

18.23 Performance Standards



18.40 General Standards and Exceptions
18.42 Standards for Special Uses
18.54 Parking Facility Design Standards

- Water quality
- Landscape screening
- Lighting impacts
- Mechanical lift parking
- Refuse storage/screening

RECAP: STREAMLED REVIEW PROCESS

Exempt from Architectural Review

New exemption from subjective review:

“Housing development projects” in accordance with the Housing Accountability Act

Maintain Opportunity for Input

New streamlined process for projects that comply with objective standards:

1 study session with the ARB

Rely More on Objective Checklists & Less on Findings

City of Palo Alto Objective Design Standards: Checklist

18.24.050 Building Massing

(b)(1) Upper Floor Step Backs			
Pick One	Standard	Sheet #	Applicant's Justification
<input type="checkbox"/>	1. When the height of the subject building is more than 20 feet above the average height of an adjacent building, an upper floor step back shall start within 2 vertical feet of the height of the adjacent building. The step back shall be a minimum depth of 6 feet along the primary building frontage, and the step shall occur for a minimum of 70% of the facade length.		
	i. Proposed building height: ____ feet		
	ii. Average building height of the adjacent building(s): ____ feet		
	iii. Building height where upper floor step back begins: ____ feet		
<input type="checkbox"/>	2. Except, when adjacent to a single-story building, the upper floor step back shall occur between 30 and 37 feet in height.		

(b)(2) (A)(B)&(C) Transition to Lower Density Building Types			
Check All	Standard	Sheet #	Applicant's Justification
<input type="checkbox"/>	1. Buildings that abut a side and/or rear property line with a RE, RMD, R-1, or R-2 zoned parcel or a village residential or existing single-family residential use, the building breaks down the abutting facade by meeting all of the following:		
	a. A landscape screen that includes a row of trees with a minimum 1 tree per 25 linear feet and continuous shrubbery planting. This screening plant material shall be a minimum 72 inches (6 feet) in height when planted. Required trees shall be minimum 24" box size.		
	b. A minimum facade break of 4 feet in width, 2 feet in depth, and 32 square feet of area for every 36 to 40 feet of facade length.		

MOTION J

Motion Item	Response
J. On appeal, consider sending directly to Council if required to meet streamlining requirements.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Chapter 18.40.170 allows for Director to forward projects to Council for final action, even in the absence of appeal• Therefore, no further changes are necessary

MOTION A: AFFORDABLE HOUSING (AH) OVERLAY

- Currently, purpose and process do not align
- Proposed change would provide incentives for 100% affordable housing, by right

Purpose

Flexible development standards for projects that provide 100% affordable rental housing (<120% of AMI)

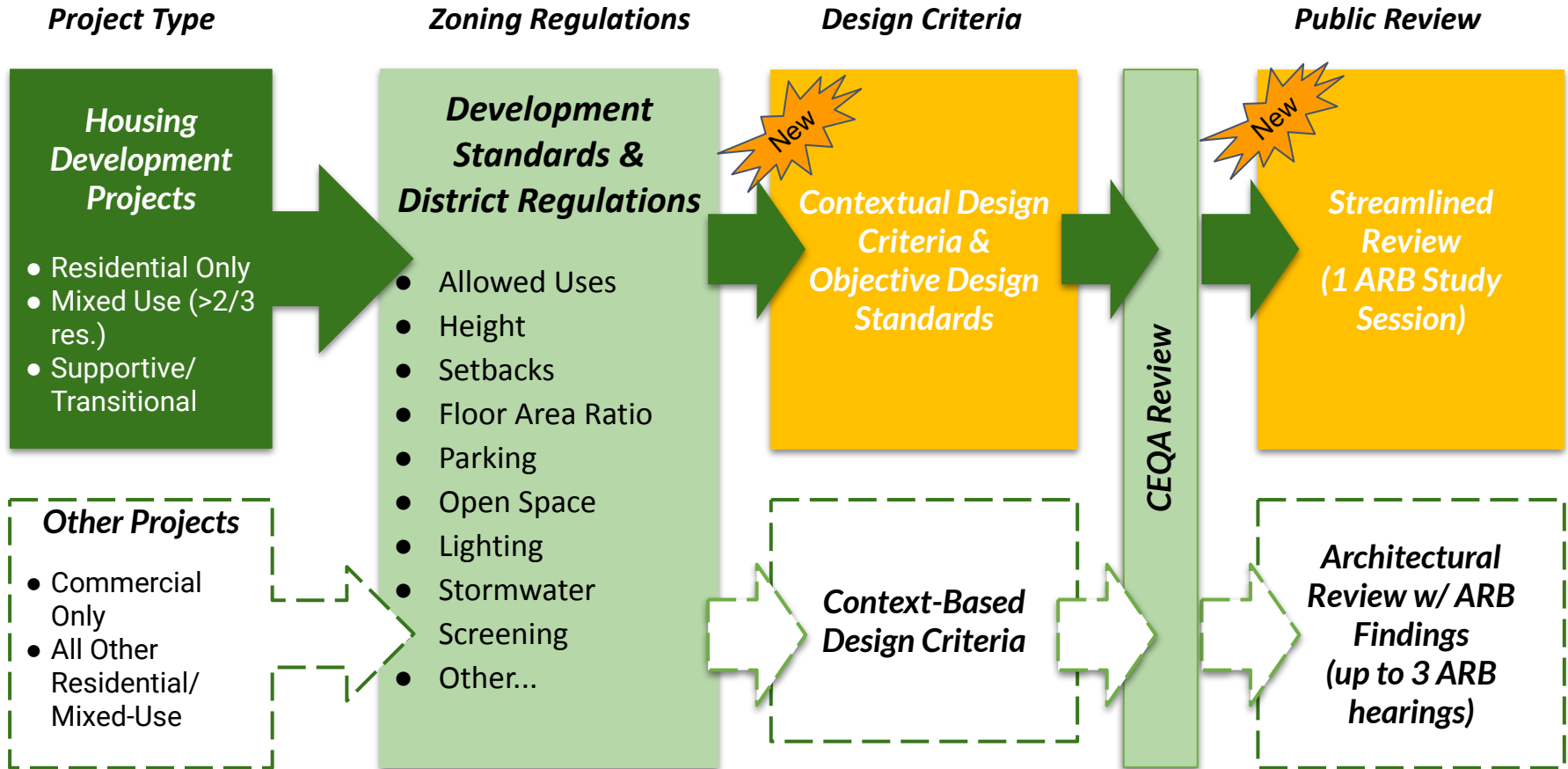
Current Process

Legislative Rezoning
ARB, PTC, and City Council Review
(up to 9 meetings)

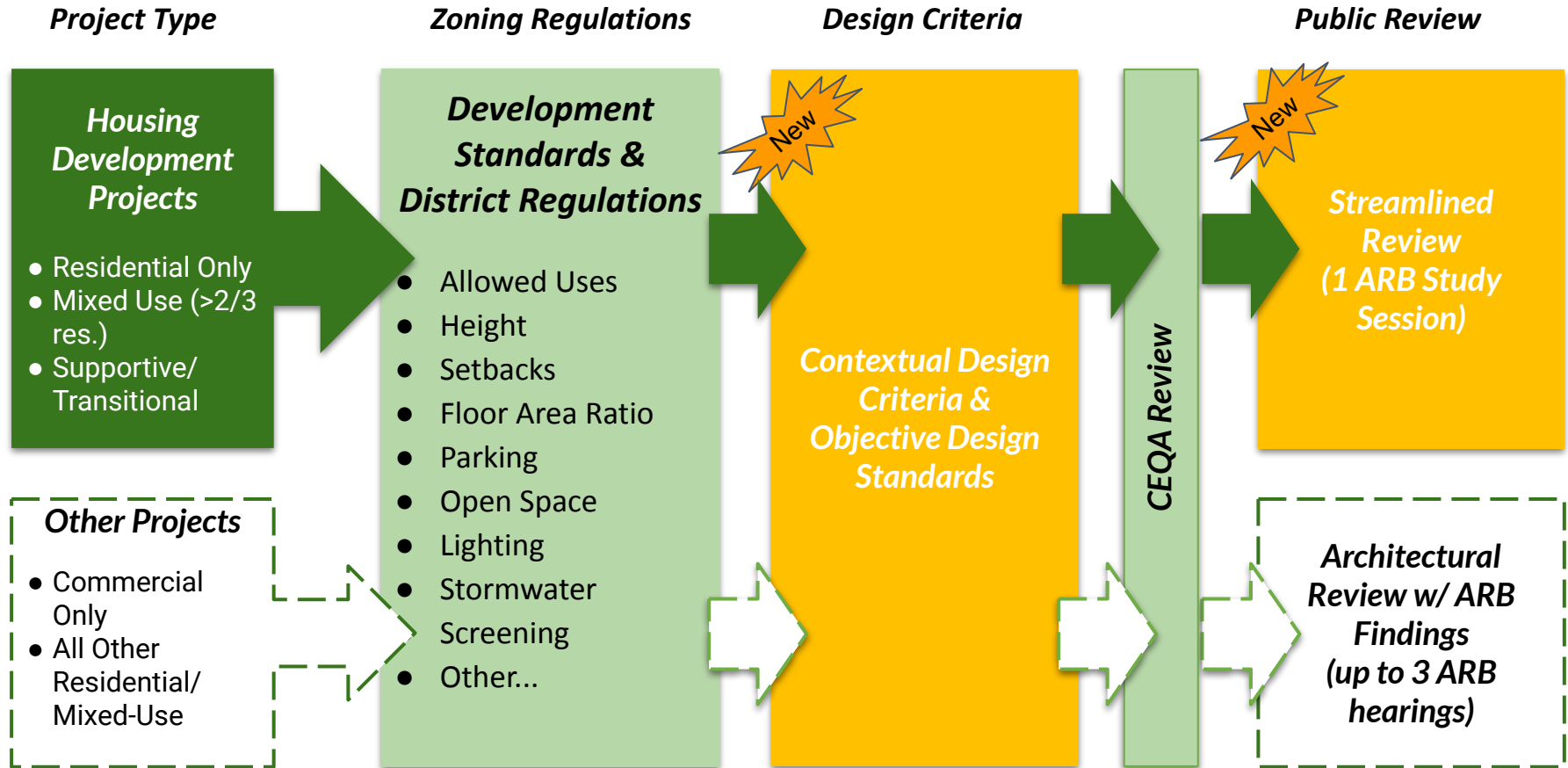
Proposed Process

Allow projects that meet affordability requirements to automatically qualify for flexible standards
ARB Review (1-3 meetings)

MOTION B: ENTITLEMENT PROCESS



STAFF ALTERNATIVE: ENTITLEMENT PROCESS



STAFF ALTERNATIVE: ENTITLEMENT PROCESS

1. Clarifies the City's design priorities in 1 code section vs. 5 sections, reducing the overall amount of code and **removing redundancy**
2. Clarifies for City staff, ARB and other decision-makers, applicants, and community members what the **City's design priorities** are
3. **Reduces burdens on staff** if a project changes from one set of criteria to another over the course of a project
4. **Allows criteria that the community and Council have identified as important—e.g. standards for privacy, sight lines, and height transitions—to apply to all project types/uses, not just Housing Development Projects**

SUMMARY OF REVISIONS

<i>Motion # (in Staff Report Order)</i>	<i>Addressed?</i>	<i>Location in Tonight's 6/1 Packet</i>	<i>Other Referrals and Approvals</i>
Ci. Existing vs. Proposed	✓	Att. C: Packet p. 124+	n/a
Cii. Privacy & RM Setbacks	✓	Att. A: Packet p. 65-67	RM-40 setback: Approved 5/9/22
Ciii. GHG Impacts	✓	n/a	Referred to S/CAP Ad Hoc
D. PF Zoning	✓	n/a	Deferred to Housing Element
E. Community Meetings	✓	Packet p. 37	Completed February 1 and March 22, 2022
F. Menu of Options	✓	Att. A: Packet p. 69, 73	n/a
G. Contextual Height Stepbacks	✓	Transitions: Att. A: p. 64-65	Development Standards: Approved 5/9/22
H. Terminology for Design Intent	✓	Att. A: Packet p. 51	n/a
I. Remove Decisions by Director	✓	Att. A: Packet p. 70, 73	n/a
J. Appeals	✓	Packet p. 45	Chapter 18.40.170
A. Overlays	✓	AH Overlay: Att B: Packet p. 106-109	PF and PTOD referred to Housing Element
B. Retain Context-Based Design Criteria	✓	Att B: Packet p. 51-52	vs. Staff Alternative Option

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that Council consider the proposed objective design standards (Attachment A) and Code changes (Attachment B), take public comment, and adopt the ordinance.