



City of Milpitas Objective Standards Project

Project Overview

The City of Milpitas is creating a project to create objective design standards for all new multi-family and mixed-use projects in the city. Recent state laws require local jurisdictions to adopt objective standards and streamline their housing development and review process to ensure high quality design and facilitate efficient delivery of new residential units.

California State Senate Bill 330, also known as SB 330, requires individual jurisdictions that have not yet achieved their respective State-mandated housing goals to establish a clear and impartial approval process for multi-family housing projects.

Today, the City primarily relies on the Zoning Ordinance and two Specific Plans to address the character of new residential development. These documents include objective development regulations and subjective design guidelines. The goal of this project is to create objective design standards that applies citywide. These design standards will allow flexibility in design, but require key elements that support the pedestrian experience, create human-scaled buildings, and preserve the character of Milpitas' neighborhoods. These objective design standards will be formally adopted as a stand-alone document once approved by City Council.

What are Objective Design Standards?

Objective Design Standards are defined by State law as standards that:

“[Involves] no personal or subjective judgement by a public official and is uniformly verifiable by reference to an external and uniform benchmark or criterion available and knowable by both the development applicant or proponent and the public official before submittal of an application.” California State Senate Bill 330 (Section 66300.7)

These standards typically contain **concise** and **quantifiable language** that are designed for **consistent interpretation** by designers, reviewers applicants, and approval bodies.

The language is **clear and explicit in its direction**, and **balances flexibility** in design with a **universal set of rules** that facilitate an **efficient review process** and result in buildings that are appropriate for their context and environment.

Why are Objective Design Standards Necessary?

The goal of objective design standards is to eliminate the need for personal interpretation and uncertainty, in favor of language that encourages a transparent and streamlined review process. Previously, local development standards often contained ambiguous or unclear standards and requirements for residential development.

Individual applicants and planners would both have to interpret and negotiate vague terminology such as **“high quality,”** **“consistent design,”** or **“sensitive to local context.”** This level of subjectivity and lack of clarity often resulted in inconsistent interpretations, as well as prolonged approval processes that impeded the creation of new housing and development.

Examples of Subjective Guidelines and Objective Standards

Subjective Language

Provide articulation to reduce the apparent mass and scale of the building, and to be sensitive to the neighborhood context.



Objective Language

For every 100 feet of building length, there shall be a place-break along the facade comprised of an offset of at least 5 feet depth and 25 feet in length.



Where will these standards apply?

Objective design standards will apply to new projects that are either:

1) Multi-family projects

(defined as 2 or more dwelling units)

2) Mixed-use projects

(combination of residential and other uses)

New single-family homes, commercial-only projects, and other project types still need to meet existing development standards in the Zoning Ordinance, Specific Plan design guidelines (if applicable), and if discretionary approval is required, additional standards on a project-by-project basis

Project Schedule

