

13.B.8 OBJECTIVE DESIGN STANDARDS

Chapter 18.49 OBJECTIVE DESIGN STANDARDS

18.49.010 Purpose.

- A. The purpose of the Objective Design Standards is to provide architectural and design requirements aimed at streamlining the approval process for qualifying multi-unit residential developments. The Objective Design Standards are intended to support a high-quality and desirable character for National City.

18.49.020 Applicability.

- A. The Objective Design Standards apply to:
 - 1. Qualifying multi-family projects located on a site that is zoned for residential use or residential mixed-use development or on a site that has a general plan designation allowing residential use or a mix of residential and non-residential uses; or
 - 2. Qualifying mixed-use projects in a mixed-use zone that designates at least two-thirds of the square footage of the development for residential use.
- B. These standards serve as the minimum requirements and are mandatory for any eligible project for which a streamlined approval process is requested pursuant to state law provisions that reference objective design standards, found in Section 18.12.030 (Ministerial decision process). All projects must comply with provisions established by National City's Zoning Ordinance (Municipal Code, Title 18) and the goals, policies, and actions established in the General Plan that help ensure the city and its neighborhoods remain great places to live.

18.49.030 Definitions.

- A. Definitions used in this chapter
 - 1. Downtown Specific Plan area: Planning area bounded by Division Street, Roosevelt Avenue, 16th Street, D Avenue, Plaza Boulevard, Kimball Park, and Interstate 5.
 - 2. Long-term bicycle parking: Bicycle parking designed for residents, employees, students, public transit users, and others that need to park their bicycles for several hours or more that provides security and weather protection.
 - 3. Mixed-use zones: Zones that support residential, commercial, and recreational uses that intend to create vibrant dynamic districts. Mixed-use zoning designations include MCR-1, MCR-2, MXC-1, MXC-2, MXD-1, and MXD-2.
 - 4. Project: Multi-family or mixed-use development with at least two-thirds of the square footage of the development designated for residential use.
 - 5. Residential zones: Zones that allow residential uses including high-rise, mid-rise, low-rise, multi-family attached or single-family detached. Residential zoning designations include RS-1, RS-2, RS-3, RM-1, RM-2, and RM-3.
 - 6. Short-term bicycle parking: Bicycle parking where bicycles are left for two hours or less, such as bicycle racks.

18.49.040 Site design.

- A. Neighborhood compatibility
 - 1. Projects located across single-family residential areas shall orient entrances, patios, and landscaping to the street. Residential uses and activities may be located near other residential uses.

2. Projects adjacent to single-family residential areas shall install solid masonry walls and landscaping at the adjoining property line within the required setbacks found in Sections 18.21.040, 18.23.30, and 18.24.30. The landscaped setback shall not be less than five feet.
 3. Uses that may generate noise levels over sixty Db shall have primary entries, window openings, and permitted outdoor uses front commercial streets and away from residential uses.
 4. Projects located in mixed-use zones or within the Downtown Specific Plan area shall orient all ground floor commercial and residential uses to the street, plazas, or parks to encourage public activity.
- B. Transit connections
1. Driveways shall not be located directly adjacent to bus stops to avoid conflicts between buses and vehicles entering or exiting the parking.
 2. Projects adjacent to a transit stop shall provide a direct connection between the transit stop and any pedestrian and bicycle entrances via walkways, paseos, sidewalks, or any other path of travel uninterrupted by a driveway or parking area.

18.49.050 Building design.

- A. Massing
1. Residential projects shall have massing breaks at least every thirty feet along any street frontage using varying setbacks, vertical recesses up to three feet deep and four feet wide, or recessed building entrances. Massing breaks shall be at least two feet deep and extend the full height of the building.
 2. Mixed-use projects must distinguish non-residential uses at the ground floor from the upper stories by having massing breaks at least every sixty feet along any street frontage above the podium level using varying setbacks, vertical recesses up to three feet deep and four feet wide, or recessed building entrances. Massing breaks shall be at least two feet deep and extend the full height of the building.
- B. Setbacks
1. Setback requirements are found in Sections 18.21.040, 18.23.30, and 18.24.30, which are not part of the objective design standards.
 2. Setbacks for ground-floor residential units along street frontages shall not exceed ten feet. The setback area shall include street trees and understory plantings.
 3. Projects located in mixed-use zones with ground-floor non-residential uses shall have a minimum of seventy percent of building frontage constructed to the front property line with a zero-foot front yard setback.
 4. Projects within the Downtown Specific Plan area shall have at least eighty percent of building frontages with non-residential uses constructed to the setback line with a zero-foot front yard setback to activate the street and improve the pedestrian environment.
- C. Ground floor residential features
1. Residential units located on the ground floor shall be elevated between two and three feet above grade to provide adequate separation from the public street while preserving a visual connection. Accessibility requirements may be met with unit entries from the building interior.
 2. A three-foot deep transition space must be provided between ground floor private residential unit entries and the street using features such as stoops, porches, and landscaping. At-grade entry with an internal stair to the elevated floor level may be provided as an alternative to stoops.

D. Ground floor mixed-use features

1. Mixed-use projects in mixed-use zones and the Downtown Specific Plan area shall support a strong pedestrian-scale experience at the ground level by including features such as concertina doors, large pivot doors, and large operable windows to avoid blank façades.

E. Materials

1. Exterior building façades shall be constructed of stucco, fiber cement, masonry, architectural concrete masonry units, pre-cast concrete, rock, wood, or simulated wood siding. All buildings shall have an integrated color or painted exterior.
2. For projects that have a mix of affordable units and market-rate units, exterior materials and details shall be the same for both such that the units are not distinguishable.

18.49.060 Façade and articulation.

A. Articulation

1. Residential projects with street-facing façades greater than fifty feet shall incorporate two or more of the following variations in the building frontage:
 - a. Changes in material or color every thirty feet or less. Upper stories shall exhibit a lighter character than the base.
 - b. Cornices that project no more than three feet into the public right-of-way.
 - c. Window bays or other projecting windows that encroach no more than three feet into the public right-of-way every thirty feet or less.
 - d. Above-ground balconies that encroach no more than three feet into the public right-of-way every thirty feet or less.
 - e. Projections or recesses, such as porches, steps, entryway doors, or similar architectural elements, that may project up to six feet into the minimum front yard setback area to define the primary entrances of the building.
 - f. Changes in height of the building of at least four feet for projects with two or more stories.
2. Mixed-use projects in mixed-use zones and the Downtown Specific Plan area shall have articulated street-facing façades for at least eighty percent of each façade length. Other façades shall be articulated for at least sixty percent of the façade length. Street-facing facades should include at least one of the following variations:
 - a. Changes in material from the remainder of the façade.
 - b. Horizontal design features, such as water tables, belt courses, or belly bands to transition to the upper stories.

B. Ground floor height

1. Mixed-use projects in mixed-use zones with ground floor non-residential uses shall have a minimum ground floor ceiling height of fourteen feet.
2. Projects within the Downtown Specific Plan area with ground floor residential uses shall have a minimum ground floor ceiling height of twelve feet.
3. Mixed-use projects in the Downtown Specific Plan area with ground floor non-residential uses shall have a minimum ground floor ceiling height of fifteen feet.

C. Windows

1. Projects with residential uses along street frontages, including residential units over non-residential uses, shall provide clear glass windows or doors of at least thirty percent transparency.
2. Mixed-use projects with retail and office uses along street frontages within a mixed-use zone or the Downtown Specific Plan area shall have transparent windows and doors of a minimum of sixty percent transparency to provide views into the building. Views into the building shall not be blocked by shelving or displays.

D. Accessory structures

1. Accessory structures shall match the residential development by using the same roof form, overhangs, trims, windows, and colors.

18.49.070 Building equipment and service areas.

A. Mechanical equipment

1. Screening for both ground-level and roof-mounted mechanical equipment shall be consistent with the design of the building.
2. All mechanical equipment, including heating/air conditioning units, transformer, terminal boxes, meter cabinets, pedestals, and ducts, located at ground level shall be screened from view from streets, parks, gathering areas, and building entries using noncombustible screenings. Screenings are subject to all yard and setback regulations and shall exceed all mechanical equipment by one foot in height.
3. Elevator housing and mechanical equipment located on the roof of the building shall be screened from view behind a full or partial penthouse with walls and roofs that have the same construction and appearance of the building served by the equipment.

B. Utility connections

1. All utility connections shall be designed to be consistent with the architectural elements of the site so as not to be exposed except where necessary. Pad-mounted transformers and/or meter box locations shall be included in the site plan and must be screened from view.
2. All new and existing utility connections within the boundaries of the project shall be placed underground.

C. Trash and recycling enclosures

1. Standards for trash enclosures are found in Section 7.10.080 (Enclosures required) and Section 18.42.070.5 (Trash and recycling enclosures).

D. Laundry facilities

1. Standards for laundry facilities for multi-unit projects are found in Section 18.42.070.6 (Laundry facilities).

E. Storage facilities

1. Multi-family units shall be provided with a minimum of one hundred and fifty-cubic feet for storage space per dwelling unit plus fifty-cubic feet for each additional bedroom more than one. Bedroom closets and cubic feet utilized by mechanical equipment shall not be included in the cubic feet requirement.
2. Outdoor storage areas shall be located to the rear of a building and enclosed by solid decorative masonry walls and view-obstructing gates, both to be not less than six feet in height to adequately screen such areas from view.

18.49.080 Fence and walls.

A. Standards

1. Fence and walls standards are found in Section 18.43 (Fences and walls).

B. Height

1. Standards for fence and wall heights are found in Section 18.43.050 (Maximum height).

C. Materials

1. Fences shall be constructed of wood, vinyl, decorative iron, or welded steel. If wood is used, it shall consist of pressure-treated wood posts set in concrete footings. barbwire, electrified fence, chain link, and razor wire are prohibited.
2. All fences along a public street shall be constructed of decorative iron or welded steel.
3. Masonry walls are allowed and shall conform to the requirements of the California Building Code and will require a building permit.

18.49.090 Pedestrian access.

A. Orientation and dimensions

1. Building frontages shall be oriented towards the street with clearly defined entrances. Residential and commercial entrances must be clearly differentiated.
2. Pedestrian walkways with a minimum width of thirty-six inches and a grade no steeper than a one-to-twelve slope shall be provided to every multi-unit unit entry.
3. Projects located along street corners shall include a primary entry within 30 feet of a street corner whether for residential or commercial uses, measured from the back of the curb.
4. Projects in mixed-use zones and the Downtown Specific Plan area with ground floor commercial and retail shall provide direct access from and to the street.

B. Residential access

1. For buildings with ground floor residential units with street frontage, entrances shall be clearly defined and directly accessible from the public sidewalk. For units that do not face the street, entrances may face a forecourt with at least the primary building entrance having access to the public sidewalk.

18.49.100 Outdoor/common spaces.

A. Common space requirements

1. Common usable open space shall be provided for all multi-unit projects with three or more units. Required open space may be a combination of open space amenities accessible to all project residents. Depending on their location, projects shall provide open space as follows:
 - a. Residential zones: minimum two hundred square feet per unit
 - b. Mixed-use zones: minimum one hundred and twenty-five square feet per unit
 - c. Downtown Specific Plan area: minimum seventy-five square feet per unit

B. Dimensions

1. At least seventy-five percent of the units shall be provided a minimum of sixty square feet of private usable space. Balconies, porches, and rooftop gardens can apply towards this requirement, but driveways and services areas shall not be counted as applying.

2. Up to a maximum of forty percent of the required common usable open space may be provided indoors.
3. Common usable open space areas shall be provided with minimum length and width dimensions of twenty feet.

C. Amenities

1. Projects with twenty-five or more units shall include at least one amenity from the following options:
 - a. Active recreational facilities, such as sports fields, sports courts, or areas for recreational/exercise equipment, with a minimum area of four hundred square feet.
 - b. Passive recreational facilities, such as paseos, plazas, or shaded gathering areas, with a minimum area of four hundred square feet.
 - c. Community or rooftop gardens with a minimum area of four hundred square feet.
 - d. Playgrounds or tot lots with a minimum of three structured play modules and a seating area.
 - e. Lounge or reading area with a minimum area of four hundred square feet.
 - f. Video screening room with a minimum area of four hundred square feet.

18.49.110 Landscaping.

A. Landscaping

1. The landscape plan, plant materials, turf lawn, and both soil and mulching shall comply with standards held within Section 18.44 (Landscaping).

B. Location

1. All common space areas, building entries, and pedestrian walkways shall be landscaped with defined edges.
2. Projects in residential zones shall have landscaped pedestrian walkways with shade trees at intervals of thirty feet. At least fifty percent of street trees shall be deciduous trees to shade walkways in summer and allow for the sun in winter.
3. Projects with residential uses on the ground floor shall provide landscaping along the street frontage to create a buffer between the sidewalk and the residential units. The landscaped setback shall not be less than three feet.
4. For projects in mixed-use zones and the Downtown Specific Plan area, a tree canopy shall be provided along the street frontage by installing shade trees at intervals of thirty feet or less. A minimum distance of twelve feet shall be provided between the center of the tree and the edges of the building.

C. Trees

1. Tree species for projects located in residential and mixed-use zones shall be selected in accordance with the National City Urban Forest Management Plan.
2. Tree species for projects within the Downtown Specific Plan area shall be selected following Section 7.7.10.1 (Street trees guidelines) of the National City Downtown Specific Plan.

18.49.120 Parking.

A. Parking requirements

1. Parking requirements for multi-unit and mixed-use projects shall conform with the standards established in 18.45.050 (Off-street parking requirements by land use) and Table 18.45.050 (Schedule of off-street parking requirements by land use).

B. Location and access

1. Parking spaces (including structures) shall not occupy more than twenty-five percent of the site frontage and shall be integrated into the design of the development. Parking may be placed behind buildings and/or on the interior of blocks to reduce visual prominence.
2. Parking areas along side or private streets shall occupy less than forty percent of the site frontage.
3. If multiple driveways are provided along the street frontage, they shall be at least fifty feet apart measured from the internal edges to reduce impacts of on-street parking capacity and minimize pedestrian and vehicular conflicts.
4. Projects in mixed-use zones and the Downtown Specific Plan area shall have parking and garage entrances with an architectural style that is consistent with the rest of the project.
5. Clearly defined pedestrian and bicycle access shall be provided and shall be accessible from the public street. All access points shall be a minimum of five feet in width and shall be unobstructed and conveniently accessible by walks, steps, or stepped ramps.

C. Screening

1. Parking shall be integrated into the design of new developments and shall be screened from street frontage by building placement, architectural elements, landscaping, planted fence, topography, or some combination of these elements. Landscaping used for screening purposes shall be no more than five feet wide and no more than six feet tall.
2. Parking behind buildings shall be screened on all sides from adjacent residential zones and adjacent streets by a six-foot-high wall or wood privacy fence to avoid headlight impacts to adjoining properties. A five-foot-wide landscape buffer (from the back of the sidewalk or street curb to the parking lot paving) may be used for screening purposes.
3. Parking screening shall be continuous, broken only for access driveways and walkways.
4. Architectural elements used for screening purposes shall be three feet tall and shall utilize the same materials, colors, and lighting fixtures as the site or building, or include a mural.
5. For mixed-use developments, parking along the frontage street shall be wrapped with a linear space for retail, commercial, or residential uses.

D. Landscaping

1. Landscaping shall be included in all parking lots and include drought-tolerant plantings that can thrive in an urban setting and be resilient to changing climate conditions, permeable pavers, and permanent water-efficient irrigation systems.
2. One shade canopy tree shall be included for every seven parking spaces and shall be placed within the parking lot envelope. The trees shall be dispersed throughout the parking lot to soften large areas of pavement.
3. Landscaped areas within parking lot islands shall be planted with a combination of canopy trees, ornamental trees, shrubs, perennials, ornamental grasses, and groundcover and shall comply with the requirements established in Section 18.44.060 (Plant materials).
4. Living ground cover shall be designed and maintained to screen vehicles from view from the street to a minimum height of three feet. Screening materials shall include a combination of plant materials, earth berms, solid decorative masonry walls, or raised planters.

F. Vehicle Parking

1. Parking structures shall be integrated into the design of the multi-unit project and shall be consistent with the articulation and design of the building façade. Parking shall incorporate screening elements including faux building façades and/or artistic elements along the full length of the façade.

2. Glare-free, dark-sky compliant fixtures shall be utilized to prevent uneven light distribution and trespass or glare outside the structure or property line.

18.49.130 Bicycle parking.

- A. Long-term bicycle parking
 1. Multi-unit projects shall provide one long-term bicycle parking/storage space for every two units.
 2. Long-term bicycle parking shall be located on the ground floor or first level of the parking structure in a secured location within proximity to the public street.
 3. Bicycle spaces shall not be located within required storage areas for the building; however, they may be located in common areas with direct access to the street.
 4. Each required bicycle parking space shall be accessible without moving another bicycle.
- B. Short-term bicycle parking
 1. Standards for short-term bicycle parking are found in Section 18.45.120 (Bicycle parking).
 2. Projects shall provide one short-term bicycle parking space for every ten parking spaces.
 3. Bicycle parking facilities shall be placed so the full length of the rack remains clear of pedestrian/wheeled user and vehicular access.
 4. Each required bicycle parking space shall be accessible without moving another bicycle.
 5. Bicycle parking facilities shall be in well-lit and convenient areas on private property within fifty feet of the main entrance to the building.

18.49.140 Lighting.

- A. General standards
 1. All outdoor lighting shall comply with the standards held within Section 18.46 (Outdoor lighting).
- B. Lighting for multi-unit attached residential projects
 1. All walkways, steps, parking areas, driveways, onsite streets, and other facilities shall be illuminated to ensure safe and convenient nighttime use.
 2. All fixtures shall be fully shielded and directed downward to direct light to fall on the same premises upon which the light is located and prevent light from entering habitable rooms and enclosures.
 3. All bicycle parking and storage areas shall be illuminated.