



Objective Design Standards

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1. What are the Objective Design Standards?

In response to new State legislation, the City is undertaking an effort to modify existing subjective development standards and guidelines related to site planning and building design for all new multiple family and mixed-use residential projects. This involves translating existing subjective design guidelines into a set of objective design standards.

The City is developing Objective Design Standards that conform with the City's vision and design expectations to guide future development. The standards will be utilized to streamline the review and permitting process for future multiple family and mixed-use development proposals. The intention is to ensure these new projects are compatible with existing neighborhoods, including the City's downtown area and commercial corridors, and reflect the uniqueness and context of Arcadia.

The City is creating the Objective Design Standards so developers, design professionals, applicants, property owners, City staff, decision-makers, and residents will have clear and consistent direction to apply in the preparation and review of multiple family and mixed-use residential project submittals.

2. Why is this happening now?

The State of California has adopted recent legislation to address the State-wide housing shortage and now requires a streamlined process for specific multiple family and mixed-use residential developments.

All cities in California must adopt clear regulations to expedite housing development and remove discretion in review of multiple family and mixed-use residential housing developments.



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The two most relevant laws are SB 35 (applicable to any housing development with 50% or more units dedicated to affordable housing) and the SB 330 Housing Accountability Act (applicable to housing developments of two or more units). These laws do not impact single family residential or commercial/industrial development that does not include housing.

Without Objective Design Standards in place, the City would not have the ability to control the look of multiple family and mixed-use residential developments in Arcadia. The City also would not be able to deny a multiple family and mixed-use residential project based upon noncompliance with existing subjectively written standards and design guidelines.

3. What is the SB 2 Planning Grant Program?

To assist Cities with developing the Objective Design Standards, the State developed the SB 2 Planning Grant Program (PGP) to provide financial and technical assistance to local jurisdictions.

In early 2020, the City applied for and received funding under the SB 2 Planning Grant Program to fund this project which will result in compliance with new State law requirements.

4. What does the Development Code currently regulate? Will Objective Design Standards replace the Development Code or other policy documents?

The City's zoning code (Development Code) regulates building height, setbacks, density/intensity, and various other development controls which are objective in their application. These new Objective Design Standards will not replace existing development standards found within the Development Code or Specific Plans.

The new Objective Design Standards will supplement the existing standards found in the zoning code, specific plans, and existing design guidelines with objective criteria that provides an additional level of clarity and specificity to regulate site layout, building orientation, building design, pedestrian connections, etc.

5. How will Objective Design Standards be applied?

- The new objective standards will only apply to new multiple family and mixed-use projects proposed after the City's adoption of the Objective Design Standards.
- They will not apply to single family homes exempt from design review or commercial and industrial projects that do not contain a residential component.
- An application will be subject to a discretionary review process if they choose not to adhere to all of the standards, if a General Plan or zoning amendment is requested, or if the project would result in significant public health and safety impacts.

6. What are some examples of how Objective Design Standards provide additional direction compared to subjective Design Guidelines?



Objective Design Standards

Subjective Design Standards

- Demonstrate preferences while allowing discretion and flexibility.
- Lack specificity and may allow for personal opinion and arbitrary interpretation.

Objective Standards

- Involve no personal judgment by a public official or decision maker.
- Provide quantifiable and concise direction for when and how to apply development requirements.
 - Utilize photographs and graphics, where needed, to clarify standards and illustrate expectations for the level of quality and design.

	Subjective City Design Guidelines	Objective Sample Design Standards
Site Planning	Long expanses of fence or wall surfaces should be offset and architecturally designed to prevent monotony , and landscape pockets should be provided. (Example from Multi-Family Residential Design Guidelines, Section 3c)	New residential fencing and walls shall not exceed 20 feet in length without a 3' minimum offset with landscape pockets provided for a minimum of 25% of the overall length. 
Building Design	Large blank walls adjacent to the street frontages are strongly discouraged . (Example from Commercial & Mixed Use Design Guidelines, Section 4e)	No building façade (wall) visible from a public street shall extend 50 feet in length without a 5-foot minimum variation in the wall plane.
Utilitarian Design	The quality of light, level of light, and type of bulb or source should be carefully selected and placed so that lighting levels do not draw attention to the glow or glare of the project site, and timers and sensors should be incorporated to avoid unnecessary lighting . (Example from Multi-Family Residential Design Guidelines, Section 13i)	Exterior light sources shall be controlled with cutoffs to prevent illumination exceeding 0.2fc at the property line.



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7. Is Design Review eliminated?

No. Design review may still be required for certain projects and application types, such as:

- Projects not subject to SB 330 streamlining, such as single-family, commercial, and industrial projects.
- Multiple family and mixed-use residential projects not requesting a streamlined objective review pursuant to SB 330.
- Multiple family and mixed-use residential projects requesting a streamlined ministerial approval process but not meeting ALL required objective design standards.

8. Can we still use existing design guidelines?

Yes. The existing design guidelines will continue to be used for certain projects and application types, such as:

- Projects not subject to SB 330 streamlining, such as single-family, commercial, and industrial projects.
- Multiple family and mixed-use residential projects not requesting a streamlined objective review pursuant to SB 330. These projects may deviate from the objective design standards, but then will be subject to design guidelines and the discretionary review process.

9. What other cities have adopted Objective Design Standards?

Several Cities throughout California have adopted and codified objective design standards for new, multi-family and mixed-use residential projects in compliance with State laws. In addition, many San Gabriel Valley cities are currently in the process of preparing objective standards using SB 2 Planning Grant Program funding.

10. When is the public review period?

The Objective Design Standards are available for public review and comment from until July 22, 2022.

A public hearing will be held before the Planning Commission on July 26, 2022 at 7:00 PM. The public hearing will be held at the City Council Chambers at 240 W. Huntington Drive.

11. How can I stay informed?

Visit the City's Objective Design Standards webpage at ArcadiaCA.gov/objectivedesign to:

- Review materials as they become available
- Sign up for email updates
- View information on upcoming Planning Commission and City Council Public Hearings



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12. What if I have questions?

City Staff is available to answer your questions. Please contact:

Development Services Department, Planning Division

Fiona Graham, Planning Services Manager

Phone: (626) 574-5442

Email: fgraham@ArcadiaCA.gov

In Person: Arcadia City Hall

240 West Huntington Drive, Arcadia, CA 91007