City of SACRAMENTO
Community Development

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Multi-Unit Dwelling Design Guidelines

Site Plan and Design Review Guidelines Checklist

Applicant's Name: _____ **Phone:** _____

Project Address: _____ **Email:** _____

The following checklist is a summary of the Multi-Unit Dwelling Design Guidelines. Please review the complete list of guidelines in the full document (https://www.cityofsacramento.org/Community-Development/Resources/Online-Library/Design-Guidelines). Applicant shall fill out the design guidelines checklist for all guidelines applicable to the project. Check the box if the project meets the guidelines and indicate in the comments how the guidelines are met. Indicate NA if a design guideline is not applicable. Any design guideline that the project does not meet shall be indicated as a deviation with a comment explaining the rationale for the deviation.

Site Design

1. SITE PLANNING

☐ Site planning should address how the various components of a development (e.g., buildings, pedestrian and vehicular circulation, parking, open space, etc.) relate to adjacent streets and existing development, and how the various components relate to each other within the development site to foster a cohesive, safe, and interactive environment.

a. Arrange residential buildings to provide functional public and private outdoor spaces and locate structures to create continuity of desirable characteristics along the street face.
b. Allocation of space, building size and placement, and open space design should be pedestrian-oriented. Provide adequate interior walkways and connections to public sidewalks.
c. Encourage appropriate amenities to serve anticipated residents and active common spaces.
d. Design infill development to respect existing residential patterns and development and reinforce the character and functional relationships of existing neighborhoods.

Comments/Deviations:

Staff Comments:

2. BUILDING ORIENTATION/RELATIONSHIP TO THE STREET

☐ Building orientation and positioning of other elements on a site (e.g., entrances, parking lots, and driveways) shall be planned to address the street with entries and active uses to assure both a viable, safe, and attractive site design.

☐ Multi-unit structures should present a street facade that encourages interaction with the street by including entry features, windows, and landscaping along the side of the building.

a. Provide large windows, porches, balconies, and entryways and other entry features along the street. Provide streetside facade complementary to single-unit homes if applicable.
b. Building ends should contain windows and active spaces to provide additional security and visual interest. Locate buildings to minimize potential for disruption of adjacent neighborhoods/buildings.
c. Residential buildings should have pedestrian access to adjacent roadways and/or open space features. Pedestrians should have clear access to the street and nearby transit stops.
d. If project faces on an alley, develop to enhance livability, visual quality, and safety of the alley.

Comments/Deviations:

Staff Comments:

Parking/Circulation

3. PEDESTRIAN CIRCULATION

☐ Multi-unit structures should present a facade that encourages interaction with the street by including entry features, windows, and landscaping along the street side of the building.

a. Provide easy pedestrian access to public bicycle/pedestrian ways, neighborhood centers, and transit stops.
b. Routes should be as obvious, direct, and simple as possible. Pathways should include landscaping and lighting.
c. Give pedestrian planning priority over vehicular access. Provide separated pedestrian access points and paths of travel. When pedestrian circulation crosses vehicular routes, provide a change in grade, materials, textures or colors to emphasize the conflict point and improve safety.
d. Consider actual walking distances to transit services. Measure pedestrian accessibility by the actual path available. People are typically willing to walk five minutes/1,000 feet to get to transit.
e. Consider all likely pedestrian routes to eliminate “shortcuts”, which damage landscape areas.
f. Locate bicycle parking close to, and with direct access to, residential buildings.

Comments/Deviations:

Staff Comments:

4. VEHICLE CIRCULATION/PARKING

☐ Parking should be located at the rear or interior of the complex, where feasible. Parking lots that face the street or are on the side of multi-unit housing should be minimized.

a. Parking lots should be located away from adjacent public roadways, to the rear or beneath buildings where possible. Locate parking and vehicle access away from street corners.
b. Landscaping and walkways should be provided between buildings and paved parking areas. Screen parking areas visible from the street right-of-way with landscaping or other visual barriers.
c. Multiple smaller parking lots are preferred over single, large lots.
d. Parallel parking along drive aisles may be added to minimize the number of stalls in lots.
e. If large parking areas are needed, provide clearly defined pedestrian path inside the parking area with sidewalks for safe and easy access to and from buildings.
f. Include textures, patterns, and colors in the design of paved parking areas or entries.
g. Locate covered parking to not interfere with front entries or access to interior common spaces.
h. Minimize number and width of driveways and curb cuts. Encourage shared driveways. Smaller driveways, curb cuts, and parking areas reduce development costs and improve pedestrian movement and aesthetics of a site.

Comments/Deviations:

Staff Comments:

5. GARAGES/CARPORTS

☐ The visibility of multi-unit garages from the street should be minimized. Instead, garages should be located beneath, at the side, or at the rear of multi-unit structures. Garage and carport materials and architectural styles should complement the materials and styles of the primary buildings.

a. Carport roofs should be compatible with the design, materials, and colors of the buildings.

b. Break up garage setbacks to avoid “corridors” of garage walls. Vary garage locations to minimize impact of a row of garage doors.
c. Avoid rows of garages and carports around the perimeter of the development.
d. Place garages and driveways in well-lit and secure alley in rear of structures.
e. Use photovoltaic solar panels on carports if possible.

Comments/Deviations:

Staff Comments:

Landscaping/Open Space

6. INTERIOR/COMMON SPACE

☐ Interior common spaces that are easily accessible and visually appealing should be provided in multi-unit resident communities. Units that are adjacent to common spaces should have entry features and windows that open onto those common spaces.

a. Ground floor units should have doorways that open onto interior common spaces. All units overlooking interior common spaces should have windows allowing residents to see these areas.
b. Provide common amenities catering to all age ranges such as swimming pools and seating areas.
c. Locate common facilities such as recreation rooms, laundry, and mail areas adjacent to common open space. Common open spaces should be designated as a visible, accessible transition between the street and individual units.

Comments/Deviations:

Staff Comments:

7. LANDSCAPING

☐ Landscaping should be provided within all street side setbacks, common areas, and parking lots to provide shade and create visually appealing exterior spaces.

a. Exterior site design and landscaping should provide functional recreational spaces and/or community site amenities. Exterior spaces should be designed to enhance overall appearance and compatibility of such development.
b. Street-facing elevations should have landscaping adjacent to their foundation or along the edge of a porch.
c. Dense landscaping and/or architectural treatments should be provided to screen unattractive views and features, including storage areas, HVAC units, etc.
d. Incorporate appropriate landscaping including a variety of trees, shrubs, and other plantings. Use irrigated plant materials or mulch in unpaved areas. Identify provisions for on-going maintenance for timely replacement of any dead or deceased vegetation.
e. Landscaping compatible with building design is encouraged. Landscaping should be in scale and compatible with the project and adjacent land uses. Utilize landscaping to soften the differences between infill development and existing adjacent properties.
f. Consider security issues in landscape design, including creation of barriers and screening. Landscape plans should avoid potential conflicts between landscaping and lighting.
g. Provide deciduous trees around the east, west, and south sides of residences to reduce cooling loads during the summer and allow solar gain during the winter.
h. Front and street side setbacks must be planted with landscaping materials consisting of turf or low-growing groundcover (see City Municipal Code Section 13.64.010).
i. Trees should be planted in setbacks and common areas at intervals appropriate to the full spread of mature trees. Retain existing mature trees in landscape and building location plans where possible.
j. Retain street trees. Consult City of Sacramento Parks and Tree Service and/or private tree services if necessary.
k. Plant species should be suitable for Sacramento’s climate and low-water landscaping materials are encouraged. All new landscaping shall comply with the City of Sacramento Water Conservation Ordinance.

l. All planting areas should be landscaped with groundcover to reduce runoff. New planting strips located between the sidewalk and the street should be at least 6 feet wide to promote health of street trees.
m. Encourage planting of trees in planting strips between the sidewalk and street.
n. Landscaping shall not impede fire access to hydrant connections. Street design shall be compatible with the City Street Design Manual.

Comments/Deviations:

Staff Comments:

8. IRRIGATION

☐ An automatic irrigation system should be provided for new construction to maintain the health and positive appearance of all landscaped areas.

a. Install an irrigation system to provide consistent coverage of all landscape areas.
b. Irrigate turf and groundcover with a conventional spray system; head-to-head spray coverage is recommended. Irrigate shrubs and trees with a drip irrigation system to permit greater water conservation.
c. Use automatic controllers with rain shut-off valves for greater water conservation.
d. Screen irrigation controls from view with landscaping or other attractive site materials.

Comments/Deviations:

Staff Comments:

9. OPEN SPACE

☐ An automatic irrigation system should be provided for new construction to maintain the health and positive appearance of all landscaped areas.

a. Organize multi-unit projects around usable common space. Site plan for each multi-unit project should address both active and passive open space uses.
b. Common areas should be accessible from all buildings and connected by a comprehensive, on-site pedestrian circulation system.
c. Provide usable outdoor spaces private to individual dwelling units at grade or in the form of a balcony for upper story dwellings.

Comments/Deviations:

Staff Comments:

Lighting/Security

10. LIGHTING

☐ Project lighting shall respect the scale and character of the adjacent residential neighborhood. Lighting shall not intrude or create a nuisance towards adjacent properties. At the same time, lighting should provide for adequate visibility and security for residents.

a. Architecturally integrate exterior lighting with the building style, material, and colors. Attractively design raised light pole bases to be compatible with the overall project.
b. Illuminate parking areas and entry drives to facilitate pedestrian movement and safety. Pole mounted lighting should be spaced for maximum energy efficiency and have a maximum height of 16 feet.

c. Pedestrian walk lighting should be of appropriate scale and style, such as bollard type lighting, step lighting, and/or pole mounted lighting.
d. Use low, downcast lighting to add safety to pedestrian walkways without contributing to noise pollution and nuisance illumination.

Comments/Deviations:

Staff Comments:

11. SECURITY/CPTED

☐ Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design, or CPTED, is the proper design, maintenance, and use of the built environment. The use of CPTED standards provides for security, appropriate color of lighting,minimized glare, and energy-efficient lighting use.

a. Provide landscaping and other suitable barriers between sidewalks and entrances/windows. Landscaping should be trimmed and maintained to prevent places of concealment by unauthorized users. Other barriers should be at least partially see-through to avoid creation of hiding spaces.
b. Encourage use of neighborhood watch and good neighbor policies. Consider use of low walls on downstairs patios to allow residents to watch children and other activities.
c. Windows need to be clear of obstructions (such as bushes or walls) so there are clear views from inside the dwelling units, common spaces, parking spaces, and offices.
d. Shared facilities should be adjacent to well-traveled areas and the doors to these facilities should have windows. Arrange seating, lights, and landscaping to encourage the use of common outdoor areas.
e. All exterior unit doors should have wide-angle viewers (peep holes), or windows on or immediately adjacent to, when located near mechanical equipment.
f. All outdoor lighting should be LED and on photosensitive timers. Residents should be encouraged to use LED front and back porch lights during hours of darkness. All exterior doors, alcoves, hallways, stairwells, and parking areas, pedestrian walkways, and recessed areas should be illuminated.
g. Include a clear transition between public property and the complex property. Accentuate entrances to the property and buildings with architectural elements and lighting to indicate where pedestrian traffic should go.
h. Street address numbers and apartment numbers should be clearly visible and illuminated at night. When all units do not face the street, there should be well-lit directional signage to assist emergency responders in locating units quickly.

Comments/Deviations:

Staff Comments:

Accessory Structure/Infrastructure

12. STORAGE/ACCESSORY STRUCTURES/MECHANICAL/HVAC/UTILITY EQUIPMENT

☐ Service elements and infrastructure such as loading docks and mechanical equipment shall be located away from street.
a. Roof pitch, materials, and colors of an accessory structure should be consistent with those of the primary structures.
b. Integrate resident storage areas into the building design. Dedicated storage units provide secure storage and minimize clutter in other spaces.
c. Integrate mechanical equipment into the design of projects as much as possible. If integration is not possible, screen mechanical equipment. Mechanical equipment placed on building roofs shall not be visible from street or walkways. Provide shade trees adjacent to mechanical equipment to reduce temperature at air intakes.
d. Utility equipment should be screened by walls and/or landscaping. Combine the location of utilities and services when possible.

e. All electric, gas, television, radio, and cable television lines should be underground. Mechanical equipment should be installed consistent with the Comprehensive Floodplain Management Plan.

Comments/Deviations:

Staff Comments:

13. TRASH/RECYCLING ENCLOSURES

☐ Trash enclosures shall be located away from street views and away from neighboring residential zones.

a. Trash enclosures should include enough space to facilitate both waste disposal and recycling.
b. Trash enclosure design should address solid waste personnel safety and have access routes that do not require personnel to lift dumpsters for collection.
c. Views of trash storage should be minimized from public streets and be located to avoid impacting adjacent properties. Landscaping should be used around trash enclosures to provide screening.
d. Required to construct trash enclosures from concrete block or other durable material. Enclosures should be architecturally integrated with the building design.
e. Trash enclosures shall have roofs.

Comments/Deviations:

Staff Comments:

Fencing/Walls

14. FENCING/WALLS

☐ Fencing should complement the design of the buildings and define the boundary of the complex without obstructing physical or visual access from a public way.

a. Design sound-walls, masonry walls, or fences to minimize visual monotony through changes in plane, height, material or material texture o significant landscape massing where appropriate. Design fencing and gating as an integrated part of the site.
b. Use of alternative fencing designs and materials (e.g. wrought iron/brick mix, hedges) is encouraged. Chain-link and woven-wire fences are prohibited.
c. Support place-making goals with fences and walls reflecting the style, materials, colors, and architectural character of the buildings and the site.
d. Screen fencing to the greatest extent possible with landscaping.
e. Set back fencing on street sides to avoid a fortress effect. Fencing should be between buildings and not continuous on street face site. Solid fencing, walls, large hedges or other similar barriers over 4 feet in height are discouraged in streetside setback areas.
f. Fencing should allow pedestrian (resident) ingress and egress to the project site.
g. Fencing shall not exclude use of hydrants or fire department connections and should have non-destructive emergency access.

Comments/Deviations:

Staff Comments:

Drainage/Water Quality

15. PARKING LOTS

☐ New multi-unit development shall incorporate design features which provide for on-site source and treatment of urban runoff.

a. Areas required for tree planting may be used to satisfy City's requirement to provide on-site stormwater treatment, with early planning and design. Vegetated swales and filter strips may be integrated with tree shading.
b. If parking lot is part of a new development with 1 acre of more impervious area, it is required to provide treatment control measures that capture and treat stormwater runoff through settling, filtration and/or biodegradation.
c. New multi-unit sites shall be designed to incorporate urban runoff mitigation measures (as identified in the City of Sacramento Guidance Manual for On-Site Stormwater Quality Control Measures).

Comments/Deviations:

Staff Comments:

Architectural Elements

16. ARCHITECTUAL VARIETY

☐ New multi-unit dwelling developments shall consider the scale and character of the adjacent residential neighborhood through attention to views, building scale and orientation and proximity to adjacent uses.

a. Provide variety in the architecture to add interest and character. Use high-quality building materials to contribute to sustained quality and sense of permanence.
b. Provide variety in the roof form, mass, shape, and material changes to create variations in planes.
c. Larger projects (greater than 200 units) should contain a variety of building elevations.
d. Design projects to respect privacy of surrounding uses. Consider privacy of individual units in location of windows and balconies and design of building features.

Comments/Deviations:

Staff Comments:

17. SCALE/MASSING ARTICULATION

☐ Multi-unit design should develop massing and scale to best transition with surrounding scale, massing, setbacks, and articulation and maximize integration into the existing streetscape.

a. Step down buildings at upper levels in areas with a relatively smaller scale character.
b. Design extremely long facades with sufficient building articulation and landscaping. Use articulation such as roof dormers or gables to break up the visual massing of building facades.
c. Include appropriate features in street elevations, such as wainscoting or shutters.
d. Improve massing of large complexes by variation in roofline, balcony placement, windows, and chimneys. Units clustered in one structure should have varying front setbacks, staggered roof planes, and variety in orientation.

Comments/Deviations:

Staff Comments:

18. FACADES/ENTRIES

☐ Designs within a specific project area need to be compatible in scale and character, but not to the point of being identical or repetitious. The design shall consider the characteristics of the existing developments in the project area.

a. Provide entries allowing residents to “see and be seen”. Visibility of and from entries adds security and visual interest to the streetscape. Provide clearly defined site and building entries in scale with the project and relating directly to street frontage. The front door of each unit should be clearly visible.
b. New infill residences should preserve and reinforce the streetscape character.
c. The main entrance of each primary structure should face the street-side lot line when structures are proximate to street rights-of-way.
d. Provide addresses illuminated and clearly visible from the street.
e. All building entrances shall meet Title 24, California Code of Regulations pertaining to disabled access requirements.
f. Building design should include windows with visible massing and detail, such as shutters and trim.

Comments/Deviations:

Staff Comments:

19. MATERIALS/TEXTURES/COLORS

☐ New multi-unit development shall incorporate a mixture of materials, textures, and colors.

a. Select durable and low-maintenence materials for multi-unit projects, such as stucco, wood siding, stone, or brick. The use of a variety and combination of building materials is encouraged.
b. Integrate signs consistent with the design of the project.
c. Use material textures and colors to help articulate the building design. Careful application of materials is important to final design and appearance.
d. Use of permanent roof materials, such as concrete and clay tile, is encouraged.
e. Window and door placement may create patterns that help add variety and interest to the design.

Comments/Deviations:

Staff Comments:

Mixed-Use Development

20. SITE ORIENTATION

☐ New mixed-use developments shall be located at or near the property line, and oriented with active ground floor uses that seamlessly connect to the public and semi-public realm.

a. Locate buildings adjacent to the street at the front setback line or immediately behind a public or semi-public space when feasible.
b. Development should not create gaps or voids in the rhythm of the street’s architectural due to excessive setbacks. Develop street corners of corner sites with buildings, public plazas, or open-space areas.
c. Design vertically mixed-use buildings with commercial storefronts on the ground floor and residential units above.

Comments/Deviations:

Staff Comments:

21. BUILDING DESIGN

☐ New mixed-use developments shall avoid design that creates a continuous facade that looks overly long and bulky without articulation to minimize the bulk of the building.

a. Design vertically mixed-use buildings with commercial storefronts on the ground floor and residential units above. Building materials should be used to differentiate between commercial and residential uses and provide a smooth transition between the two.
b. Change in establishments at adjacent storefronts should be clear through a change in facade.
c. Provide continuous storefront windows, open-air store frontages, and visible entrances.
d. Individual tenant spaces shall be located within building bays when multiple tenant spaces are incorporated into a building.

Comments/Deviations:

Staff Comments:

22. WINDOWS/ENTRIES

☐ New mixed-use developments shall incorporate windows and entries that are clearly distinguishable in form and location.

a. Entrances to residential, office, or other upper story uses shall be clearly distinguishable in form and location from retail entrances.
b. Doors at storefronts must include windows permitting views into the establishment. Service or employee doors that are visible from public streets or walkways shall be an integral part of the building design.
c. Windows should maintain consistency in shape and location across the façade. Commercial storefronts should include street-oriented display windows.
d. Groundfloor retail windows should be of a storefront design and be larger in proportion than residential windows.

Comments/Deviations:

Staff Comments:

23. HORIZONTAL MIXED USE

☐ New horizontal mixed-use developments shall incorporate a mixture of commercial and residential land uses that are adjacent to each other on the same parcel. The opportunities for interplay between these uses will primarily be in the relationship of the open space and parking requirements of the adjoining uses. Projects should develop a comprehensive open space network that uses plazas and other open space elements to connect uses. Open space areas and the paths that link them should facilitate the integration of adjacent land uses on the site.

a. Buildings should be laid out to define the open space and should be positioned for use by both residential and commercial uses.
b. Open space and paths should facilitate the integration of adjacent land uses on the site. Plazas and building forecourts should maximize circulation opportunities between adjacent uses.
c. All mixed-use buildings should be publicly accessible via a walkway or pathway from a public sidewalk.
d. Both the commercial and residential components of a project have specific parking requirements. Parking areas shall not separate the adjacent land uses and should be located on the periphery of projects.
e. Opportunities for shared use of parking facilities are encouraged.

Comments/Deviations:

Staff Comments:

By signing below, the applicant certifies that this form accurately describes the proposed work.

Applicant's Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Name of Planner: _____

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