

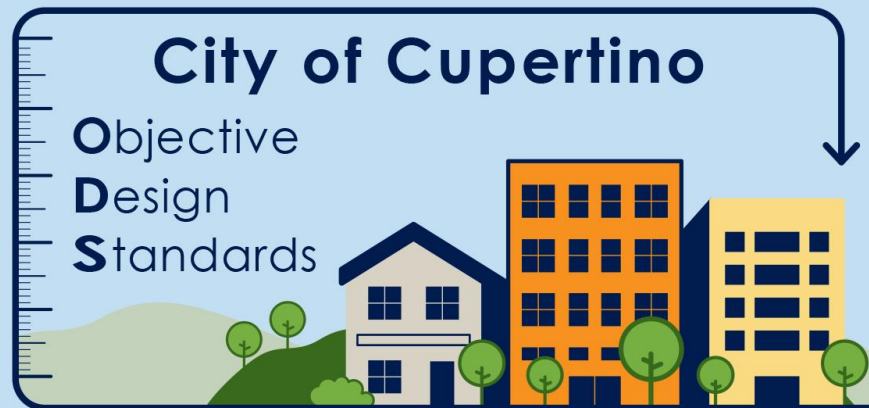
PC 7-22-2025

Item No. 2  
Study Session:  
Objective  
Design  
Standards

Presentations

# Multifamily and Mixed-Use Objective Design Standards

Planning Commission Study  
Session, July 22, 2025



# Agenda



1.

**PROJECT WELCOME**

2.

**ODS BACKGROUND REVIEW**

3.

**SAMPLE ODS PROCESS**

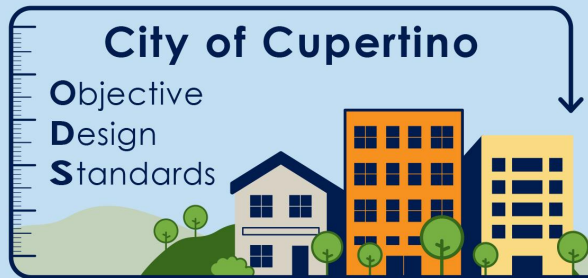
4.

**SAMPLE ODS REVIEW**

5.

**PLANNING COMMISSION DISCUSSION**

# Project Welcome







WELCOME

# PROJECT TEAM



- **Luke Connolly**

- Assistant Director of Community Development, City of Cupertino

- **Piu Ghosh**

- Planning Manager, City of Cupertino

- **Greg Goodfellow**

- Senior Associate II, PlaceWorks

- **Charlie Knox**

- Principal, PlaceWorks



**CUPERTINO**



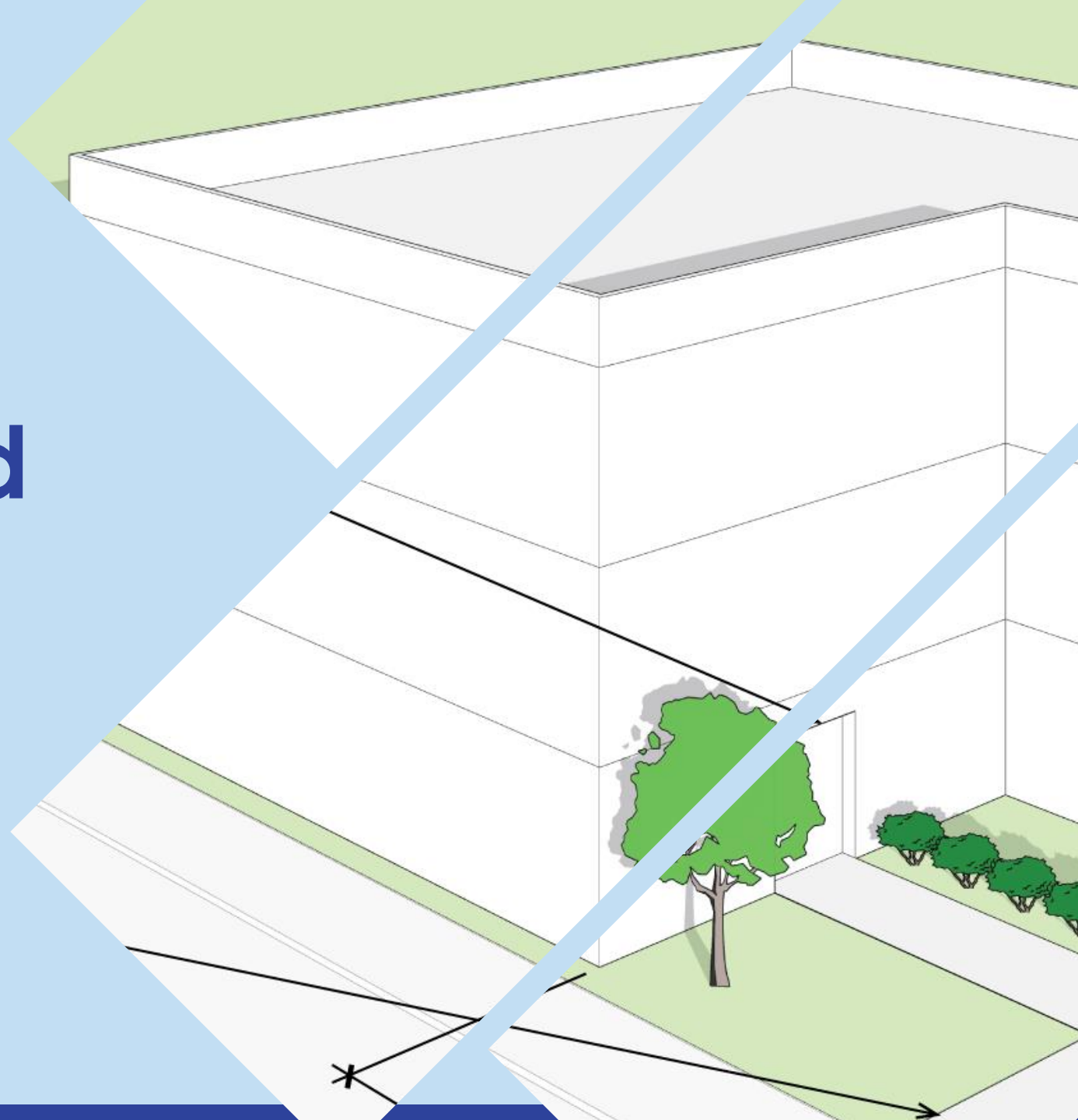
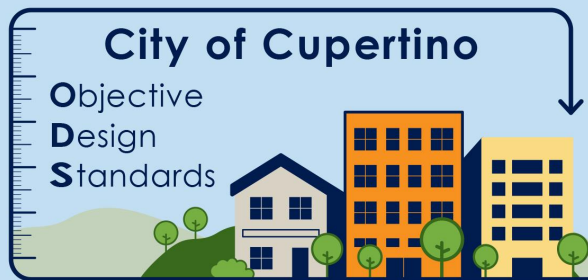
**PLACEWORKS**

# Welcome to the Cupertino ODS Project



- The City is in the process of developing **Objective Design Standards (ODS)** for all types of multi-family and residential mixed-use development projects.
- **Tonight's study session has 2 goals:**
  1. Review sample ODS developed in response to May 13, 2025 Commissioner design input.
  2. Solicit additional Commissioner feedback on ODS content, graphics, document formatting and Administrative Draft direction.

# ODS Background Review



# CA Housing: A Statewide Challenge



- Insufficient supply
- Unaffordability
- Ongoing construction challenges



## ■ Legislative Response

1. California needs multifamily housing.
2. Discretionary review constrains production.

## ■ One common provision

- » **Subjective** criteria can not be used to deny multifamily development for streamlining.



# CA Housing: A Statewide Response



## ■ Laws requiring objective criteria:

- » SB 423 (SB 35): Streamlined Ministerial Approval
- » SB 330: Housing Crisis Act
- » SB 167: Housing Accountability Act
- » SB 6: Middle Class Housing Act
- » AB 2011: Affordable Housing and High Road Job Act



## ■ SB 330: Housing Crisis Act

- » “Cities can’t disapprove...a multifamily housing project, **including through design review**...unless project is shown to be inconsistent with ‘**objective, quantifiable standards.**’”

# ODS: Applicable Development



## ■ Subject to ODS

- » All multifamily (2+ units) residential projects.
- » Includes townhomes.
- » All residential mixed-use projects with at least 30% residential.

## ■ Not subject to ODS

- » Single family homes.
- » Non-infill sites (less than 75% developed perimeter).
- » Hazardous sites.
- » Natural resource impact.
- » Wetlands site.
- » Historic impact.

# Proposed Cupertino ODS Outline

## 1. Purpose

A. Legal Background  
B. Definition

C. Organization  
D. Administration and Review

## 2. Mixed-Use & Multifamily ODS



### Typologies:

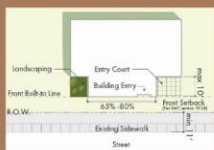
- Vertical Mixed-Use (Low-, Mid- and High-Rise)
- Multifamily Residential (Low-, Mid- and High-Rise)
- Townhomes

"Block Scale" = 2+ stories; 10+ units

**Guiding Principles:** High quality design via diverse approaches; pedestrian orientation; coordination of project, site and surrounding circulation.

### A. Site Design Design Intent Statement

- Connectivity
- Building Orientation
- Vehicle Access and Parking
- Equipment, Utilities and Storage Areas



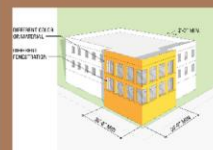
### B. Building Form Design Intent Statement

- Massing
- Facade Articulation
- Context and Scale
- Roof Form
- Equipment Screening
- Fenestration



### C. Pedestrian Experience Design Intent Statement

- Ground Floor Design
- Building Frontage Design
- Entryway Design
- Streetscape Design

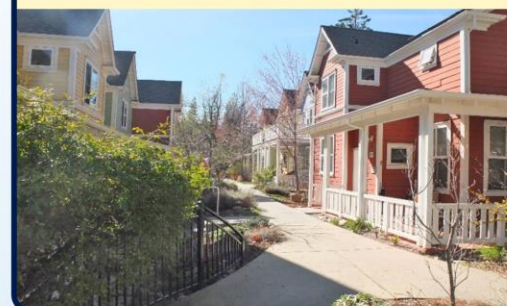


### D. Common Open Space & Landscaping Design Intent Statement

- Types: Ground Level Outdoor & Rooftop
- General Standards
- Type Specific:
  - Access
  - Amenities
  - Landscape



## 3. Small-Scale Residential ODS



### Typologies:

- Duplexes
- Triplexes
- Quadplexes
- Multiplexes
- Small, courtyard-style developments

"House Scale" = 1-3 stories; 2-10 units

**Guiding Principles:** Integration of single-family design elements, public-facing access to individual units, commitment to neighborhood scale.

### A. Duplexes, Triplexes and Multiplexes Design Intent Statement

- Orientation
- Scale
- Neighboring Roofline
- Front Elevation Massing
- Entryway Design
- Vehicle Access



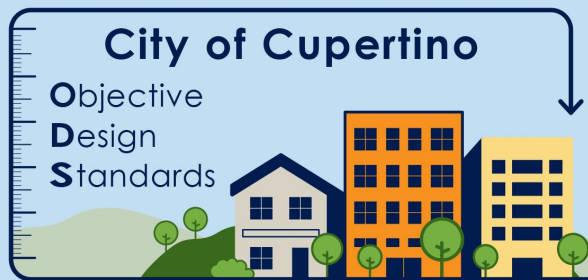
### B. Courtyard Residential Design Intent Statement

- Site Design
- Unit Orientation
- Unit Entryways
- Shared Open Space Design
- Vehicle Access





# Sample ODS Process



# Sample ODS Process



- **Commissioners provided various design feedback on May 13, 2025, Study Session.**
  - » General approach to ODS: Prescriptive or flexible?
  - » Benefits and impacts of residential design on quality of life
  - » Responses to recent design trends
  - » Local design priorities and direction
- **Project team identified 5 Planning Commission design priorities and developed potential ODS to support each.**



# Planning Commission Priorities



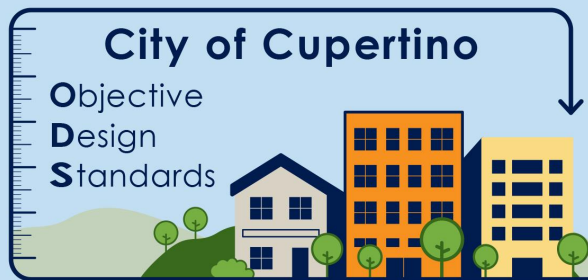
1. Ensure new buildings are sensitive to surrounding low-density residences.
2. Ensure new surface parking and loading areas are sensitive to surrounding low-density residences.
3. Minimize privacy impacts to adjacent residential development
4. Prevent a transition to a local “concrete jungle,” or heat island, with inadequate trees and greenery.
5. Activate retail visitation and promote walkability.

# Goals of this Exercise



1. **Demonstrate how ODS can be applied and adapted to various design priorities.**
2. **Allow Planning Commission and the public to review various ODS approaches and formats.**
3. **Introduce the ways in which ODS may be organized into topical sections.**

# Sample ODS Review



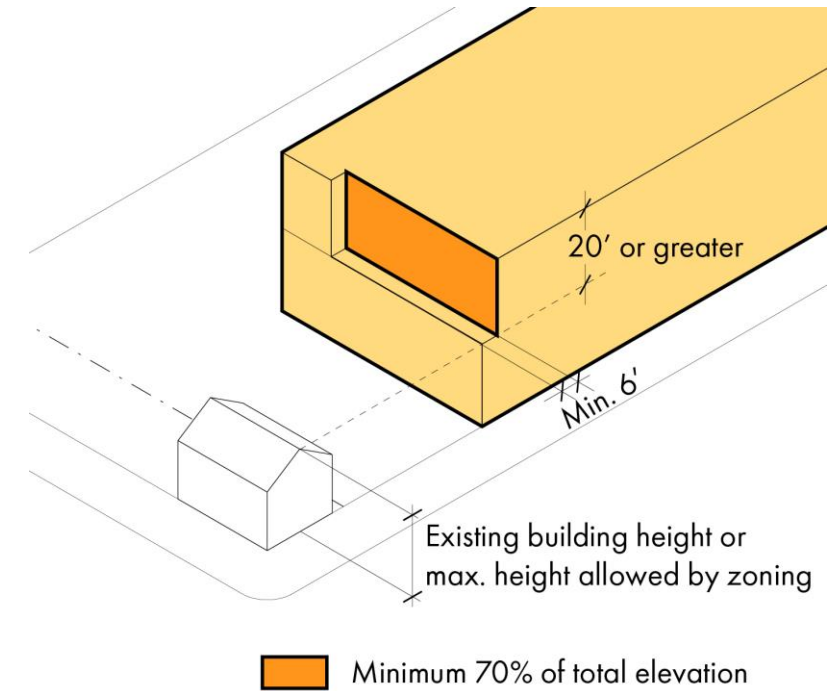
# Priority 1: Sensitive Buildings



## Standard: Side and Rear Upper Floor Step Backs

All new developments that:

- Abut low-density residential lots at an interior side and/or rear property line; and
- Are twenty (20) feet or more taller than either an existing adjacent building or the maximum height allowed by the adjacent zoning, shall incorporate side and/or rear upper floor step backs that:
  - Start within two (2) vertical feet of the height of the adjacent building or maximum allowed height.
  - Have a minimum depth of six (6) feet along the façade(s) facing low-density development.
  - Occur for a minimum of 70% of each relevant façade length.

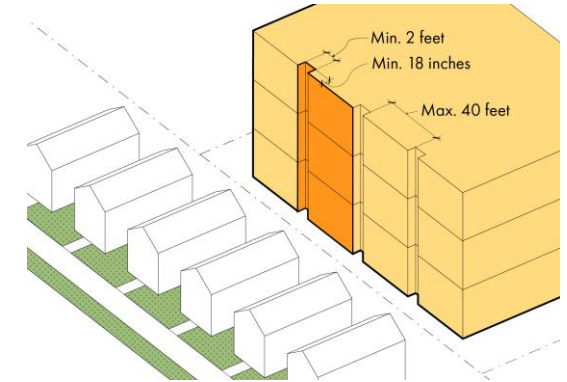


# Priority 1: Sensitive Buildings



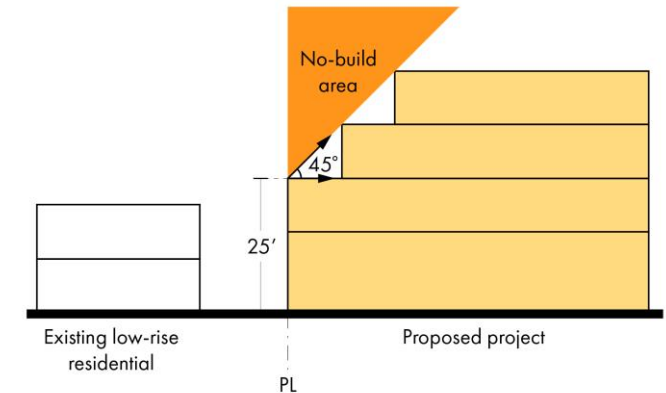
## Standard: Rear Modulation

All buildings whose rear elevation abuts a lot with low-density zoning shall include at least one façade modulation with a minimum depth of 18 inches and a minimum width of two feet, per 40 feet of façade length.



## Standard: Daylight Plane

The minimum daylight plane angle from a rear or side lot line shared with existing low-density residential districts shall be 45 degrees, as measured from 25 feet above grade at the subject property line, perpendicular to the property line.





# Priority 1: Sensitive Buildings



## Standard: Façade Wrapping

The same materials and finishes must be uniformly applied on all exterior elevations to create four-sided architecture.

## Standard: Side and Rear Façade Details

The side and rear façades of new developments abutting low-density residential lots at an interior side and/or rear property line shall incorporate each of the following:

- a. Window heads and sills that align horizontally with those on front façade and are consistent with privacy standards in Section xx.
- b. At least one of the following decorative elements used in the front facade:
  - Light fixtures
  - Vent gables
  - Trellis or arbors

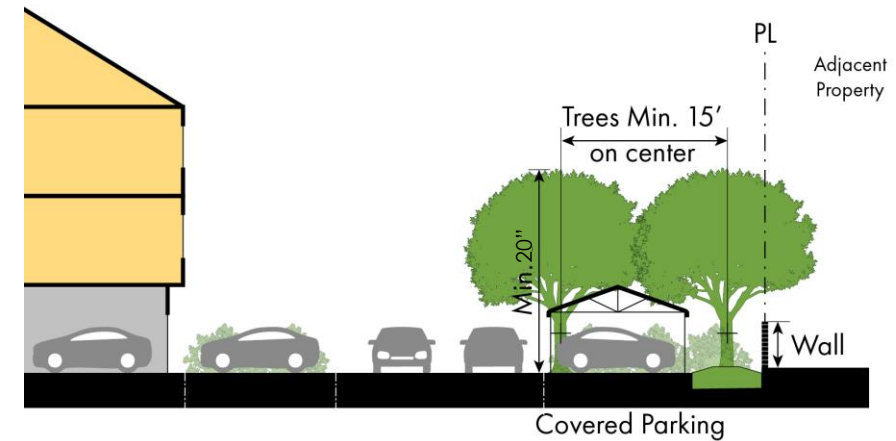
# Priority 2: Sensitive Parking & Loading



## Standard: Design of Surface Parking Abutting Low Density Residential

Figure x illustrates standards for the design of interior parking lots that abut low density residential properties. The following additional standards shall apply:

- a. Wall. The height of the wall at the shared property shall be at least eight (8) feet, as measured from highest adjacent grade. It shall be a solid masonry material construction, colored to match the primary building.
- b. Landscape Buffer. The landscape buffer shall be planted with trees planted at least fifteen (15) feet on center and with a mature height of at least twenty (20) feet. All relevant parking lot buffer standards in Section xx shall also apply.
- c. Covered parking. All parking abutting the property line shall be covered by a roofed structure without vertical walls, composed of either materials that complement the primary project building or photovoltaic shade structures.



# Priority 2: Sensitive Parking & Loading



## Standard: Solid Waste Facilities

All solid waste storage containers shall be designed and located to minimize visual and circulatory impacts to proposed and adjacent development. The following shall be true of all solid waste collection facilities:

### a. Siting:

- Trash collection facilities shall be sited so as not to block project circulation or driveways.
- Trash collection facilities shall be located outside a sixty (60) foot radius from the nearest residential entry.

### b. Screening:

- Trash collection facilities shall be enclosed on all four sides, one of which includes an access gate that opens the full width of the enclosure.
- Enclosers shall include a roof providing adequate clearance to open receptacles.
- Enclosures shall be composed of at least two (2) materials and colors used on primary project structures.



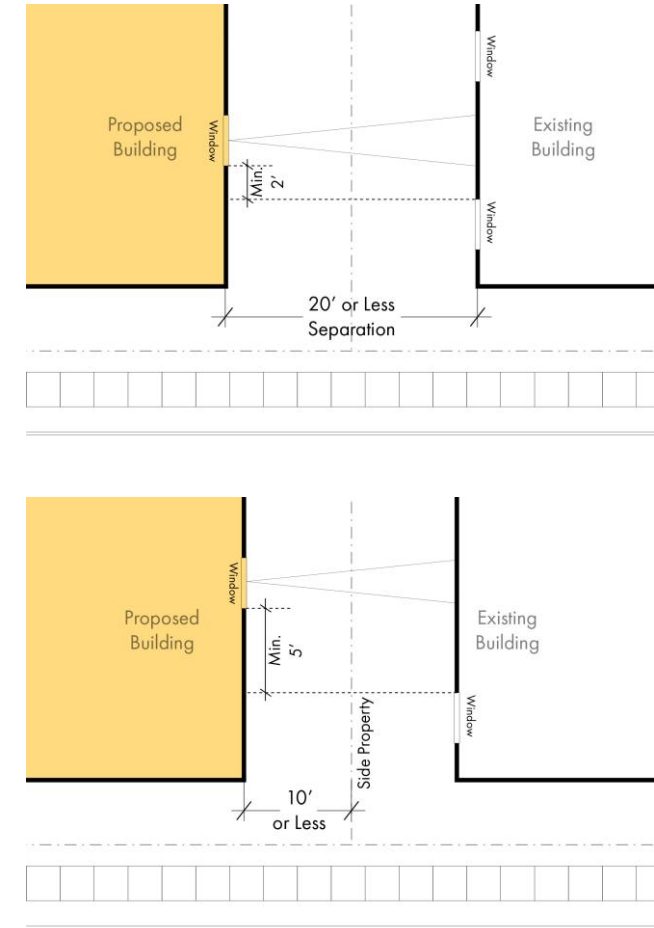
# Priority 3: Minimize Privacy Impacts



## Standard: Upper Floor Window Placement

When a proposed multi-story, multifamily or mixed-use building would be located near existing low-density residential buildings, upper floor windows of the proposed buildings shall be oriented to avoid a direct line of sight into all adjacent buildings. The following shall apply:

- When a proposed building would be located within twenty (20) feet of an existing building, windows shall be offset horizontally from the existing windows by a minimum of two (2) feet.
- If the proposed building would be located within ten (10) feet of a side property line, side windows shall be offset horizontally by a minimum of five (5) feet from windows of the nearest residential building on the adjacent property.
- Windows on any floor to a non-habitable room such as a bathroom or closet may be excepted from this standard if the minimum windowsill height is five (5) feet and the window has frosted or privacy glass.



# Priority 4: Avoid “Concrete Jungle”



## Standard: Street Trees in Sidewalk Landscape Zone

All sidewalks surrounding new multifamily and mixed-use projects shall include a dedicated landscape zone between the pedestrian zone and the street. The landscape zone shall include at least one street tree for every 30 feet of linear feet of sidewalk length. Street trees shall:

- a. Be planted within six feet of the sidewalk.
- b. Be selected for consistency with City of Cupertino plans, ordinances, approved planting lists.





# Priority 4: Avoid “Concrete Jungle”



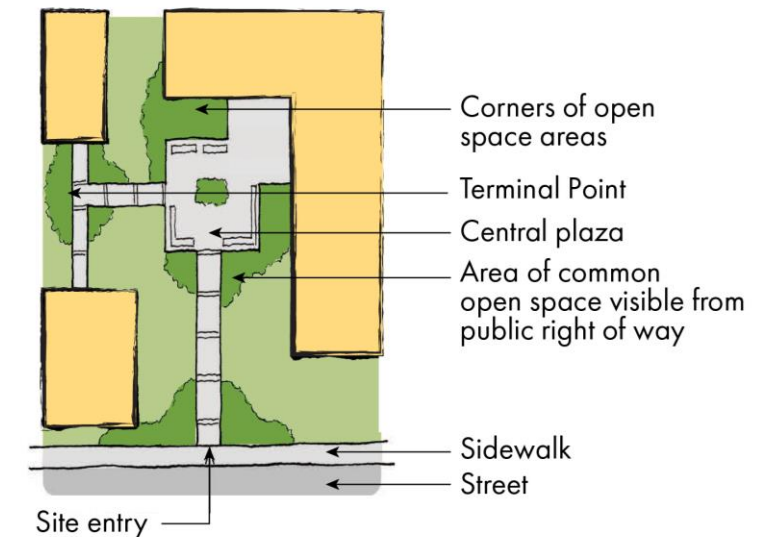
## Standard: Physical Focal Point Landscaping

Physical focal points of new development project sites shall be landscaped to increase sitewide green cover and strengthen the visual impact of the landscape plan. Physical focal points include the following:

- Central plazas or other permanent gathering facilities in common open space areas.
- Terminal points of pedestrian pathways
- Site entries
- Areas of common open space visible from the public right of way
- Corners of open space areas

Each physical focal point shall provide at least one of the following landscape treatments:

- Climate-adapted flowering plants.
- Plants with foliage of a texture or color that differs from the larger landscape palette of the site.
- Up to five types of ornamental plants.



# Priority 5: Activate Retail and Walkability

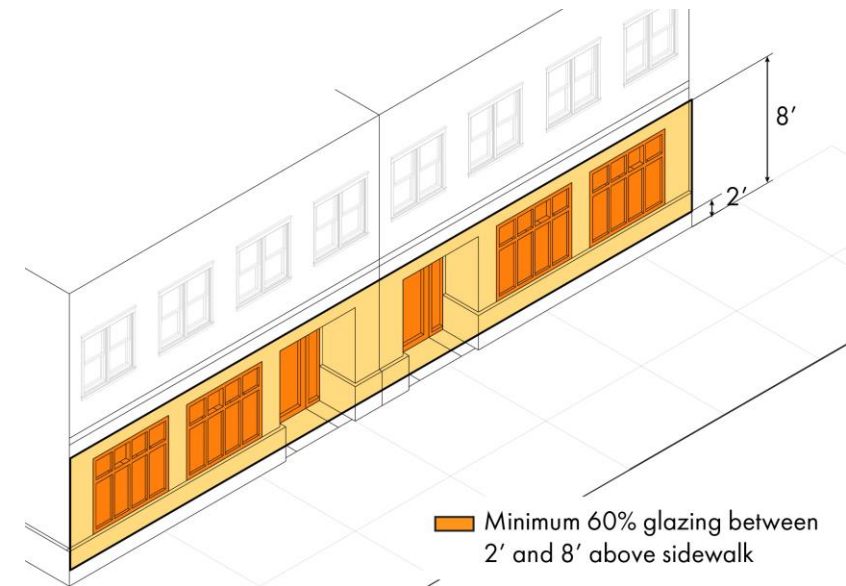


## Standard: Commercial Ground Floor Dimensions

- Ground Floor Finish Level: Zero (0) feet at entries.
  - Exception: Ground floor finish level is subject to Cal. Code Regs., Title 24 and site-specific conditions.
- Ground Floor Height: Minimum fourteen (14) feet floor-to-floor or shall match the ground floor height of an abutting building.

## Standard: Commercial Ground Floor Glazing

Ground floor elevations shall have at least sixty (60) percent transparent glazing between two (2) and eight (8) feet above sidewalk level.

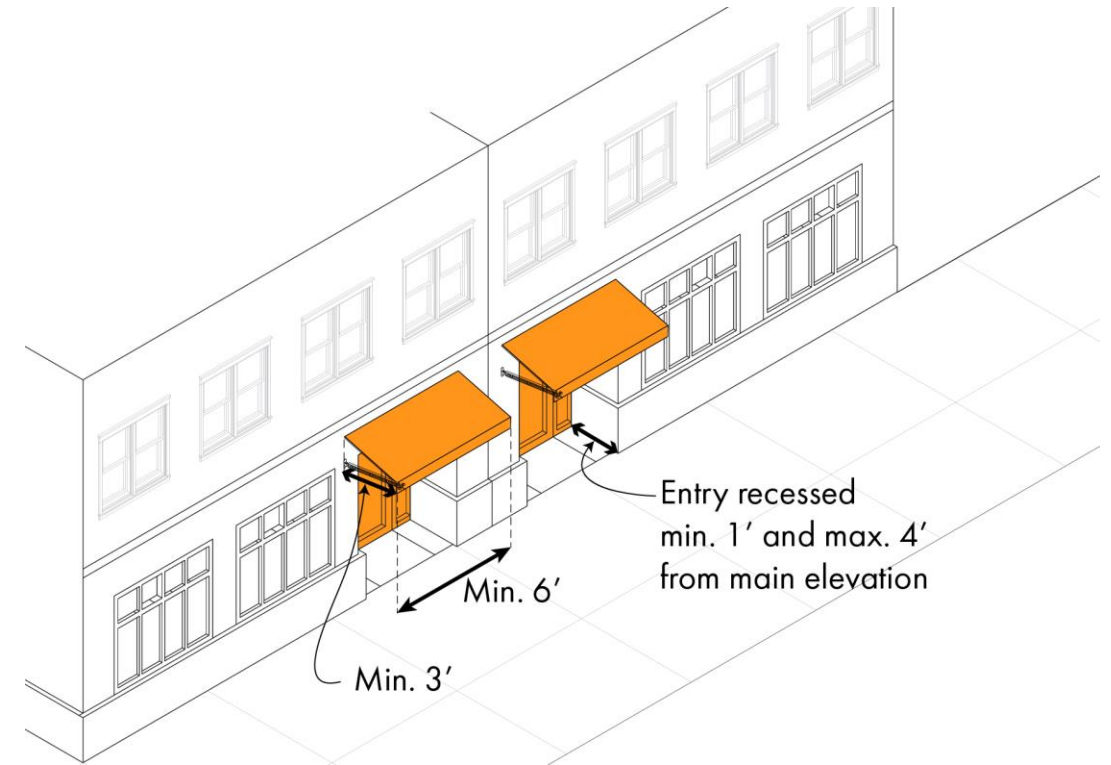


# Priority 5: Activate Retail and Walkability



## Standard: Primary Commercial Entries

- a. Primary entries shall be recessed between one (1) and four (4) feet from the main elevation.
- b. Primary entries shall provide full ingress and egress during business hours, including unobstructed movement of all doors.
- c. Each primary entry shall include awnings or weather protection at least six (6) feet wide and three (3) feet deep, composed of metal, wood, glass, slate, or concrete, and without openings.



# Planning Commission Discussion



# Discussion Questions



1. To what degree are the standards themselves consistent with your expectations regarding content, level of prescriptiveness and design topics?
2. How well do the sample standards and graphics demonstrate that diverse design priorities can be fulfilled with objective standards?
3. Describe your response to the overall layout, visual organization and packaging of the sample ODS.
  - a. What components would you retain?
  - b. What components would you change, remove or add?
4. What direction, requests and/or concerns would you like to see reflected in the Administrative Draft ODS document?