



Architectural Review Board

Staff Report (ID # 14930)

Report Type: Study Session **Meeting Date:** 11/17/2022

Summary Title: Ad Hoc Committee Report: Objective Standards

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From: Jonathan Lait

Recommendation

Staff recommends the Architectural Review Board (ARB):

1. Review and provide informal comments. No formal action is requested.

Background

When the Objective Design Standards for Housing Development Projects were adopted in July 2022, we knew that changes to these standards would likely be needed. Hence, the ARB Chair formed an Ad Hoc Committee to review the adopted standards and suggest changes to the full Board. This Committee is comprised of Chair Hirsch and Board member Chen.

Discussion

The Committee has been working on the attached document for the last few weeks, recognizing that the specific use of Townhomes may not be adequately addressed in the existing Objective Design Standards. The Committee spent considerable time examining Palo Alto's Townhome communities, visited similar projects in neighboring communities and researching online. While this is still a work in progress, the Committee feels there are many issues that could be addressed now and that will be useful for upcoming projects.

Because the actual research has been so important in development of these ideas, the Committee will present photographs and illustrations that have been used to bring needed changes to light.

ARB¹ Liaison & Contact Information

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Attachments:

- Attachment A: Townhome Draft Code Language (PDF)

Regulations for Townhomes - Objective Zoning:

1. The maximum length of any linear grouping of Townhomes is 120 feet not including entry elements or bay windows, Each unit must include a minimum front yard 5 feet deep by the width of the unit. The exterior areas adjacent to first floor and separate from the required unit's walkway and entry path and entry door must be landscaped with shrubbery that separates it from the public sidewalk or be defined by a private entry court with fencing or walls no greater than 3'-6" between units or the public right-of-way.
2. No more than 3 attached Townhomes within a cluster of 5 units or 4 in a cluster of 6 units can repeat the same elevation, window format, surface pattern and cornice height.
3. Corner units that face two streets must have a change in the roof line to a higher elevation and must have two or more of the following elevation treatments so that it is distinguished from the repetitive units.
 - a. minimum 4' deep covered entry patio entry..
 - a. A wrap around corner window or 2.5' projecting bay window on one or more upper floors.
 - c. A tower element that may penetrates the height limitation of the R-30 but does not exceed 50 feet in height.
 - d. A projecting bay window on the front or side elevation or both.
 - f. A setback area of differing material and/or color from the major facade material.
4. The base building color treatment must include at least two colors and two basic materials. If the face of the window trim elements and other facade defining trimming are 4" or larger, then they can be considered the second color. Otherwise a second color shall represent another, typically consistent facade element of each building not including the color of the windows trim.

5. Townhomes located on major streets or boulevards can exceed the R-30 height requirements by one story but can not exceed the 50 foot height limitation. Emphasis on increasing the the importance of the street is achieved by selecting two or more of the following:
 - a. Increase the scale of the entry area and doorway.
 - b. Increase the window dimensions and their surrounds and the cornice dimension.
 - c. Provide the front areaway within the property with a defined structure that separates it from the sidewalk.
 - d. Increase the height of the building by a full story or a partial story consistently for each structure.
6. All Townhomes projects on all sites greater than 200x400 feet must have one street of the longest dimension with a sidewalk and street trees.
(see xxx for tree frequency)
7. While 3 different prototypes are preferred, a minimum of two separate prototypes of townhome design are required between one half acres and two acres. Above two acres, three prototypes are required. The difference between typologies must include a variation of internal planning and exterior elevation treatments. End unit variations are not a separate prototypes.
8. Pedestrian paths on the side of housing clusters that connect the front to the rear and located between the townhome clusters where the unit entry is on the opposite side must be a minimum of 12 feet wide with a minimum 4 foot sidewalk and the adjacent areas fully landscaped. Bay windows of 2.5 foot projections may penetrate this area as long as no windows directly face each other across its width.
9. All major, general public pedestrian passages between clusters must be a minimum of 16 feet wide. A minimum 4 feet perimeter of planting areas and pedestrian amenities such as seating areas must be incorporated in the design and are required throughout the pedestrian way. Such amenities can include bicycle racks or other mobility devices.
10. Tandem parking is permitted for a maximum of 50% of the units, but must be equally distributed between the clusters.

11. A Cul-de-Sac arrangement of parking entries between clusters is permitted. Vehicles in such a parking scheme cannot cross a pedestrian path that provides access to the unit entries on the opposite side or connects to another series of garages across an intervening pedestrian path. Safety barriers must be provided at the border between the vehicles and the pedestrian path. If the Cul-de-Sac is also the garbage pick-up area, barriers at the border to pedestrian paths must be removable during garbage pick-up periods.
12. All Townhome projects 40 units or greater must provide centrally located common green spaces or linear public pedestrian paths such as Paseos equivalent to a minimum of 5% of the gross property area of the Townhomes.. Such areas must be exclusively for pedestrian use.
13. The design of the Townhome project must integrate its internal pedestrian, bike and vehicular system with the surrounding areas in order to maintain the connectivity and continuity.
14. Prominent site areas at the major visual corners of the project must be emphasized with structures that, like the cluster corner units, are distinct and identifiable than their neighboring Townhomes, which can be achieved by utilizing at least 3 of the modulations noted in a-e of # 3 above.

ARB Ad Hoc Objective Zoning Committee:

David Hirsch, Chairman
Yingxi Chan, Commissioner