

**RESIDENTIAL DESIGN STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES FOR THE  
UNINCORPORATED COMMUNITIES OF WEST ALAMEDA COUNTY  
CHAPTER 8.2  
OBJECTIVE STANDARDS FOR MULTI-FAMILY AND MIXED-USE DEVELOPMENT**

**Adopted by the Alameda County Board of Supervisors per Ordinance O-2023-XX  
on November 09, 2023**

These Objective Standards for Residential and Mixed-Use Residential Development are applicable to (1) new construction, reconstruction, additions, and remodels of residential dwelling units and mixed-use residential developments of more than one dwelling unit, (2) affordable housing dwelling units, and (3) mixed-use residential affordable housing developments of any number of units.

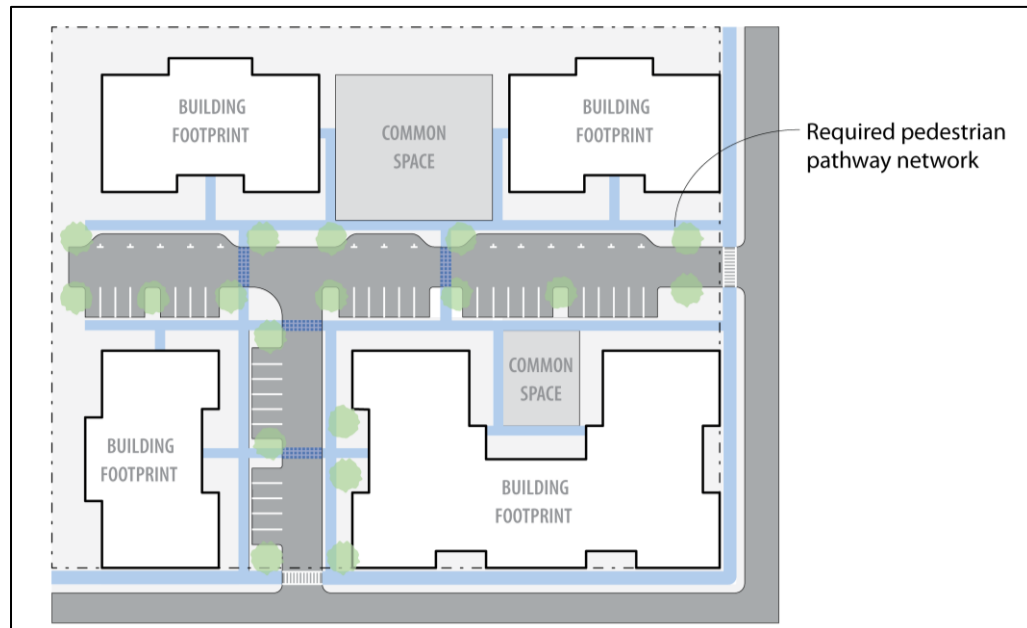
A multi-family residential development is a multi-story building that has a shared entry lobby, and common access areas such as hallways or stairways that lead to individual units. Mixed-use residential development is typically a multi-story residential building with commercial uses on the ground floor.

When a project proposes a residential development type, including but not limited to townhome, small-lot single-family, and detached single-family, that is typically built to a lesser density than the project parcel's General Plan designation, the project must conform to the applicable standards for the proposed housing type.

**A. SITE STANDARDS**

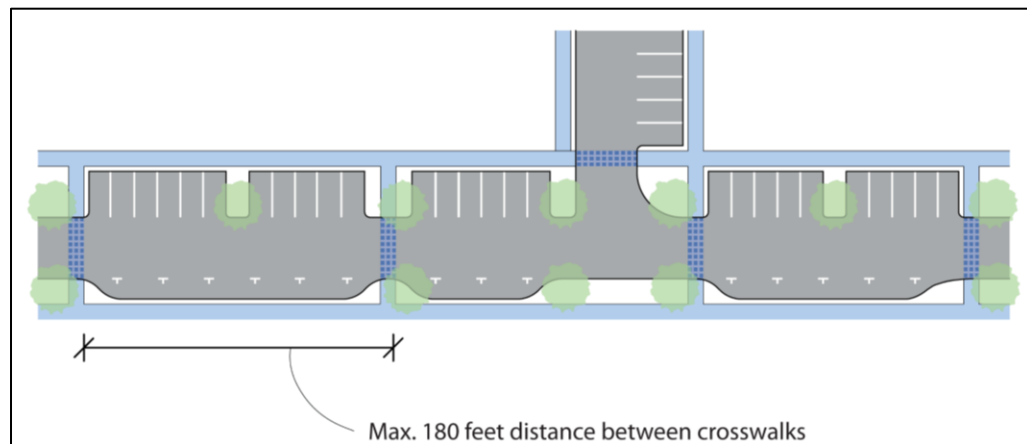
**1. Access**

- 1.1. For projects with 5 or more units, all structures, entries, facilities, amenities, and parking areas shall be internally connected with paved pedestrian pathways. The pathway network shall also connect from the building entrance to the public sidewalk along the street frontage. In a mixed-use project, residential and commercial spaces shall have access via pedestrian pathways to the public sidewalk.



**Figure A.1.1**

- 1.2. For mixed-use or residential projects with internal streets or surface parking areas, if the pedestrian pathway network internal to the site crosses a private street or a vehicular drive aisle, a crosswalk shall be provided at a minimum of 1 crosswalk for every 180 linear feet of street or drive aisle.



**Figure A.1.2**

- 1.3. All parking areas shall be internally connected and shall use shared driveways within the development.
- 1.4. Loading docks and service areas shall be integrated into the building and site design.
  - a. Loading docks and service areas, when required, shall be located on facades other than the primary building frontage: along alleys, parking

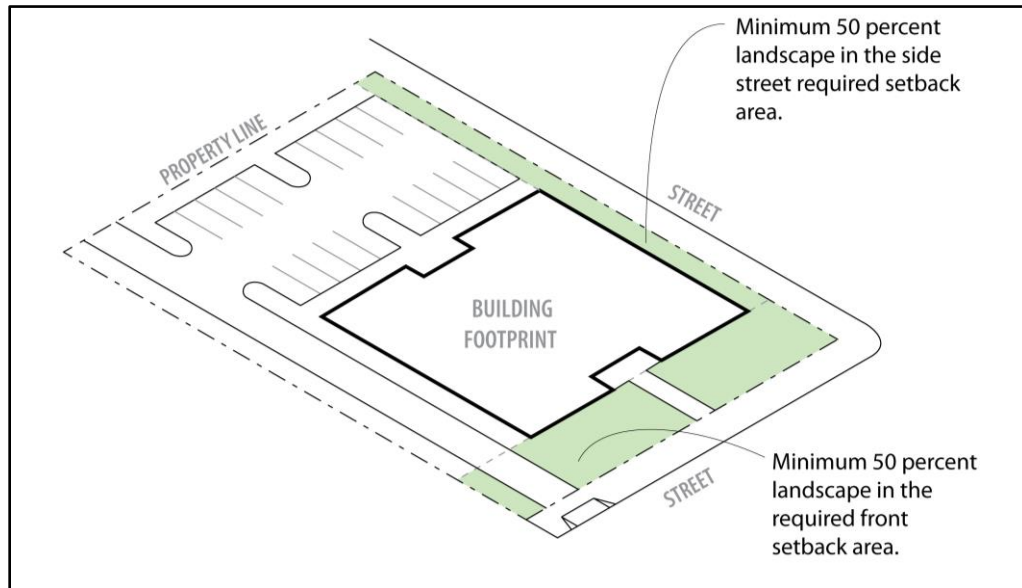
areas, or at the rear or interior side of the building. Loading docks and service areas are prohibited in the front setback area; for corner parcels, loading docks and service areas are prohibited in the setbacks of both street facing frontages.

- b. Loading and service areas, when required, shall be screened from views from buildings and open spaces with landscaping, fencing, or walls to provide separation from pedestrian access to the building and bicycle paths.
- 1.5. Pedestrian crosswalks in driveways or parking lots shall be demarcated with decorative paving materials or paint colors contrasting with the vehicular access material. Decorative paving material includes brick, patterned colored concrete, stone blocks, and pavers.
  - 1.6. Driveways and garage entries shall be located at the side of a building frontage, or side or rear of the lot frontage.
  - 1.7. Carports shall be located behind or to the side of the building. No parking spaces shall be located within 20 feet of a street-facing property line. Carport roof materials shall be the same as the primary building.

## **2. Landscaping and Screening**

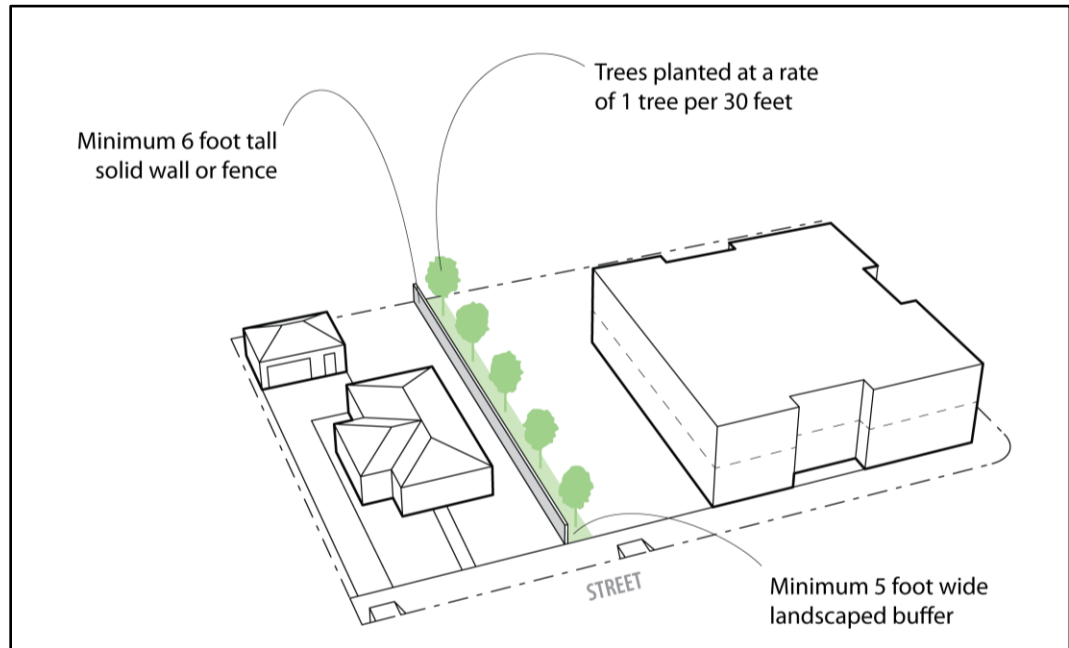
- 2.1. Landscaping shall be in the form of trees, hedgerows, flowerbeds, mulch, decorative gravel or stone, or ground cover vegetation, and shall comply with the State's Water Efficient Landscape Ordinance (AB 1881), as amended and incorporated into Alameda County's WELO Ordinance, along with Alameda County's Stormwater Management Requirements, as outlined in the Municipal Regional Permit (MRP).

At least 50 percent of the front and street side required setback areas shall be landscaped. However, no more than 25 percent of the front and side street required setback areas shall be non-vegetation material or hardscape material, which includes mulch, decorative gravel, and stone.



**Figure A.2.1**

- 2.2. To maintain privacy on adjacent properties, a minimum 5-foot-wide landscape buffer shall be provided between multi-family or mixed-use development and abutting single-family residential properties. The buffer shall include a solid wall or fence with a minimum 6-foot height and canopy trees planted at a rate of 1 tree per 30 feet.

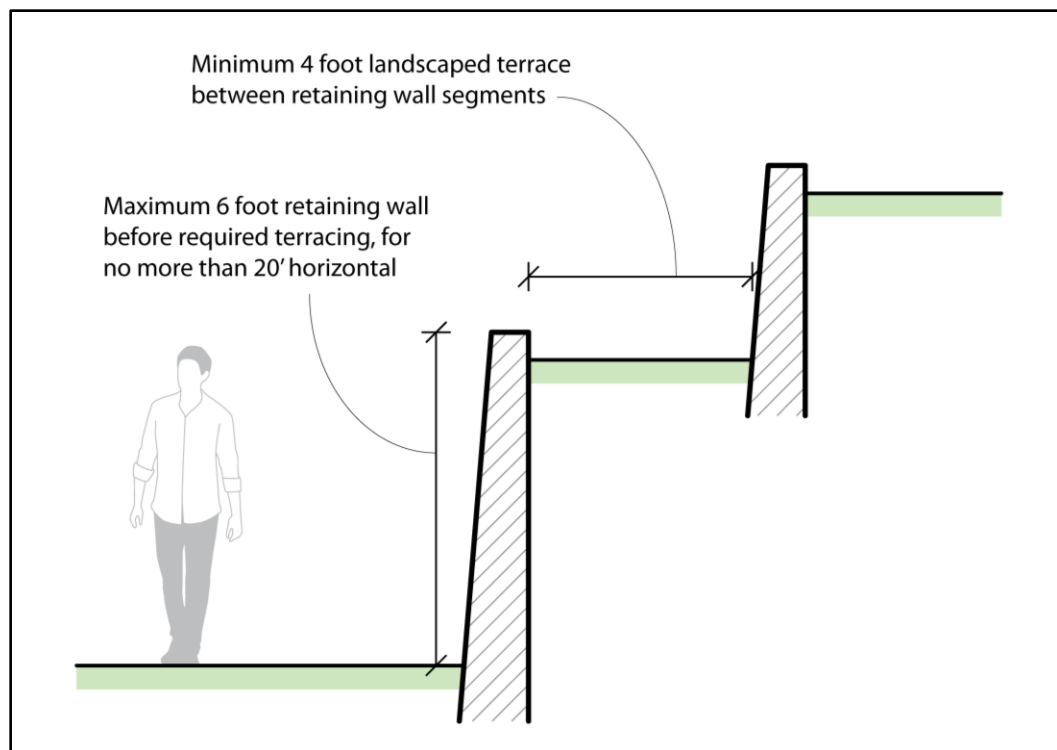


**Figure A.2.2**

- 2.3. Views into surface parking lots for multi-family or mixed-use development from a right-of-way or adjacent pedestrian paths shall be screened with landscaping, such as a hedgerow or shrubs, or a wall with a minimum 3-foot height.
- 2.4. Trash, storage, and utility areas detached from the building shall be completely screened on all sides by landscaping or an enclosure that complies with the Municipal Regional Permit (MRP) and is constructed of durable materials such as stone, concrete block, steel, or heavy timber. A gate may be provided for access on one side of the enclosure. The placement of any trash enclosure and the internal site vehicular circulation shall be designed to enable direct straight-in, straight-out access to the trash enclosure by a garbage collection vehicle.

2.5. Retaining walls located within 20 feet of a public right-of-way shall conform to the following conditions:

- Retaining walls that are not part of a building shall have a maximum height of 6 feet.
- Retaining walls with a height greater than 4 feet shall not have a horizontal measurement of greater than 20 feet per retaining wall, and 40 cumulative feet for all such walls.
- Retaining walls with a height greater than 4 feet shall use multiple-terraced walls and landscaping along each wall.
- Terraced walls shall be separated by at least 4 feet.



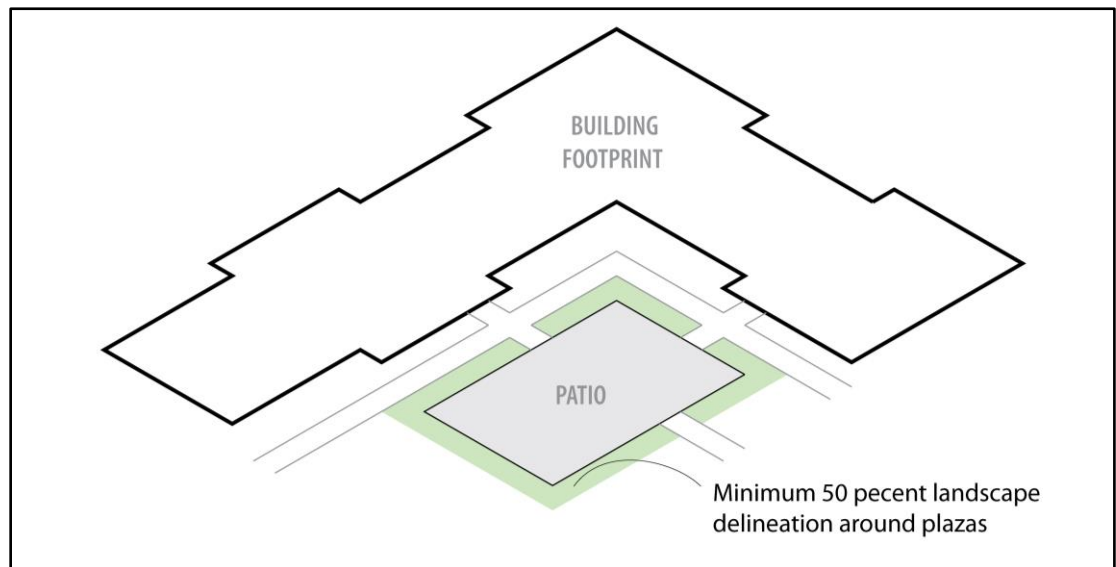
**Figure A.2.5**

2.6. Razor wire, chain link, or chain link with slats are prohibited fencing materials for street frontages.

### **3. Open Space**

3.1. Stormwater management shall comply with the Alameda County requirements under the Clean Water Act permit (Municipal Regional Stormwater Permit of November 19, 2015, or more recently adopted) and per the Alameda County Engineering Design Guidelines.

- 3.2. For multi-family or mixed-use development, private usable open space, such as balconies, patios, and porches, shall be directly accessed by adjacent individual units. For ground floor units, the private usable open space areas may also be accessed from shared pedestrian pathways or community open spaces through a gate.
- 3.3. Common open spaces shall include passive recreational features such as benches, tables and chairs, trails, social gathering areas, and children’s play areas.
- 3.4. Paved gathering areas, such as plazas or patios, shall be delineated with landscaped edges or enclosures for a minimum 50 percent of the total length of each edge combined to define the space.



**Figure A.3.4**

- 3.5. Common usable open space shall include overhead coverage for a minimum 20 percent of the minimum required common usable open space. The overhead coverage shall be provided by features such as canopies, trellises, or similar structures with open-air features.
- 3.6. A minimum of 60 percent of a common usable open space area shall be free of permanent weather protection or overhead human-made encroachments. Tree canopy or foliage is not considered an overhead encroachment.

#### 4. Parking Location and Design

- 4.1. Surface parking lots are prohibited between the street and the building. Parking lots shall be located at the side of a building or at the rear of the building. No parking spaces shall be located within 20 feet of a street-facing property line; however, for parcels with no required side setback, no parking spaces shall be located within 10 feet of a public or private street-facing property line.
- 4.2. No individual open-air parking lot shall exceed 10,000 square feet. Individual open-air parking lots shall be separated by a building or common usable open space, to reduce the visual impact of surface parking lots and reinforce the pedestrian scale.

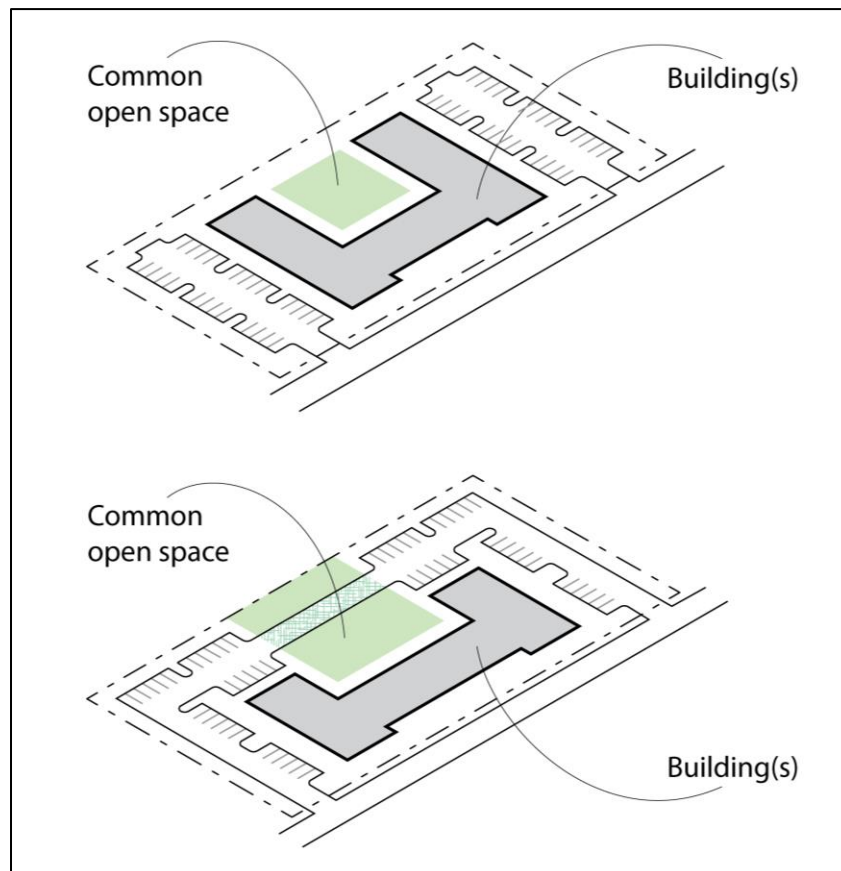


Figure A.4.2



## **5. Other Site Elements**

- 5.1. Pedestrian-oriented lighting shall be provided along all pedestrian paths. Pedestrian-oriented lighting fixtures shall be a minimum 3 feet and maximum 12 feet in height.
- 5.2. Pedestrian and vehicular lighting, including security spotlights, shall be fully shielded and restrain light to a minimum 30 degrees below the horizontal plane of the light source to not cast light into windows of buildings on adjacent lots. Up-lighting is prohibited.
- 5.3. Ancillary service and utility facilities, such as trash receptacles, utility meters, and electrical panels, are prohibited along street facing facades. These facilities shall be completely screened with landscaping, fencing, or walls that meet requirements provided in the *Residential Standards and Guidelines for the Unincorporated Communities of West Alameda County*, page 6-7.

## B. BUILDING DESIGN

### 1. Massing and Scale

- 1.1. Multiple story building walls that face a public right-of-way or publicly accessible easement and exceed 60 feet in length shall provide breaks in building mass by implementing a minimum of 2 of the following solutions:
- A minimum of 40 percent of the upper floor(s) façade length shall step back from the ground-floor façade by at least 5 feet. For three-story buildings, the façade shall step back above the ground floor; for buildings taller than three stories, the façade shall step back above the second story.

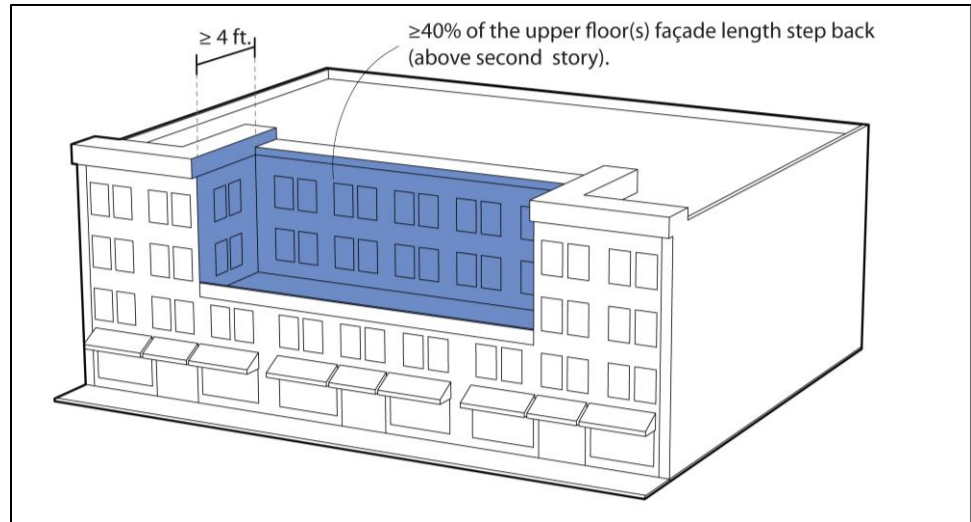
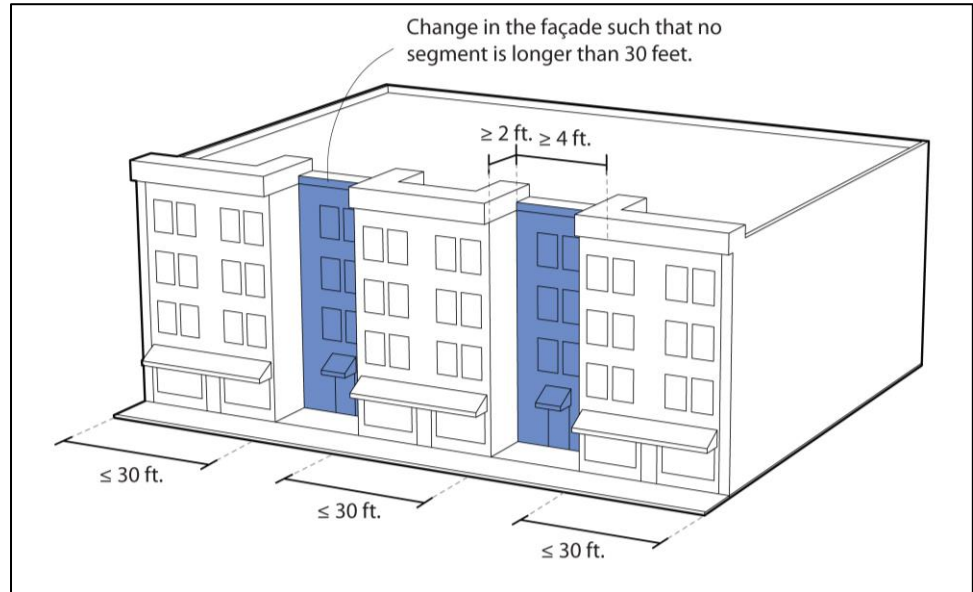


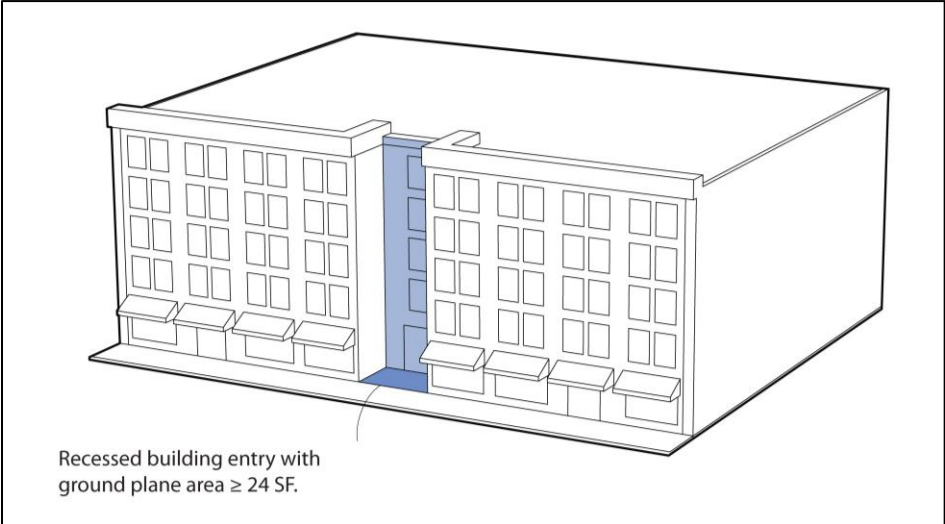
Figure B.1.1a

- b. Introduce a change in the street-facing façade for a minimum length of 5 feet at a minimum depth of 2 feet such that no segment of the façade is longer than 30 feet.



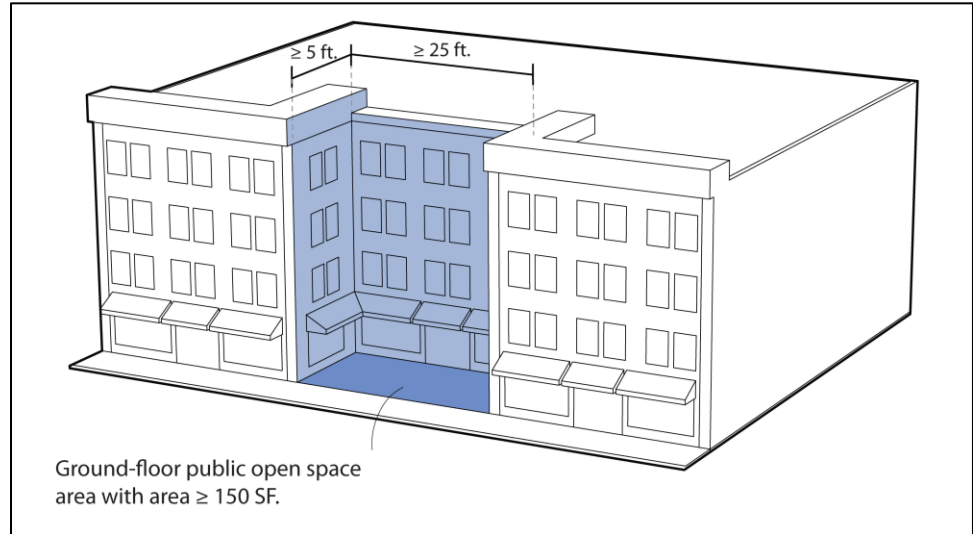
**Figure B.1.1b**

- c. Provide recessed building entries for the full height of the façade with a minimum ground plane area of 24 square feet.



**Figure B.1.1c**

- d. Provide a full-height recess in the wall plane to accommodate a ground-floor publicly accessible open space area with a minimum dimension along the façade of 25 feet for a minimum depth of 5 feet and a minimum area of 150 square feet.



**Figure B.1.1d**

## 2. Roof Design

- 2.1. Mansard roofs are prohibited on buildings with a height less than 4 stories.
- 2.2. For building façades facing a public right-of-way or publicly accessible easement and exceeding 60 feet in length, rooflines shall be vertically articulated so that no segment is longer than 40 feet along the street frontage with at least one of the following techniques:
  - a. A change in wall or roof height of a minimum 4 feet

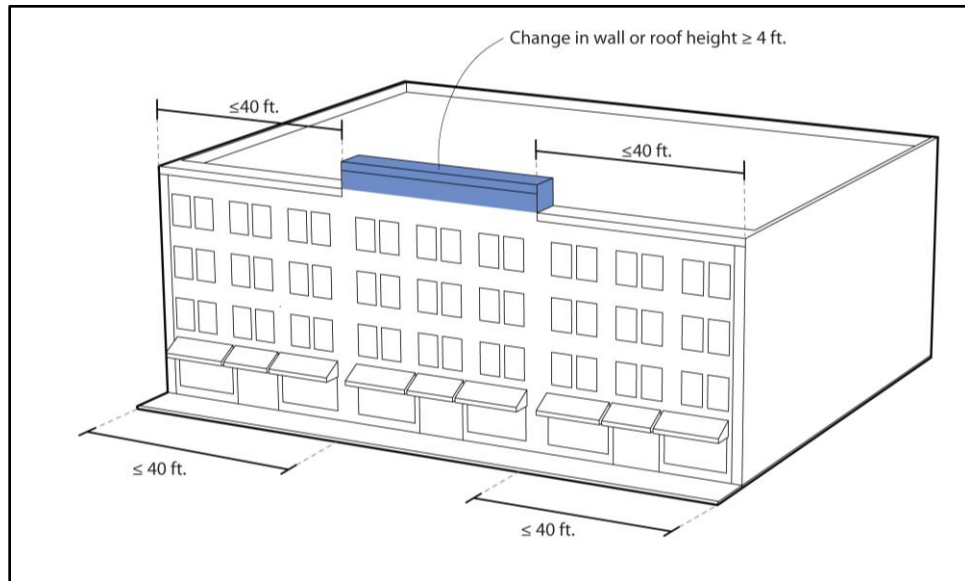
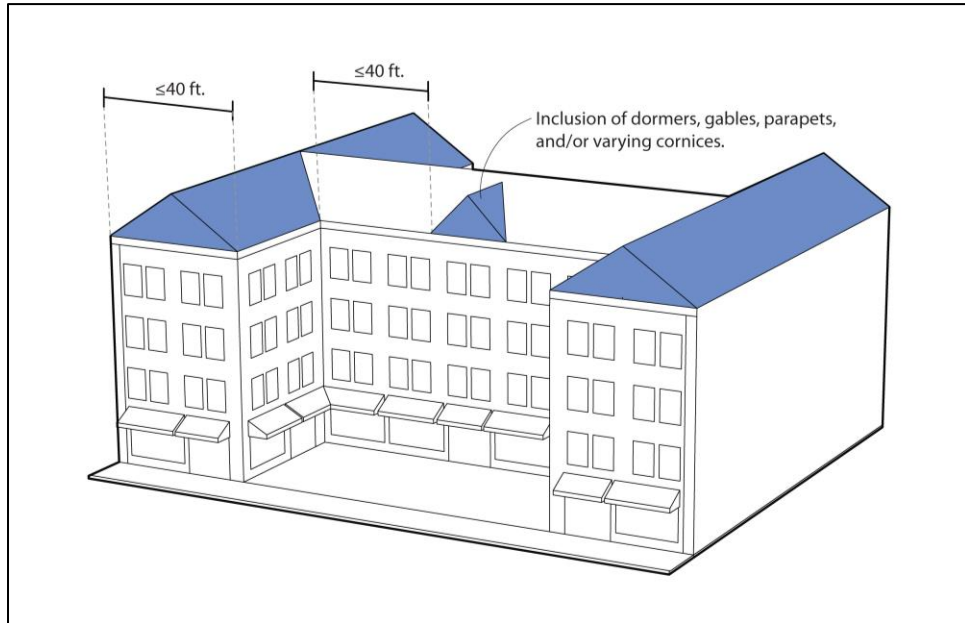


Figure B.2.2a

- b. A change in roof pitch or form
- c. The inclusion of dormers, gables, parapets, and/or varying cornices



**Figure B.2.2b-c**

- 2.3. Utility or mechanical equipment attached to or on the roof of the building shall be completely screened from view from public rights-of-way by an enclosure, parapet, or roof with a minimum height of 1 foot above the height of the equipment being screened.

### 3. Façade Design and Articulation

- 3.1. Building façades facing a public right-of-way, on-site parking lot(s), or shared private streets shall be comprised of a minimum of two materials, each of which shall be a minimum of 30 percent of the total façade.
- 3.2. For multi-family and mixed-use buildings, garages shall comply with the following requirements.
  - a. Garages shall occupy no more than 40 percent of the building width of any street-facing façade
  - b. Garage doors shall be recessed a minimum of 6 inches from the building façade.
- 3.3. Building façades facing a public right-of-way, on-site parking lot(s), or shared private streets, and that are greater than 2 stories in height and 75 feet in length shall not maintain a continuous façade plane greater than 80 percent of the façade length without an upper level modulation, implemented in one of the following ways:
  - a. Recess. The modulation shall be applied to all levels above the second floor for a minimum recessing depth of 4 feet.

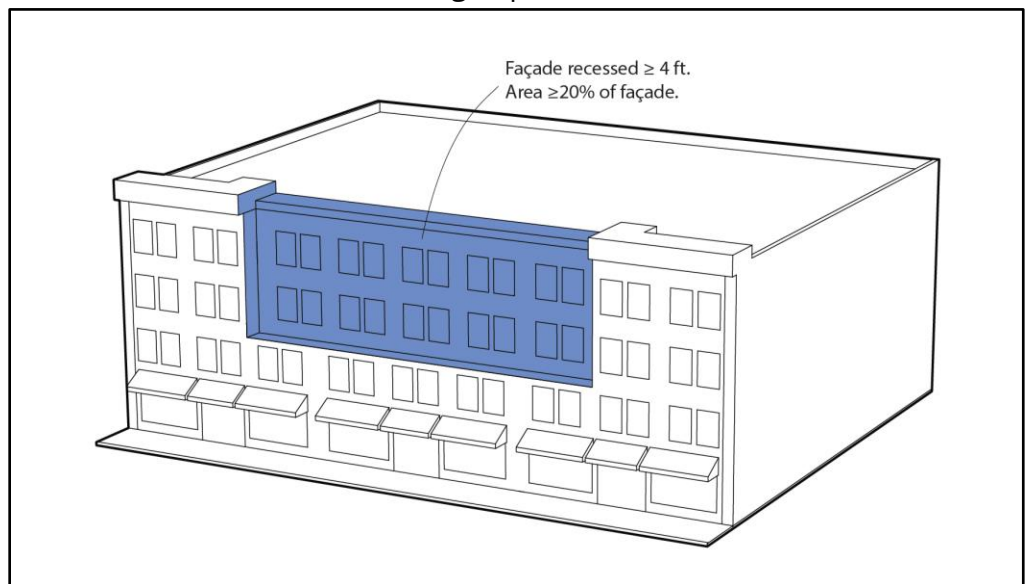
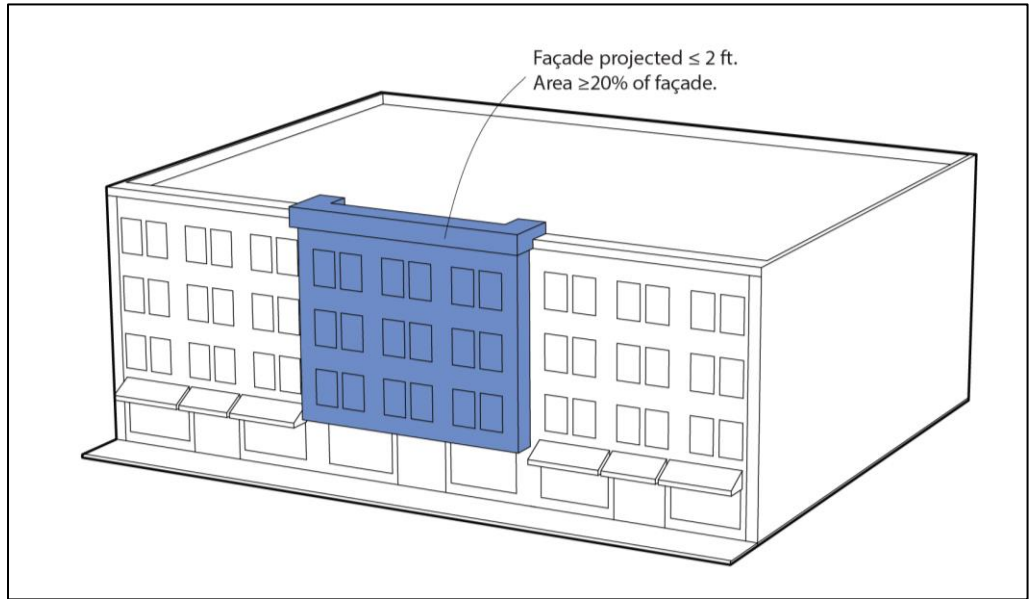


Figure B.3.2a



- b. Projection. The modulation shall be applied to all floors above the ground floor for a maximum projecting depth of 2 feet.



**Figure B.3.2b**

- 3.4. All building facades shall be articulated using at least two of the following methods:
- a. Balconies or habitable projections with a minimum 4 feet in depth for a minimum 20 percent of length of the façade
  - b. Horizontal and/or vertical projections a minimum 4 inches in depth, such as awnings, canopies, porches, or decorative architectural details
  - c. Variation in building materials along the façade, not including windows; each façade shall be comprised of a minimum of two materials, each of which must comprise a minimum of 20 percent of the façade square footage.
  - d. Columns or other architectural features that are at least 2 feet wide and extend a minimum of 60 percent of the height of the facade.
  - e. Vertical elements, such as pilasters, which protrude a minimum of 8 inches from the wall surface and extend the full height of the facade.

- 3.5. For any new building that is located 10 feet or less from an existing residential building on an adjacent property, the edge of any upper-floor window shall be offset from the edge of any of the existing building's upper-floor windows by no less than 3 feet.

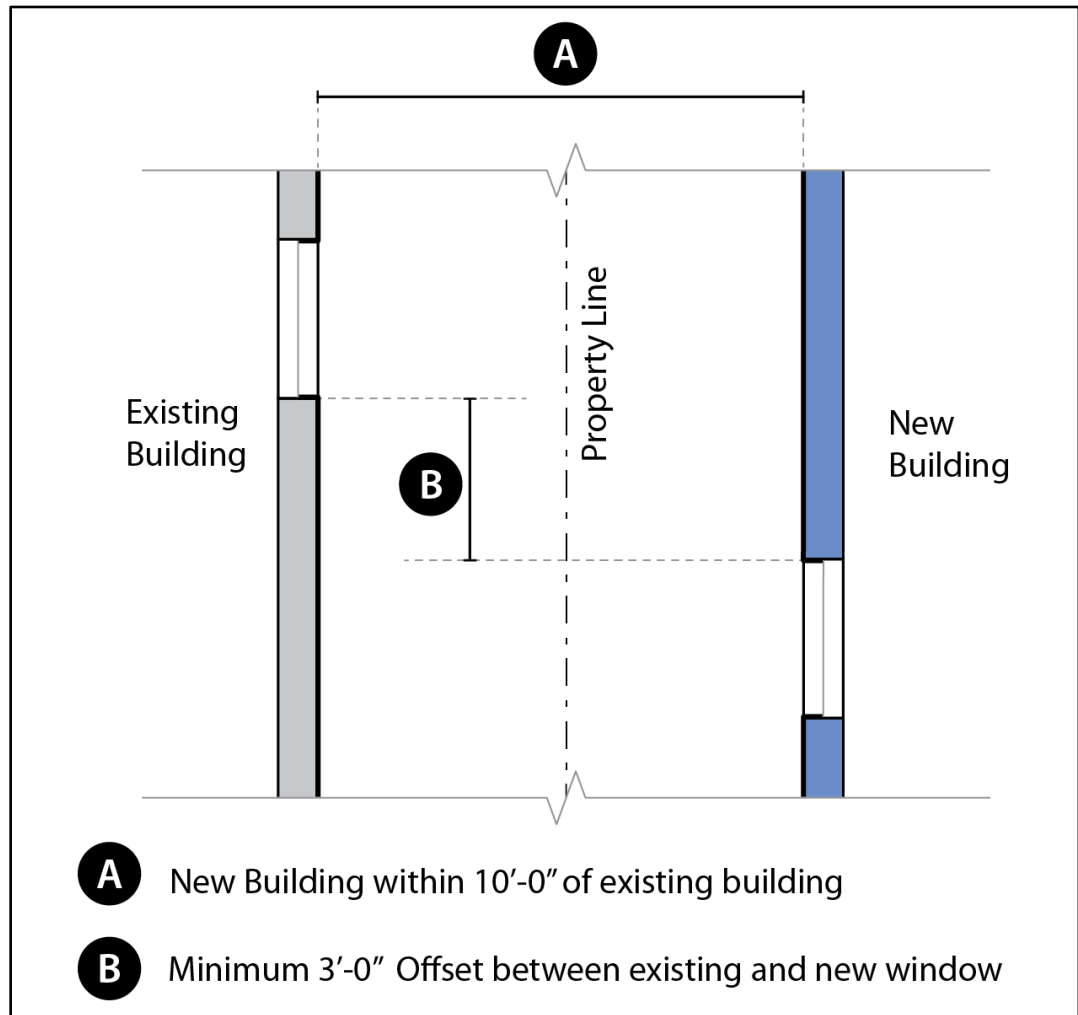


Figure B.3.4

- 3.6. For any new building that is located 20 feet or less from an existing residential building on an adjacent property, any balcony shall be offset so that the edge of the balcony is no closer than 3 feet from the edge of any of the existing building's upper-floor windows.

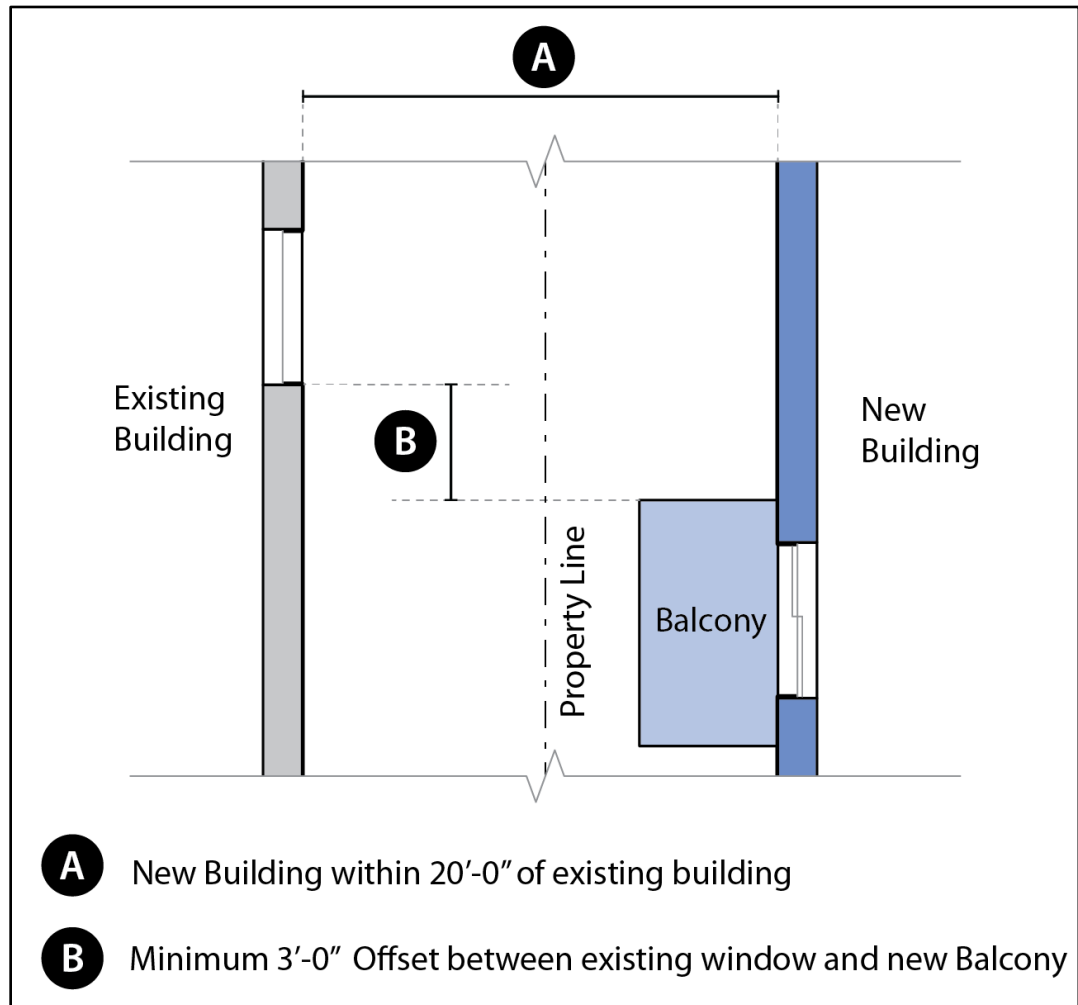


Figure B.3.5

- 3.7. Scored plywood and aluminum siding are prohibited materials.
- 3.8. Building entrances shall incorporate at least three of the following features:
  - a. Decorative trim with a minimum 2-inch depth
  - b. A pitched porch or roof
  - c. Roof overhangs at least 18 inches deep
  - d. A change in building materials
  - e. A defined building base of at least 3 feet measured from the bottom of the building. Definition may include a façade projection, recession, or a change in materials.
  - f. Railings
- 3.9. Windows shall incorporate at least one of the following features:
  - a. Minimum depth of at least 2 inches from glass to exterior of trim
  - b. Minimum depth of at least 6 inches from glass to wall edge around windows if there is no trim
  - c. Trim elements with at least a 2-inch depth.
- 3.10. The primary building entrance shall meet at least one of the following conditions:
  - a. Faces a public right-of-way
  - b. Faces a publicly accessible pedestrian walkway
  - c. Is visible from a public right-of-way through a common open space or porch.
- 3.11. Ground-floor awnings on a commercial façade for mixed-use buildings shall meet the following requirements:
  - a. A minimum vertical clearance of 8 feet measured from the sidewalk or pedestrian pathway shall be provided.
  - b. Awnings shall not extend horizontally along the façade beyond individual storefront bays.