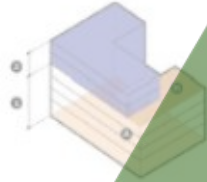




Site Design



Massing

OBJECTIVE STANDARDS

Multifamily & Mixed Use Housing

Height Transitions & RM-40 Setbacks
City Council

April 11, 2022

www.cityofpaloalto.org

OVERVIEW

- Objective Standards Project
- Process & Schedule
- Revised Ordinance:
 - Height Transitions
 - RM-40 Setbacks
- Next Steps
 - Objective Design Standards
 - Existing vs. Proposed “Crosswalk” of Standards



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
 - *Height transitions and setbacks = clarifying ambiguities*



TWO ORDINANCES

Height Transition & RM-40 Setback Ordinance

First Reading
Tonight

Objective Design Standards Ordinance

- Objective design standards
- Contextual height transitions
- Privacy/sight line standards
- Detailed “crosswalk” comparison of existing and proposed standards
- Other changes to Title 18

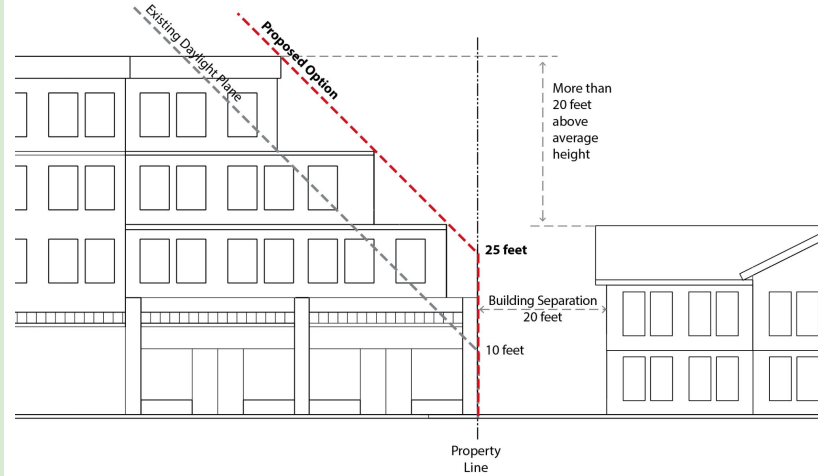
First Reading
May 16, 2022



CITY OF
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RECAP: 11/8/21 COUNCIL MOTION

- In RM-40, retain 25-foot front setback *(tonight)*
- Adopt height transition for ambiguous height standards *(tonight)*
- Add contextual height standard (ex: “no part of building can be more than X ft. higher than lowest adjacent building height...”) *(May 16, 2022)*



PREVIEW DETAILED COMPARISON OF EXISTING VS. PROPOSED STANDARDS

Council Motion (11/8/21):

- Detailed side-by-side comparison of the existing Context-Based Design Criteria and the proposed new laws

See Project Website:
bit.ly/ObjectiveStandards

Will be updated based on 4/7 ARB Recommendations

City of Palo Alto

Objective Design Standards Project

Crosswalk Matrix of Existing and Proposed Design Regulations

February 10, 2022

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

- Blue italics indicate staff comments, which identify redundancies, proposed deletions, and elements that are not addressed.
- Green text indicates purpose statements, which convey design priorities and clarify the intent of design standards.
- Draft standards are shown in normal black text
- Revisions to standards/purpose statements 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 Purpose Statement
(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 Purpose Statement 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 façade by... (B) A minimum façade break of four feet in width, two feet in depth, and 32 square feet of area for every 36 to 40 feet of façade length.



PROCESS & SCHEDULE

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

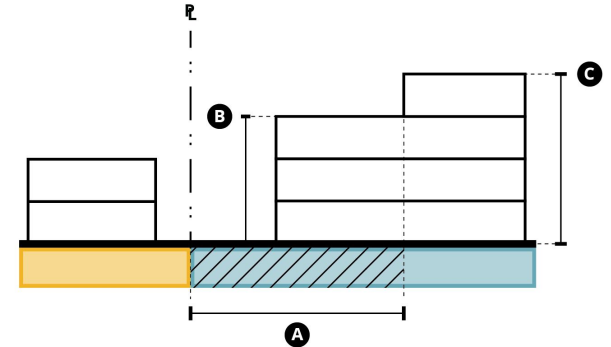
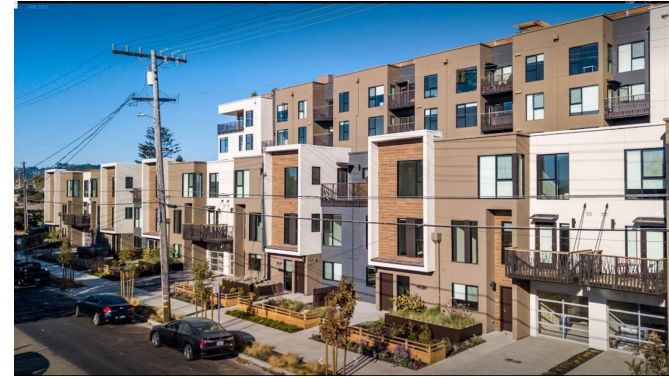



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EXISTING HEIGHT STANDARDS


Most zoning districts establish two height limits:



1. General standard
2. Reduced height limit when adjacent to an abutting lower density residential zone (except RM-40 and PC zones, typically)



 Residential Zoning District (Other than RM-40 or PC)

 Commercial Zoning District

 Property Line

 **A** $\geq 50'$ distance from  when abutting a lower density residential district

B Maximum Building Height within **A**

C Maximum Building Height Allowed within Commercial District

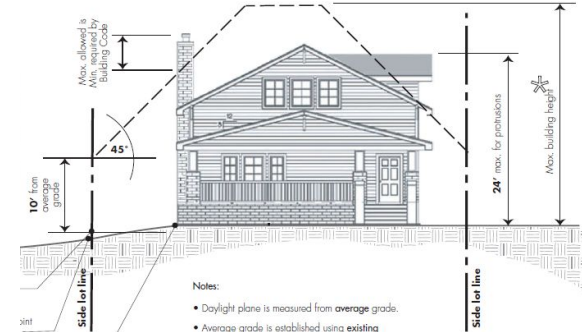
EXISTING POLICY: VARIATION BY DISTRICT

- **Variation** - Horizontal depth varies from 40 or 50 feet to 150 feet, or is sometimes not clear
 - **18.16 (CN, CC,CC(2),CS):** Existing: “Within 150 ft. of a residential zone district (other than an RM-40 or PC zone) abutting or located within 50 feet of the side.”
- **Ambiguous ≠ objective:** Problematic for City staff, decision-makers and property owners

Zoning District (Use)			General Vertical Height Standard ^C	Reduced Height Limit	
				Height Within ^B Horizontal Feet of Residential Zone	^A Horizontal Feet Distance Threshold
CD-N	Non-Residential Only	25	Max. height of abutting residential district		
	Residential/Mixed Use	35	40 50, abutting RM-40/PC		
	Non-Residential Only	25	N/A	N/A	
CN	Residential/Mixed Use	35 (40 on ECR)	35, Except RM-40 or PC	50 or 150 (Ambiguous)	
	Non-Residential Only	50	35, Except RM-40 or PC		
CC/CS	Residential/Mixed Use	50	35 50, abutting RM-40/PC		
	Non-Residential Only	37	35, Except RM-40 or PC		
CC(2)	Residential/Mixed Use	37	35 50, abutting RM-40/PC		
Office/Research/Manufacturing Districts					
MOR	Non-Residential Only	50	35	40	
	Residential/Mixed Use	35	35 N/A	150 N/A	
ROLM	Non-Residential Only	35	25 35	40 150	
	Residential/Mixed Use	35	N/A	N/A	
ROLM(E)	Non-Residential Only	35	25 35	40 150	
	Residential/Mixed Use	30	N/A	N/A	
RP	Non-Residential Only	35-40	25 35	40 150	
	Residential/Mixed Use	35	30, Except all RMs and similar density PCs	150	
Overlay/Other Districts					
PF		50	35, Except PC	150	
WH		50	35, Except RM-40 or PC	50 or 150 (Ambiguous)	
AH		50	35, Except RM-40 or PC	50, Director may waive	
PTOD		40	N/A	N/A	

EXISTING CODE: RM-40 TREATED DIFFERENTLY

- Reduced heights are typically not required for projects in commercial zones abutting RM-40
- Code acknowledges RM-40 is a higher density district with a 40-foot height limit
- Many other existing standards help modulate massing, protect privacy and light access, including daylight plane, setbacks, screening, landscaping, and fencing



1/24/22 COUNCIL MOTION

Revised
Ordinance

- A. Amend the proposed Ordinance to a 150 ft height transition zone, while leaving the abutting conditions where they already exist;
- B. Clarify if projects want to reduce the horizontal transition zone, they are opting into the discretionary process;
- C. Extend the height transition rules in Part A to RM-40 adjacent nonresidential buildings; and
- D. Investigate 18.38.150 section (b), and to incorporate RMD into the language.



**Confirmed,
with caveats**



DRAFT ORDINANCE

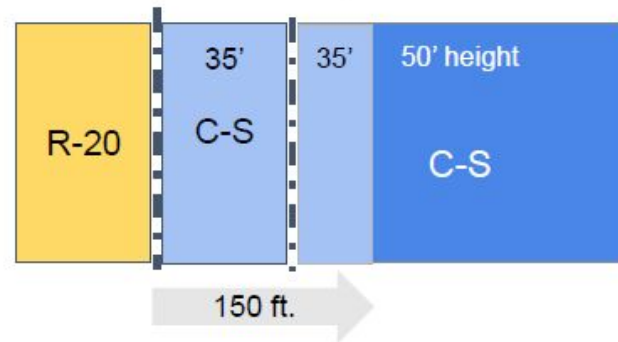
- RM-40 front and side setbacks
- Where ambiguous, revise to higher threshold:
 - Is it 50 or 150 feet? → change to 150 feet
 - Changes CN/CC/CC(2)/CS and WH Overlay
- Allow reduction by Director, upon ARB recommendation (from 150 ft. to as a low as 50 ft.) (i.e., discretionary process - **Motion Item B**)
 - Caveat: SB35/State Density Bonus Projects may request reduction as a waiver, and be still be subject to ministerial approval



DRAFT ORDINANCE: KEY REVISIONS SINCE 1/24/22

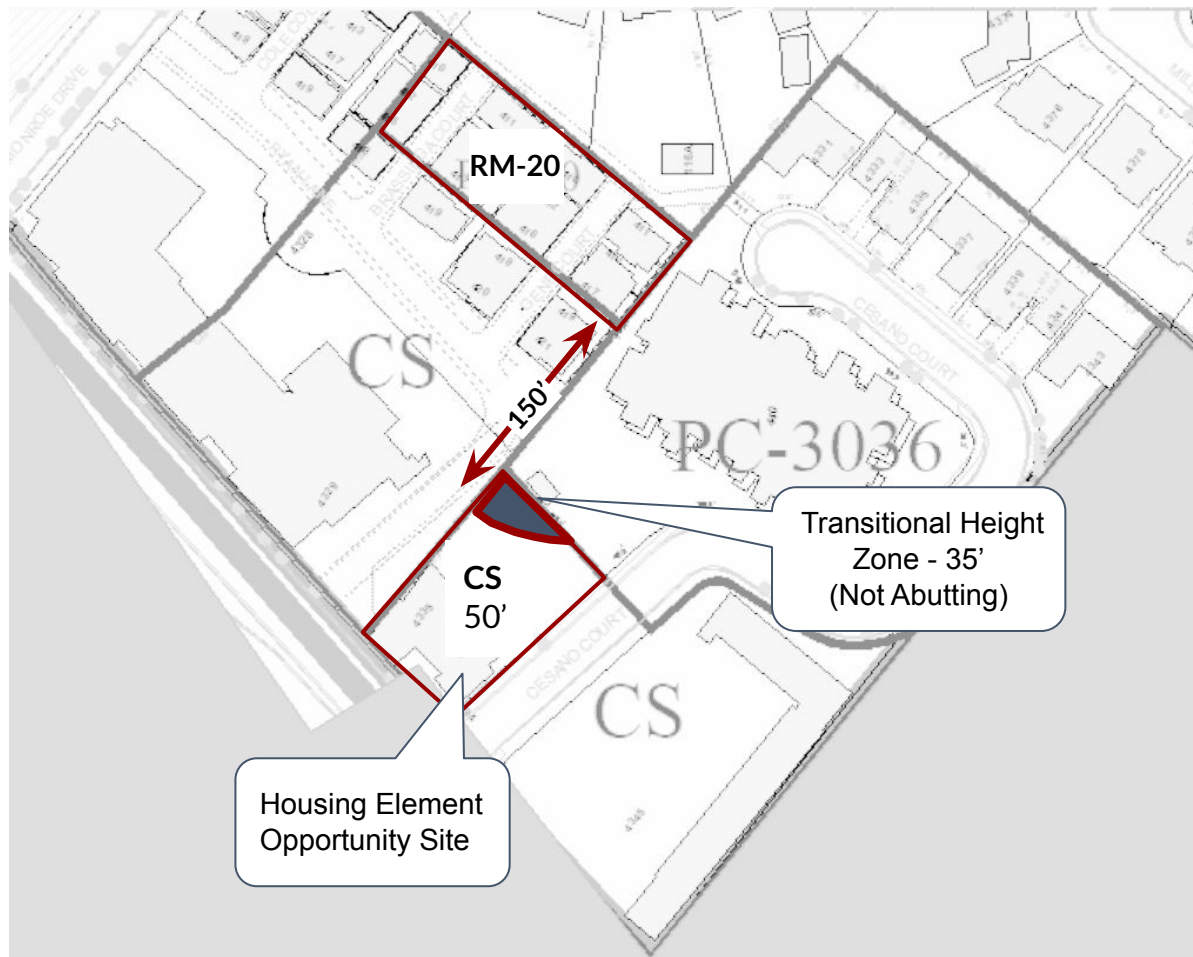
- Adds reduced height limit for non-residential uses abutting RM-40 sites (Motion Item C)
- Adds RMD to list of zones in the PC district where reduced height is required for adjacencies (Motion Item D)
- Removes previously proposed “abutting” from height standard (Motion Item A) in chapters:
 - 18.13: RM-20/RM-30/RM-40
 - 18.20: MOR/ROLM/RP/GM

Not Abutting = “Leapfrog” Scenario



LEAPFROG SCENARIO

- Would limit height of shaded portion of non-abutting residential zone to 35-foot height
- Remainder of development could build to 50-foot height



PUBLIC COMMENT

1. Apply height transition to both abutting and “leapfrog” conditions
2. Add RM-40 zone to list of residential zones where reduced height limits apply
3. Remove potential reduction from 150 ft. to 50 ft. (horizontal distance) by Director, upon recommendation from the ARB
4. Correct PC zone list of zoning districts and reference to “abutting”



REVISION TO ORD. SECTION 9 (Packet p. 264)

18.38.150 Special requirements.

Sites abutting ~~or and~~ having any portion located with ~~one hundred fifty~~ 150 feet of any RE, R-1, R-2, RMD, RM, or any PC district permitting single-family development or multiple-family development shall be subject to the following additional height and yard requirements:

- (a) Parking Facilities. The maximum height shall be equal to the height established in the most restrictive adjacent zone district.
- (b) All Other Uses. The maximum height within ~~one hundred fifty~~ 150 feet of any ~~abutting~~ RE, R-1, R-2, RMD, RM ~~20~~, or applicable PC district shall be ~~thirty-five~~ 35 feet; provided, however, that for a use where the gross floor area excluding any area used exclusively for parking purposes, is at least ~~sixty~~ 60 percent residential, the maximum height within ~~one hundred fifty~~ 150 feet of an ~~abutting~~ RM-4 30 or RM-5 40 district shall be ~~fifty~~ 50 feet.



STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that Council consider proposed changes to height transitions and other development standards (Attachment A), take public comment, and adopt the ordinance, with the following amendments:

- Section 9 - PC District (18.38.150):
 - Keep “Sites abutting **or** having...”
 - Change “...R-1, R-2, RMD, RM-20...” to “...R-1, R-2, RMD, **RM**...”
 - Remove “abutting” where added

Staff will return to Council at a future hearing with changes to objective design standards (e.g., contextual height stepbacks, privacy) and other zoning regulations based on feedback from the Council at previous meetings.