

BOARD of SUPERVISORS



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MEMORANDUM

TO: Sarah Dennis Phillips, Director, Planning Department

FROM: John Carroll, Assistant Clerk, Land Use and Transportation Committee

DATE: October 29, 2025

SUBJECT: LEGISLATION INTRODUCED

The Board of Supervisors' Land Use and Transportation Committee has received the following hearing request, introduced by Supervisor Sherrill on October 7, 2025.

File No. 251019

Hearing on the Citywide Design Standards, as passed by the Planning Commission on November 14, 2024, discussing the potential to implement these design standards on a neighborhood-specific level while preserving their ministerial, objective, and cost-neutral nature; and requesting the Planning Department to report.

If you have comments or reports to be included with the file, please forward them to me at the Board of Supervisors, City Hall, Room 244, 1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place, San Francisco, CA 94102 or by email at: john.carroll@sfgov.org.

cc:

Offices of Chair Melgar and Supervisor Sherrill
Dan Sider, Planning Department
Corey Teague, Planning Department
Tina Tam, Planning Department
Lisa Gibson, Planning Department
Aaron Starr, Planning Department
Josh Switzky, Planning Department
Joy Navarrete, Planning Department
Debra Dwyer, Planning Department
Elizabeth Watty, Planning Department



PLANNING COMMISSION RESOLUTION NO. 21649

HEARING DATE: NOVEMBER 14, 2024

Project Name: Citywide Design Standards
Case Number: 2024-008053CRV
Staff Contact: Trent Greenan, Senior Architect/Urban Designer
Trent.Greenan@sfgov.org, (628) 652-7324
Reanna Tong, Senior Planner
Reanna.Tong@sfgov.org, (628) 652-7458
Reviewed by: Rachael Tanner, Director of Citywide Planning
Rachael.Tanner@sfgov.org, 628-652-7471

RESOLUTION ADOPTING THE CITYWIDE DESIGN STANDARDS FOR ALL APPLICABLE PROJECTS IN SAN FRANCISCO; ADOPTING FINDINGS, INCLUDING ENVIRONMENTAL FINDINGS, AND FINDINGS OF CONSISTENCY WITH THE GENERAL PLAN AND PLANNING CODE SECTION 101.1.

WHEREAS, the California Housing Accountability Act (2017) applies to certain code-complying housing projects, and limits local jurisdictions' discretion by requiring those jurisdictions to evaluate projects against objective standards, which are defined as rules which involve no personal or subjective judgment by a public official and are 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; and,

WHEREAS, in January 2023 the City of San Francisco adopted the 2022 Housing Element, which requires the Planning Department to eliminate subjective review of housing projects by developing objective design standards; and,

WHEREAS, in October 2023 the California Department of Housing and Community Development issued a Policy and Practice review which required the city to replace subjective requirements with objective design standards within one year; and,

WHEREAS, the Planning Department, in response, has developed objective Citywide Design Standards derived through an intensive analysis of adopted design guidelines, including Urban Design Guidelines and Residential Design Guidelines, across the city that cover the topics of Site Design and Architecture; and,

WHEREAS, the Citywide Design Standards are objective and involve no personal or subjective judgment by a public official and are 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; and

WHEREAS, the Housing Accountability Act generally applies to projects that construct two or more dwelling units, including mixed-use developments that are at least two-thirds residential or at least fifty percent residential for some large projects; and,

WHEREAS, Housing Accountability Act-eligible projects in San Francisco must comply with these objective Citywide Design Standards; and,

WHEREAS, the Citywide Design Standards will not modify the General Plan or any existing adopted design guidelines, as the General Plan and existing design guidelines will continue to apply to projects not subject to the Housing Accountability Act; and,

WHEREAS, projects that are subject to but choose not to comply with the Citywide Design Standards will not be code-compliant and thus would be subject to discretionary processes for review and approval under all applicable existing adopted design guidelines;

WHEREAS, the Citywide Design Standards advance high quality design in the city based on best professional standards and practices and support an active pedestrian environment and human-scaled design; and,

WHEREAS, the Planning Department has worked with design and development professionals, preservation professionals, neighborhood groups, and members of the public to refine the applicability and content of the Citywide Design Standards; and,

WHEREAS, it is expected that application of the Citywide Design Standards to different projects and scenarios will yield new insights and highlight desirable or necessary amendments to these Standards, some of which may be considered minor and not warrant Commission review and action; and,

WHEREAS, the proposed standards are not defined as a project under the California Environmental Quality Act Sections 15378 and 15060(c)(2) because they would not result in a direct or indirect physical change in the environment and they do not intensify the development or change or affect zoning or transportation in the built environment; and

WHEREAS, the Planning Commission has heard and considered the testimony presented to it at the public hearing and has further considered written materials and oral testimony presented on behalf of Department staff and other interested parties; and

WHEREAS, all pertinent documents may be found in the files of the Department, as the Custodian of Records, at 49 South Van Ness Avenue, Suite 1400, San Francisco; and

WHEREAS, the Planning Commission has reviewed the proposed Citywide Design Standards; and

WHEREAS, the Planning Commission finds from the facts presented that the public necessity, convenience, and general welfare require the proposed amendment; and

MOVED, that the Planning Commission hereby adopts the proposed Citywide Design Standards (included as Exhibit A) for application to applicable projects citywide with the condition the matter come back in six months as an Update/Action item.

The effective date for application of the Citywide Design Standards will be for project applications subject to the Housing Accountability Act submitted on or after November 14, 2024.

Findings

Having reviewed the materials identified in the preamble above, and having heard all testimony and arguments, this Commission finds, concludes, and determines as follows:

General Plan Compliance

The proposed Citywide Design Standards are consistent with the following Objectives and Policies of the General Plan:

URBAN DESIGN ELEMENT

OBJECTIVE 3

MODERATION OF MAJOR NEW DEVELOPMENT TO COMPLEMENT THE CITY PATTERN, THE RESOURCES TO BE CONSERVED, AND THE NEIGHBORHOOD ENVIRONMENT.

POLICY 3.1

Promote harmony in the visual relationships and transitions between new and older buildings.

The proposed Citywide Design Standards C.2.1, C.2.2, C.2.3, C.5.1, and C.5.2, require that projects consider adjacent conditions to provide a “more sensitive transition to existing residential neighbors” by incorporating lightwells, setbacks, and setting back occupiable space on roofs.

Policy 3.7

Recognize the special urban design problems posed in development of large properties.

The proposed Citywide Design Standards will require that developments on large sites ensure “block sizes for new housing support walkable neighborhoods” by either dividing up blocks to create new streets or alleys, or providing a mid-block pedestrian passageway. The standards also limit building bulk, require modulation of long facades, and impose building separation requirements between tall buildings.

COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY ELEMENT

OBJECTIVE 6

MAINTAIN AND STRENGTHEN VIABLE NEIGHBORHOOD COMMERCIAL AREAS EASILY ACCESSIBLE TO CITY RESIDENTS.

Policy 6.7

Promote high quality urban design on commercial streets.

The proposed Citywide Design Standards C.7.1, C.7.2, C.7.3, C.7.4, C.7.5, C.7.6, and C.7.7 ensure a “rich, engaging streetscape environment” for pedestrians through storefront design. The standards emphasize “a rhythm of elements,” including bays, transom window, storefront window height, alcoves, bulkheads, and horizontal projection requirements.

HOUSING ELEMENT

OBJECTIVE 4.A

SUBSTANTIALLY EXPAND THE AMOUNT OF PERMANENTLY AFFORDABLE HOUSING FOR EXTREMELY LOW- TO MODERATE-INCOME HOUSEHOLDS.

OBJECTIVE 4.B

EXPAND SMALL AND MID-RISE MULTI-FAMILY HOUSING PRODUCTION TO SERVE OUR WORKFORCE, PRIORITIZING MIDDLE-INCOME HOUSEHOLDS.

Policy 26

Streamline and simplify permit processes to provide more equitable access to the application process, improve certainty of outcomes, and ensure meeting State- and local-required timelines, especially for 100% affordable housing and shelter projects.

Policy 28

Affirm compliance in State housing law, requirements, and intent by strengthening data collection, clarifying definitions, and further supporting implementation.

Policy 41

Shape urban design policy, standards, and guidelines to enable cultural and identity expression, advance architectural creativity and durability, and foster neighborhood belonging.

Implementing Program 8.3.1

Develop Objective Design Standards that do not act as a constraint on new development and eliminate subjective design review of housing projects while ensuring that new development in existing neighborhoods support livability, building durability, access to light and outdoor space, and creative expression.

The proposed Citywide Design Standards will provide clarity, certainty, and flexibility to new development. Each standard includes a quantifiable measure that removes subjectivity in the review process. The standards have been crafted based on existing adopted design guidelines and best design practices that ensure livability, building durability, and access to light and outdoor space, while allowing room for creative expression.

Implementing Program 8.3.8

Create, complete, adopt, and apply the Ground Floor Residential Objective Design Standards to housing projects to require porches, stoops, and open space under specific conditions without compromising accessibility to invite social engagement and belonging.

The proposed Citywide Design Standards C.8.1, C.8.2, C.8.3, C.8.4, and C.8.5 provide a set of Ground Floor Residential design standards that address porches, stoops, and open space, in addition to landscaping and door entries.

Planning Code Section 101 Findings

The proposed amendments to the Planning Code are consistent with the eight Priority Policies set forth in Section 101.1(b) of the Planning Code in that:

1. That existing neighborhood-serving retail uses be preserved and enhanced and future opportunities for resident employment in and ownership of such businesses enhanced;

The proposed Citywide Design Standards would enhance neighborhood-serving retail by requiring high quality urban design standards on commercial streets.

2. That existing housing and neighborhood character be conserved and protected in order to preserve the cultural and economic diversity of our neighborhoods;

The proposed Citywide Design Standards would not have a negative effect on housing or neighborhood character and would require sensitivity to existing housing through stepbacks and placement of lightwells.

3. That the City's supply of affordable housing be preserved and enhanced;

The proposed Citywide Design Standards would enhance the supply of the City's supply of affordable housing by providing clear design requirements and thereby simplifying and streamlining the permitting process.

4. That commuter traffic not impede MUNI transit service or overburden our streets or neighborhood parking;

The proposed Citywide Design Standards would not result in commuter traffic impeding MUNI transit service or overburdening the streets or neighborhood parking.

5. That a diverse economic base be maintained by protecting our industrial and service sectors from

displacement due to commercial office development, and that future opportunities for resident employment and ownership in these sectors be enhanced;

The proposed Citywide Design Standards would not cause displacement of the industrial or service sectors due to office development, and future opportunities for resident employment or ownership in these sectors would not be impaired.

6. That the City achieve the greatest possible preparedness to protect against injury and loss of life in an earthquake;

The proposed Citywide Design Standards would not have an adverse effect on City's preparedness against injury and loss of life in an earthquake.

7. That the landmarks and historic buildings be preserved;

The proposed Citywide Design Standards would not have an adverse effect on the City's Landmarks and historic buildings.

8. That our parks and open space and their access to sunlight and vistas be protected from development;

The proposed Citywide Design Standards would not have an adverse effect on the City's parks and open space and their access to sunlight and vistas.

Planning Code Section 302 Findings.

The Planning Commission finds from the facts presented that the public necessity, convenience and general welfare require the proposed amendments to the Planning Code as set forth in Section 302.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Commission hereby ADOPTS the proposed Citywide Design Standards as attached as Exhibit A to this Resolution with the condition the matter come back in six months as an Update/Action item; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Planning Commission authorizes the Planning Director to amend, through an administrative process, any of the Citywide Design Standards by an accumulated change of no greater than 10% from a quantifiable metric that the Planning Commission adopted based on the Director's judgment that such amendment would improve the outcomes and implementation of the Standards as intended, and that the Director shall report in writing and orally to the Commission that such amendment has been made and the rationale; and,

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that any amendment of an adopted standard with an accumulated change greater than 10% from a quantifiable metric that the Planning Commission previously adopted, or any change to a non-numeric standard, must be considered and adopted by the Planning Commission; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that, any new design standard(s) proposed to be added to the Citywide Design Standards must be considered and adopted by the Planning Commission; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that these Citywide Design Standards shall be effective immediately.

I hereby certify that the foregoing Resolution was adopted by the Commission at its meeting on November 14, 2024.



Jonas P. Ionin
Commission Secretary

AYES: Campbell, McGarry, Braun, So

NOES: Imperial, Williams

ABSENT: Moore

ADOPTED: November 14, 2024



CITYWIDE

DESIGN STANDARDS



OCTOBER 2024

San Francisco
Planning



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Mathew Snyder

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Citywide Design Standards



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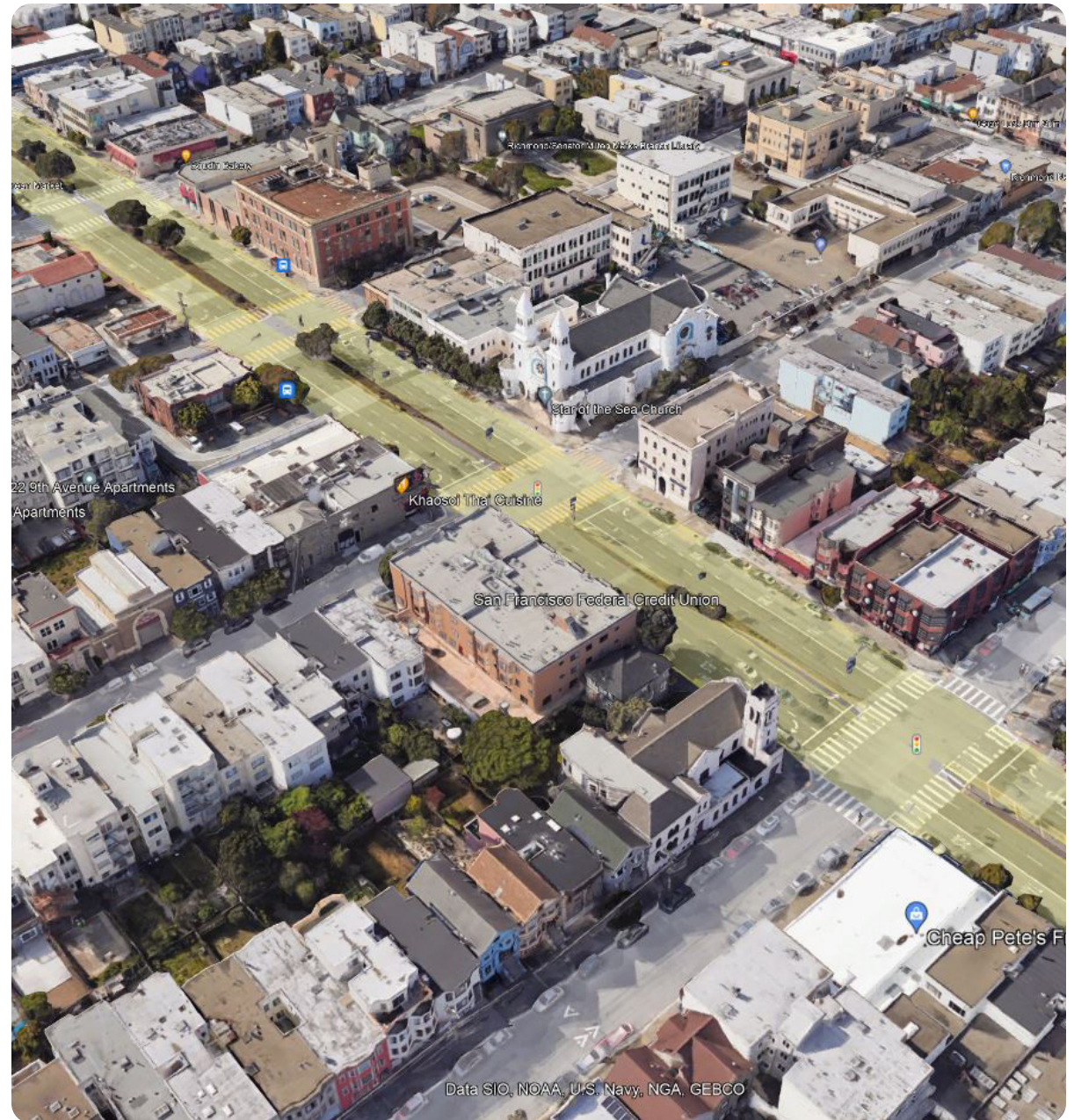


ARCHITECTURE

Façade Articulation
Commercial Ground Floor
Residential Ground Floor
Non-Active Frontages
Blind Walls
Fenestration
Residential Lobby Entries
Materials

Purpose of This Document

San Francisco values excellent building and urban design. The standards in this document are intended to assure that new buildings are well designed and contribute to vibrant urban places. These objective standards involve no personal or subjective judgment and are publicly available and verifiable by reference. The standards complement but do not replace existing obligations in the Planning Code.





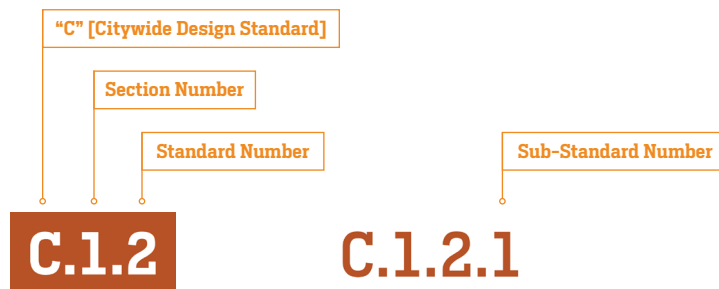
The Corridor

How to Use This Document

The Design Standards are covered in two chapters, Site Design and Architecture. Site design addresses the overall building form and how it is placed on a site and the relationship with its surroundings. These include ground floor setbacks, upper story setbacks, and modulation covering a range of scales from multi-acre sites to smaller mid-block properties. The Architecture chapter focuses on finer grained aspects of a new building that create depth, texture and expression that support an engaging pedestrian-friendly environment.

The standards in this document are regulatory and compliance is mandatory, and are to be used in concert with development standards in the Planning Code. This document will often refer to certain Planning Code sections to find specific requirements for setbacks, heights, and other controls that define a site's development capacity.

Design Standards found only in this document (and not in the Planning Code) are assigned specific numbers in the following format:



Application of the Standards

Projects subject to the Housing Accountability Act (HAA) under California Government Code Section 65589.5 are subject only to objective design standards. HAA-eligible projects are generally those that construct two or more dwelling units, including mixed-use developments that are at least two-thirds residential, or for some large mixed-use projects at least one-half residential. In addition to the standards contained in the Planning Code, HAA-eligible projects must comply with the San Francisco Design Standards. Projects not subject to the HAA are subject to the City's adopted design guidelines, including but not limited to the following: Urban Design Guidelines, Residential Design Guidelines, and Ground Floor Residential Design Guidelines. The San Francisco Design Standards apply within the boundary lines of an individual property and do not apply to the public realm.

Standard Structure: Each standard is described at the top of the page, followed by a sidebar that explains the rationale for the standard, and illustrations that further describe its application. Projects must satisfy all applicable standards. Where these standards differ from the Planning Code, the Planning Code shall govern.

The diagram shows the layout of a design standard page. It includes a sidebar with labels for different sections: Topic, Rationale, Applicability, Standards, and Example. The main content area shows the text for standard C.2 STEPBACKS, including its rationale, applicability, and specific standards (C.2.1, C.2.2, C.2.3). An example section at the bottom features a 3D rendering of a building with setbacks, labeled C.2.1 New buildings are setback at 50' when adjacent to rear yard.





SITE DESIGN

- C.1 Large Sites
- C.2 Rear and Side Stepbacks
- C.3 Tall Buildings
- C.4 Modulation
- C.5 Light wells and Side Setbacks

C.1 LARGE SITES

Ensure that block sizes for new housing support walkable neighborhoods. Large blocks inhibit pedestrian movement by lengthening the distances between points, discouraging people from walking to nearby destinations and from using transit.

APPLICABILITY: These standards are applicable to any site citywide that meets the description herein, except for those that are subject to [Planning Code Section 270.2](#).

Development lots that are either (1) two acres or larger, or (2) have a frontage of 200 feet or greater on block frontage that is 400 feet or greater, must be divided into smaller resultant lots in either one of the two following ways:

C.1.1 Option 1: Lots shall be divided into resultant blocks such that no block frontage exceeds a dimension of 300 feet and no block perimeter exceeds a total dimension of 1,200 feet. In such cases, resultant blocks shall be separated from each other by newly created public street(s) or alley(s) or publicly-accessible privately-owned street(s) or alley(s). Such streets shall meet San Francisco street standards (including Better Streets Plan standards). If privately-owned street(s) or alley(s) are created, they shall be maintained and provide public access under the same standards provided in [Planning Code Section 270.2 \(f\)](#).

C.1.2 Option 2: For block faces up to 400 feet with no block perimeter exceeding a total dimension of 1,400 feet, resultant blocks must meet the same separation standards as set forth in C.1.1 above. These larger blocks shall provide a mid-block pedestrian passageway on off corridor block faces:

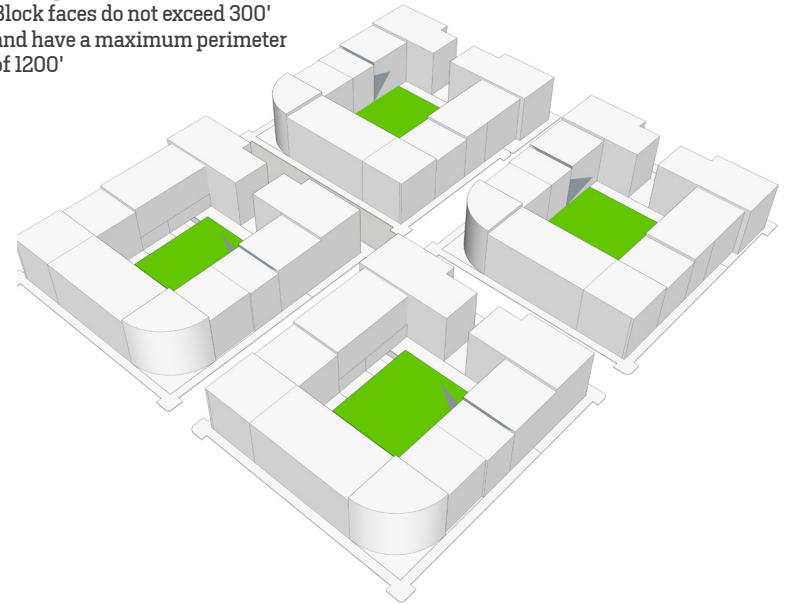
- C.1.2.1** Be located at the middle portion of the subject block face, perpendicular to the subject frontage and connect to existing adjacent streets and alleys, where they exist. A passageway that crosses the block at its center line or 50 lateral feet of the block's center line shall be considered as having met this standard. Where the subject lot is not within the central portion of its block, a passageway that crosses the lot at its centerline or 50 lateral feet of the lot's center line shall be considered as having met this standard.
- C.1.2.2** Be open to the public 24 hours a day. Fences and or gates that would limit public access at any point within the passageway shall not be permitted;
- C.1.2.3** Provide no private vehicular access;
- C.1.2.4** Have a minimum width of 20 feet measured from building to building at any point.
- C.1.2.5** Have a minimum clear walking width of 10 feet free of any obstructions.

- C.1.2.6** Have at least 60 percent of the area of the alley or pathway open to the sky. Obstructions permitted within setbacks pursuant to Section 136 may be located within the portion of the alley or pathway that is required to be open to the sky. All portions of the alley or pathway not open to the sky shall have a minimum clearance height from grade of 15 feet at all points;
- C.1.2.7** Be free of any changes in grade or steps not required by the underlying natural topography and average grade; be fronted by active ground floor uses, as defined in Section 145.1, for no less than 60% of their fronting length and in no case feature more than 50-feet of inactive use in any single segment.
- C.1.2.8** Be configured to allow clear visual access from one end of the passageway through the development lot to its opposite end.
- C.1.2.9** Maintenance and access provisions of Planning Code section(s) 270.1(d)-(f) shall also apply to passageways created under this Section.

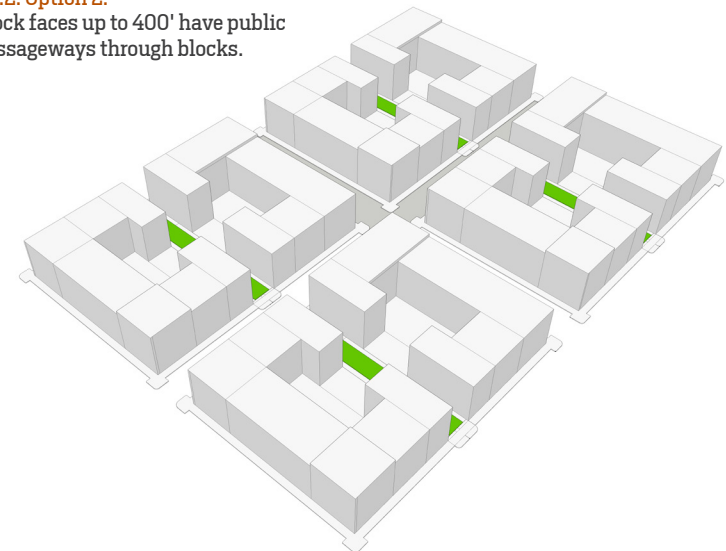


Example of how a large site could be broken up into smaller, walkable blocks.

- C.1.1. Option 1.**
Block faces do not exceed 300' and have a maximum perimeter of 1200'



- C.1.2. Option 2.**
Block faces up to 400' have public passageways through blocks.



C.2 STEPBACKS

Upper story stepbacks of new larger buildings create a more sensitive transition to existing residential neighbors. These Design Standards provide requirements for upper story stepbacks with the emphasis of modest stepping back at the side and rear when abutting properties in a Residential District as defined in Planning Code Section 201 that have zoning height limits of 45 feet or below, while maximizing new housing development toward the front of the property.

APPLICABILITY: These standards are applicable to any development citywide that is (1) taller than 55-feet; (2) wider than 50 feet along its street frontage; and (3) adjacent to or within an RH, RM, or RTO zoned neighborhood that is also within a Height District of 45 feet or less.

C.2.1 When a new building abuts the rear property line of a property in a Residential District as defined in Planning Code Section 201, the first ten lateral feet of the new building measured from the shared property line shall be no taller than 55 feet for properties wider than 50 feet.

C.2.2 When a building abuts the side property line of a Residential Zoning District, the first ten lateral feet measured from the shared property line shall be no taller than the height of the adjacent structure. If the adjacent parcel is vacant, the height shall be no taller than the zoning height of the adjacent vacant parcel.

C.2.3 Where a property's rear yard abuts the rear yard(s) of a property in a Residential District as defined in Planning Code Section 201, and has a lot depth of 100 feet or greater, the portion of the new building that is within the last 25-feet of the lot shall have a maximum height of 55-feet.



C.2.1 New buildings are stepback at 55' when adjacent to rear yard



C.2.3 When rear yard of project abuts rear yard of a Residential Zoning District the building must step down to 55' when within 25' of lot depth.



C.2.2 When abutting a side property line of a Residential Zoning District the first 10' shall be no taller than adjacent home

C.3 TALL BUILDINGS

Mass of buildings above a height of 85-feet should be reduced in bulk to reduce their impact on the street and surrounding properties. Buildings above 140-feet height shall be sculpted with consideration given to tapering their form and assuring sufficient views through multiple towers. See also Planning Code Section 270

APPLICABILITY: These standards are applicable to any development citywide that is taller than 85 feet in the X bulk district and in other Bulk Districts that do not prescribe building dimension limitations or separation requirements in the Planning Code, including in Article 1.2 and Article 2.5 Where an applicable Bulk District prescribes maximum building dimensions above a certain height threshold but does not prescribe building separation standards, the separation standards of this document shall apply above the specified height threshold in PC Section 270. The standards in this Section S3 do not apply in bulk districts CS, S, S-2, TB, CP, HP, PM, TI, EP, IB, PY and Stonestown Height & Bulk District.

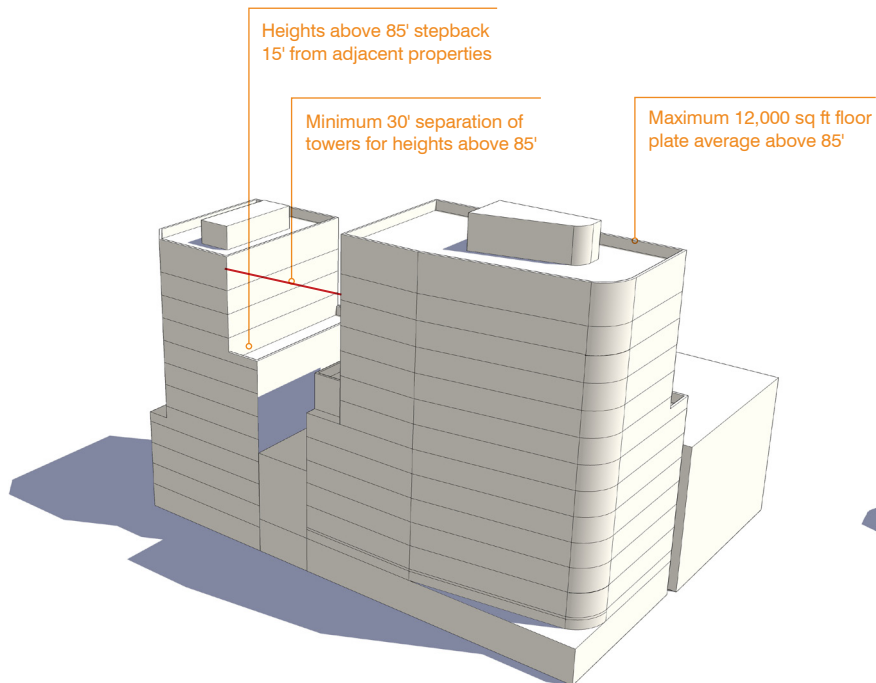
The following bulk limits and separation requirements apply to buildings above 85-feet in height unless identified elsewhere in the Planning Code.

- C.3.1** Buildings between 85 feet and 140 feet in height (exclusive of permitted height exceptions):
 - C.3.1.1** Minimum 15-foot setback from side property line(s) for the portion(s) of the building above 85 feet.
 - C.3.1.2** For portions of the building above 85 feet, the average floor plate shall not exceed 12,000 square feet.
 - C.3.1.3** Above 85 feet, a maximum length of 130 feet is permitted, and a maximum diagonal of 160 feet is permitted.
 - C.3.1.4** Building portions above 85 feet and up to 140 feet must maintain a 30-foot distance from other buildings above 85 feet.

- C.3.2** Buildings above 140 feet in height (exclusive of permitted height exceptions set forth in the Planning Code) must meet the following requirements:

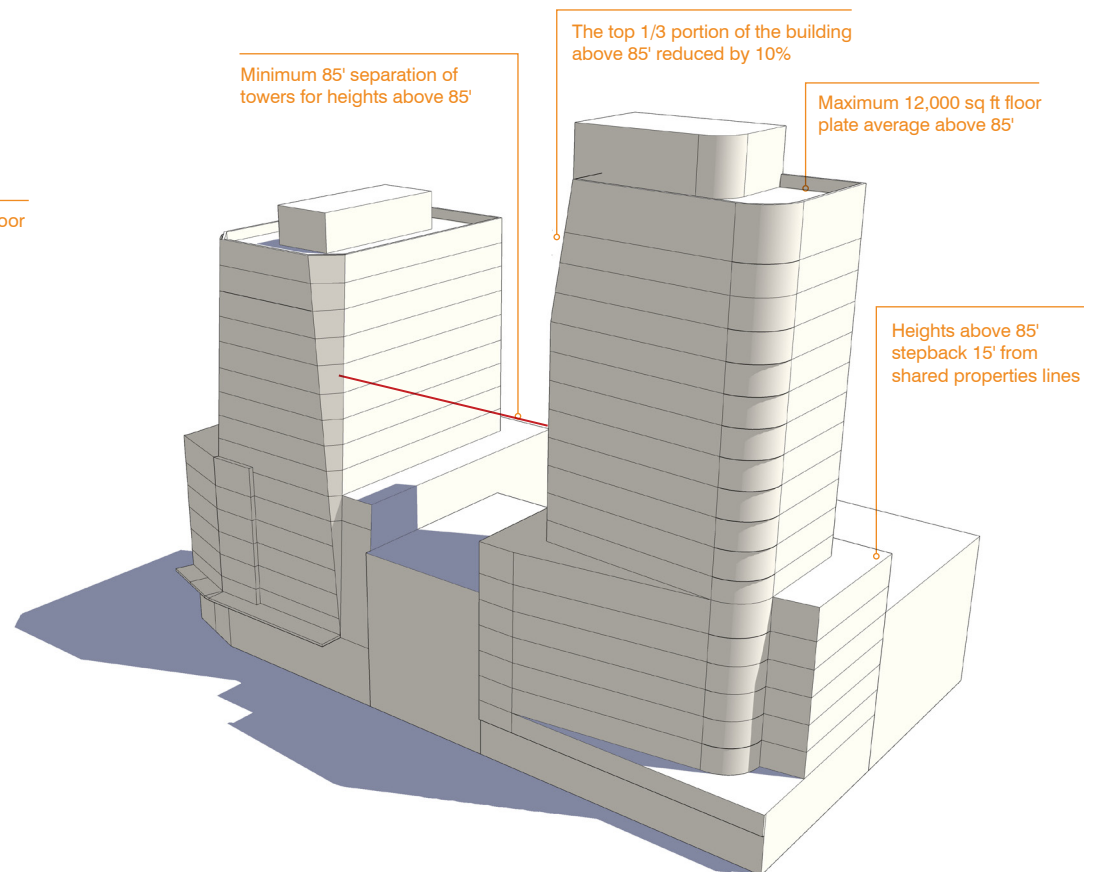
- C.3.2.1** Above 85 feet, a maximum length of 130 feet is permitted, and a maximum diagonal of 160 feet is permitted.
- C.3.2.2** For portions above 85 feet, the average floor plate shall not exceed 12,000 square feet.
- C.3.2.3** The tower portion of the building shall be setback from any shared property line(s) by 15 feet.
- C.3.2.4** Building portions above 85 feet shall be separated by no less than 85 feet from other buildings above 85 feet.

C.3.2.5 For portions above 85 feet, a maximum unbroken wall width of 100 feet is permitted. Walls of more than 100 feet in width shall provide relief through a notch of at least 10 feet by 10 feet or a change in plane of at least 10 feet.



C.3.1
BUILDINGS 85'-140'

C.3.2.6 The top 1/3 portion of the building above 85 feet shall be reduced in both square footage and the allowed maximum dimensions described above by 10 percent.



C.3.2
BUILDINGS TALLER THAN 140'

C.4 MODULATION

Breaking up the massing of long building façades encourages architectural variety and prevents monotonous streetscapes.

APPLICABILITY: These standards are applicable to any development citywide that is wider than 200 feet along its street frontage and is not otherwise subject to Planning Code Section 270.1. Modulation requirements here are for portions of buildings above the ground floor and below 85-feet in height [i.e. not the tower portion of a building].

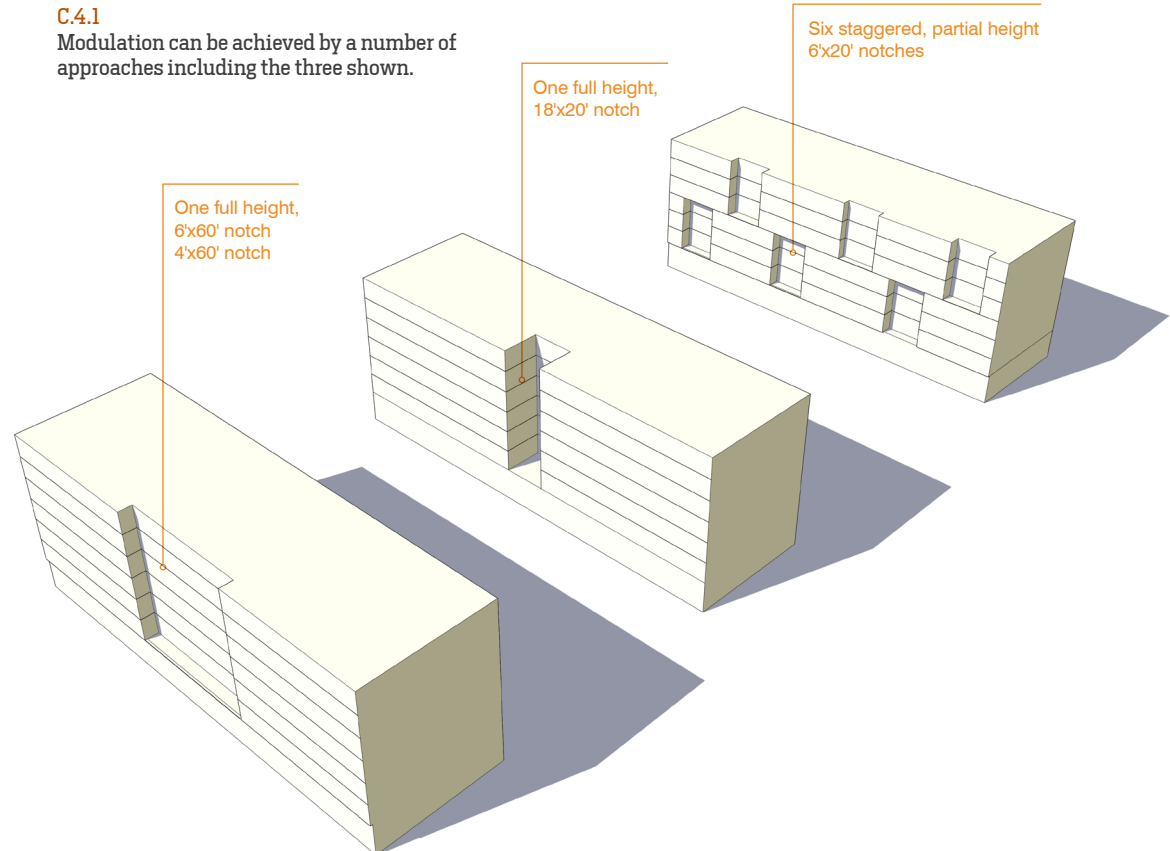
C.4.1 Building frontages greater than 200 feet along a street or alley must be modulated using the following method:

Subtract 3600 gross cubic feet from each full floor above the ground floor on the public right of way adjacent façade(s), where each subtraction is at least four feet deep and four feet wide and 8 feet tall along the frontage.

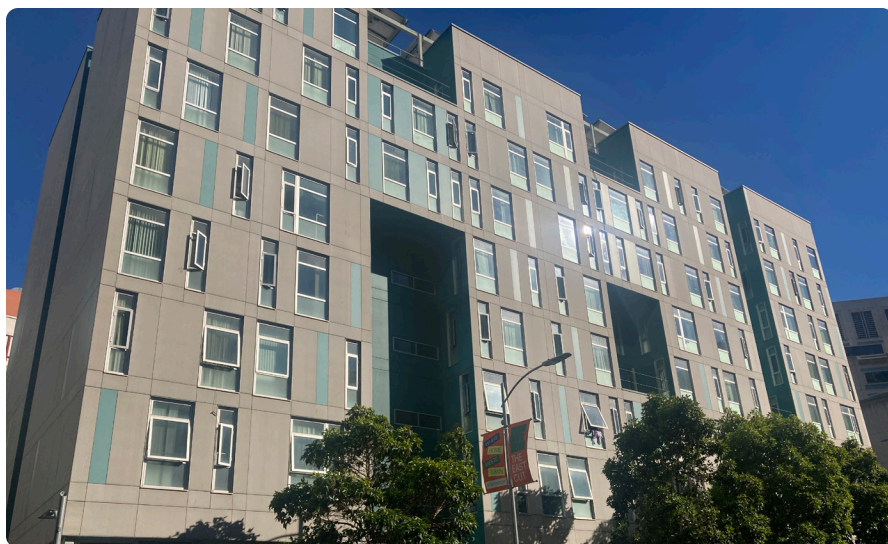
For every additional 50 feet of building frontage over 200 feet, an additional 900 cubic feet must be subtracted from each floor above the ground floor.

Balconies and recessed terraces may be placed in the modulation notch.

C.4.1 Modulation can be achieved by a number of approaches including the three shown.



Examples of different modulation approaches found throughout the city.



C.5 LIGHTWELLS AND SIDE SETBACKS

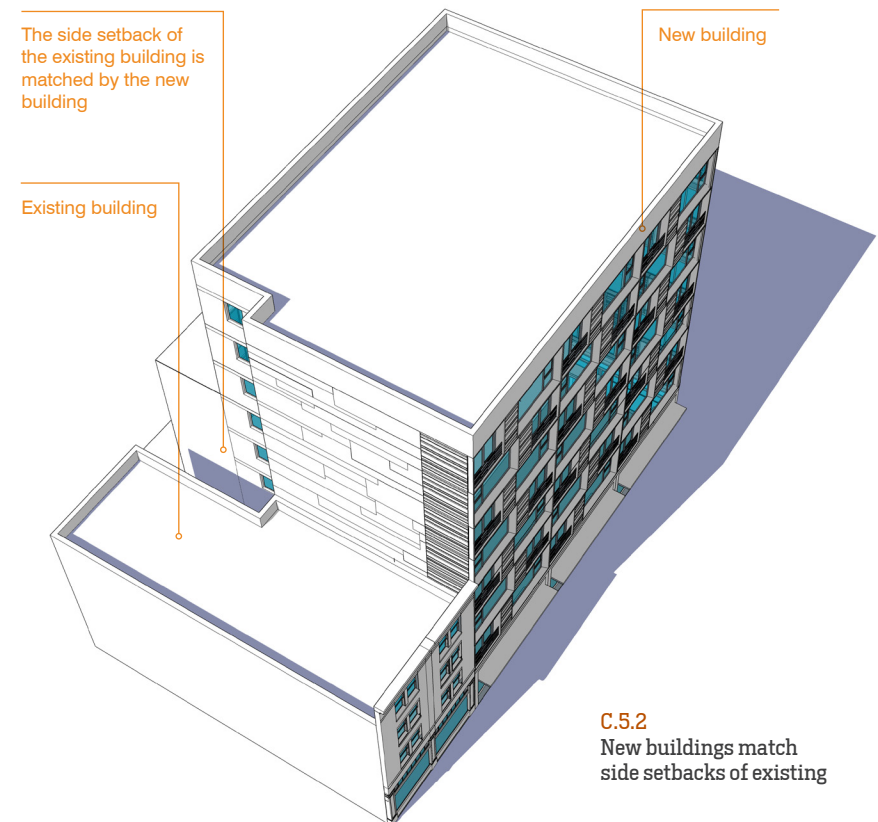
Side setbacks and lightwells are a common feature of existing residential structures and enable natural light and air to reach living spaces further from streets or rear yards. New development must be sensitive to these existing conditions by incorporating matching lightwell and stepbacks and setting back occupiable space on roofs.

APPLICABILITY: These standards are applicable to any development citywide that is adjacent to a residential structure that features a lightwell or side setback described here.

C.5.1 Existing adjacent lightwells above the ground floor shall be matched by the new building when the existing lightwell is ten feet deep or less from the property line and the light well features windows. The matching lightwell in the new structure shall have a minimum depth of three feet from the property line and shall match the location of the adjacent lightwell for a minimum of 75% of existing lightwell's width.

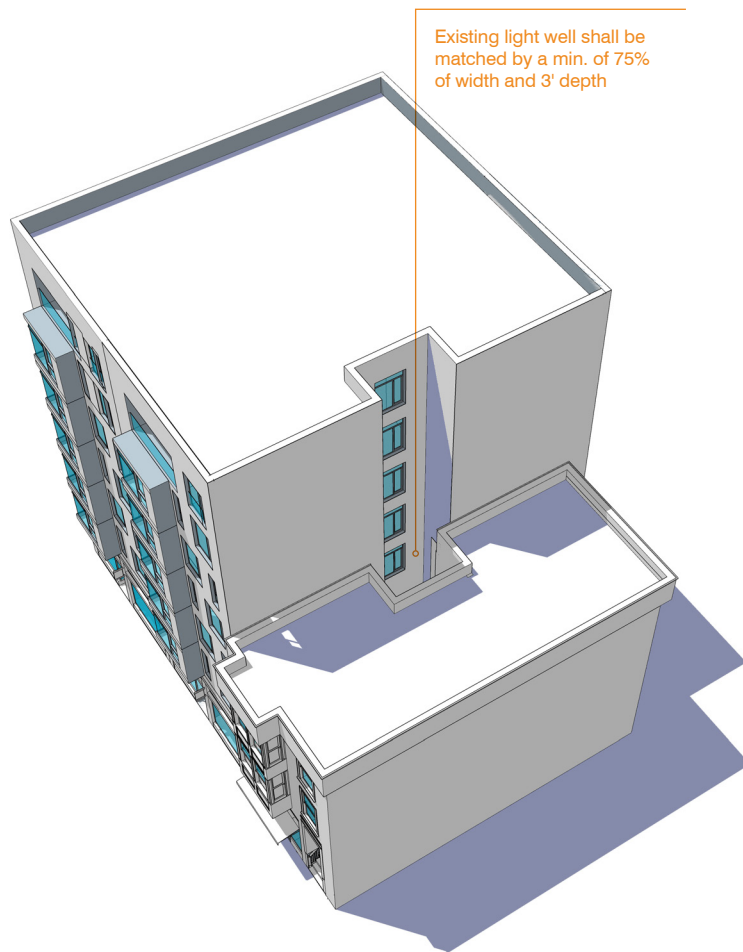
C.5.2 For projects 55' or greater in lot width adjacent to a Residential Zoning District features a side setback less than ten feet that serves a window it shall be matched by setting back at the same level of the setback and every level above. The setback shall have a minimum depth of three feet and match a minimum of 75% of the length.

C.5.3 Occupiable space on roof decks shall be setback from the building face by a minimum of five feet, except when a deck abuts a blank property line wall of a neighboring building where no setback is required.

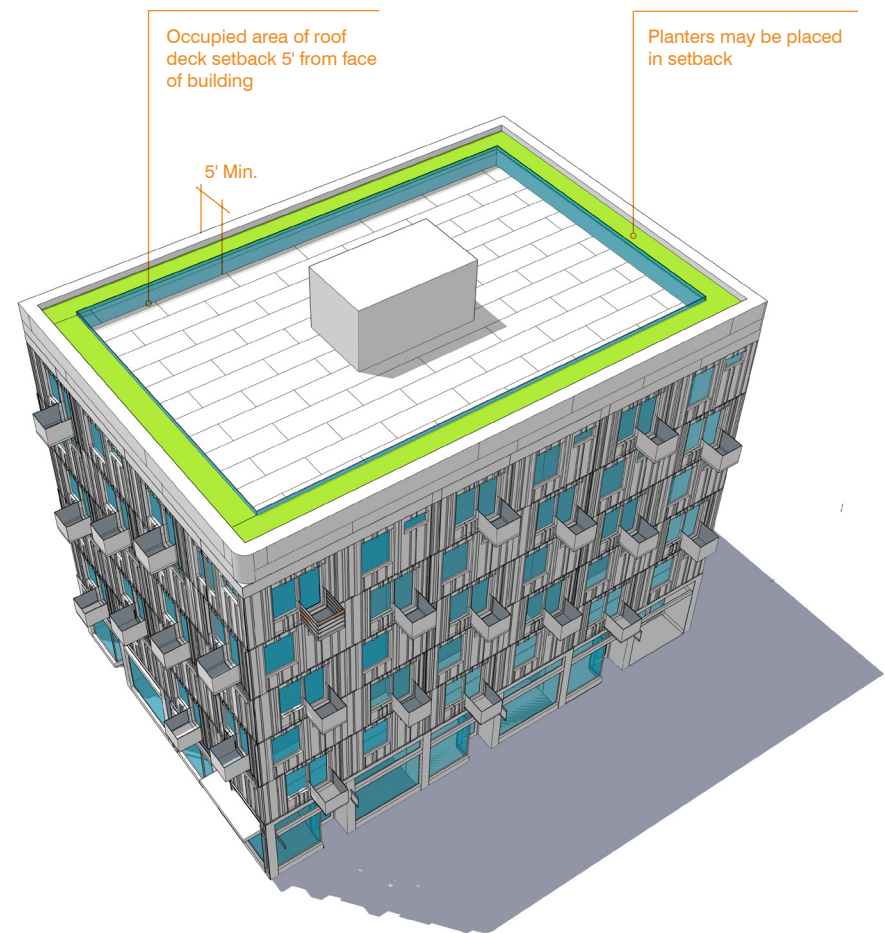


C.5.1

New buildings match light wells of existing

**C.5.3**

Roof decks are setback 5'





ARCHITECTURE

- C.6 Façade Articulation
- C.7 Commercial Ground Floor
- C.8 Residential Ground Floor
- C.9 Non-active Frontages
- C.10 Blind Walls
- C.11 Fenestration
- C.12 Residential Lobby Entries
- C.13 Materials

C.6 FAÇADE ARTICULATION

Well articulated façades include projections and/or recessions that create a rich textural quality through shade and shadow that distinguish a residential use.

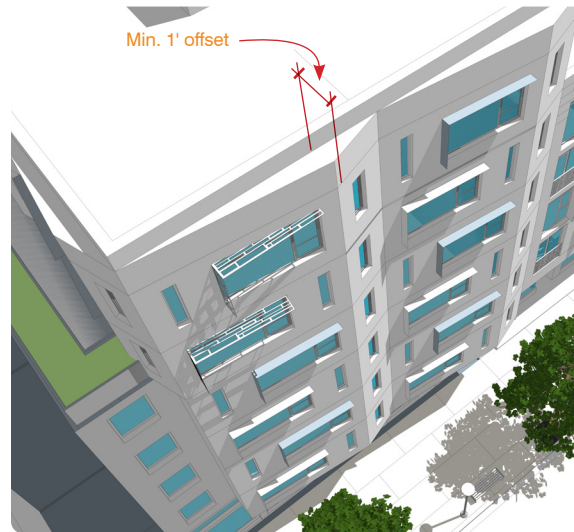
APPLICABILITY: These façade articulation standards are applicable to any development citywide. These requirements are for portions of buildings above the ground floor.

- C.6.1** Articulation requirements apply to any façade abutting a public right of way and must extend across the entire façade for all floors above the ground floor. Meeting the standards can be achieved by a number of means including major and minor projections or recessions. At least one of the following methods shall be used:
 - C.6.1.1** Code compliant bay windows spaced no more than thirty feet apart on center
 - C.6.1.2** A projecting balcony or recessed terrace a minimum of four feet by four feet spaced no more than thirty feet apart on center.
 - C.6.1.3** A major volumetric projection/recession of at least one foot at it's deepest portion that spans thirty feet.
 - C.6.1.4** All windows that exceed standard requirements described in **C.11.4.1** with a recess of six inches or more from primary cladding to exterior frame. Section detail to be provided in plans.
 - C.6.1.5** A textured façade that provides a minimum of two inches of relief. Spacing of relief shall not exceed two feet either vertically or horizontally.
 - C.6.1.6** Pilasters spanning all upper floors placed no more than twenty feet on center with a minimum three inch projection from the primary cladding. Pilasters must be a minimum of one foot wide.
 - C.6.1.7** An externalized structure or framing that at a minimum articulates each floor and unit on the façade. The structure must project a minimum of three inches from primary cladding.
 - C.6.1.8** Sunshades, fins, louvers, eyebrows, Juliet balconies, or any horizontal or vertically oriented projection a minimum of one foot from façade spaced no more than fifteen feet apart on center. Projections shall be a minimum of four feet in length.

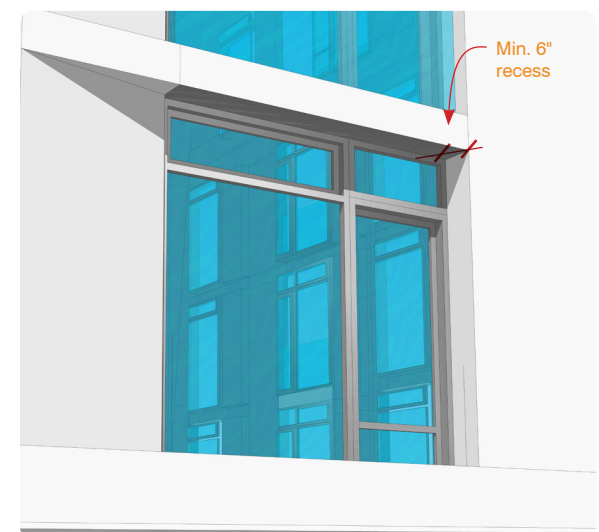
Articulation requirements can be achieved through a number of different methods.



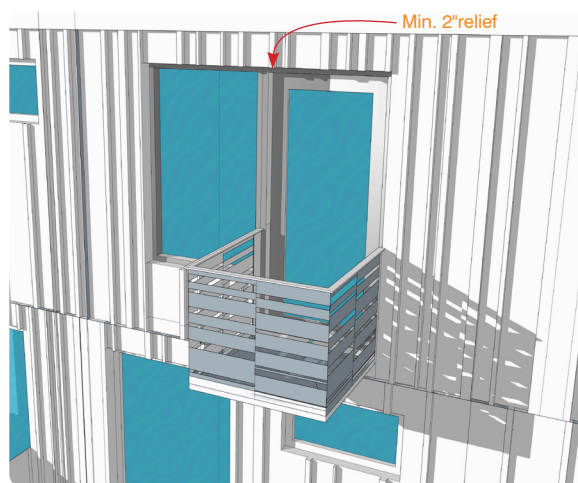
C.6.1.1 Bay windows spaced no more than 30' apart



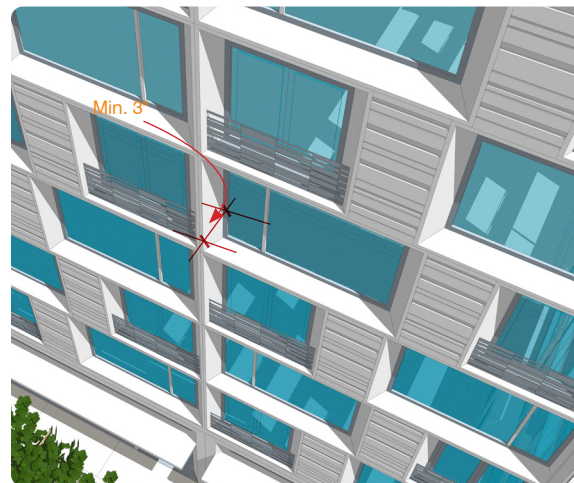
C.6.1.3 A major volumetric offset of at least 1'



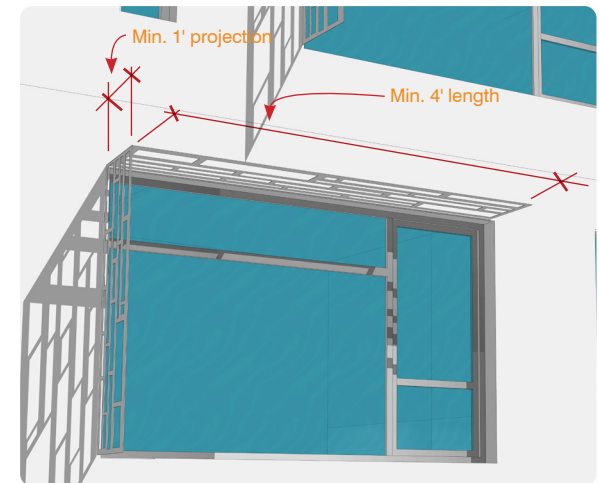
C.6.1.4 Windows recessed at least 6"



C.6.1.5 Textured façade with min. 2" relief
C.6.1.2 Projecting balcony min. 4'x4'



C.6.1.7 Framing element that articulates each unit and floor at a minimum



C.6.1.8 Sunshades spaced no more than 15' apart

C.7 GROUND FLOOR COMMERCIAL

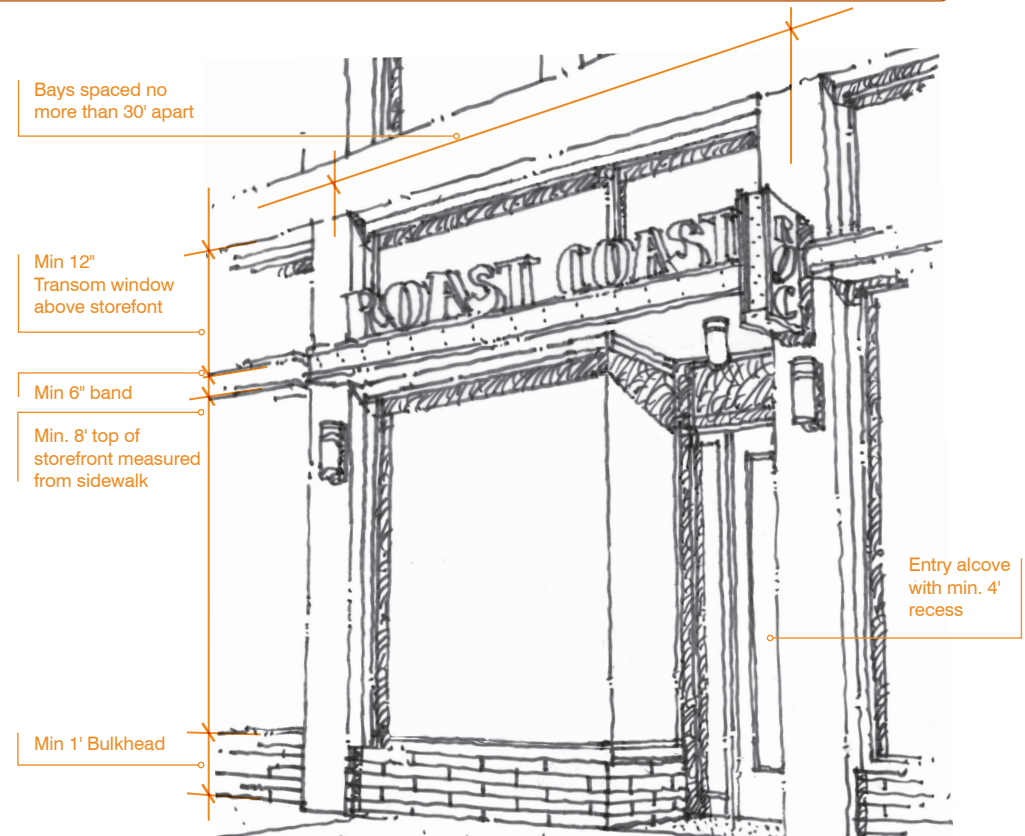
The ground floor is where pedestrians interact with a building and its treatment is integral to creating a rich, engaging streetscape environment. A rhythm of elements that address the pedestrian are fundamental aspects of storefront design. See also [Standards for Storefront Transparency](#)

APPLICABILITY: These standards are applicable to any development citywide that features ground floor commercial use. [but not PDR]

C.7.1 Commercial storefronts must be articulated into bays no more than thirty feet apart on center. The vertical articulating element shall be no less than one foot wide and no wider than two feet and extend either from the sidewalk or top of bulkhead to top of ground floor. Storefronts less than thirty feet wide do not require bay articulation.

C.7.2 For storefronts over ten feet transom windows are required over storefronts. Transom windows shall be a minimum of twelve inches in height and separated from the storefront below with a solid band or projecting canopy of six inches minimum height. If used, an awning shall be mounted to this band. Louvers for venting may replace transom glass only where required by the Building Code.

C.7.3 Commercial storefront windows, exclusive of the transom window shall be a minimum of eight feet in height measured from the sidewalk. For buildings on streets and alleys with slopes greater than 5% at least one point of the storefront window shall be eight feet.



Typical storefront condition

C.7.4 Commercial entries shall have alcoves recessed from the sidewalk by a minimum of four feet in depth by four feet in width. Alcoves may be combined for adjacent businesses. Combined entries shall be a minimum of four feet depth by eight feet width.

C.7.5 A bulkhead at the sidewalk of at least one foot in height is required below the storefront. For sloped sites the bulkhead may be measured from the downslope end of the bay.

C.7.6 For ground floors greater than seventeen feet in height a horizontal projection of at least four feet shall be placed no higher than twelve feet above the sidewalk for 40% of ground floor active uses.

C.7.7 For corner properties the storefront treatment must extend around corner for a minimum of ten feet.



A range of architectural expressions can be designed within the standards.

C.8 GROUND FLOOR RESIDENTIAL

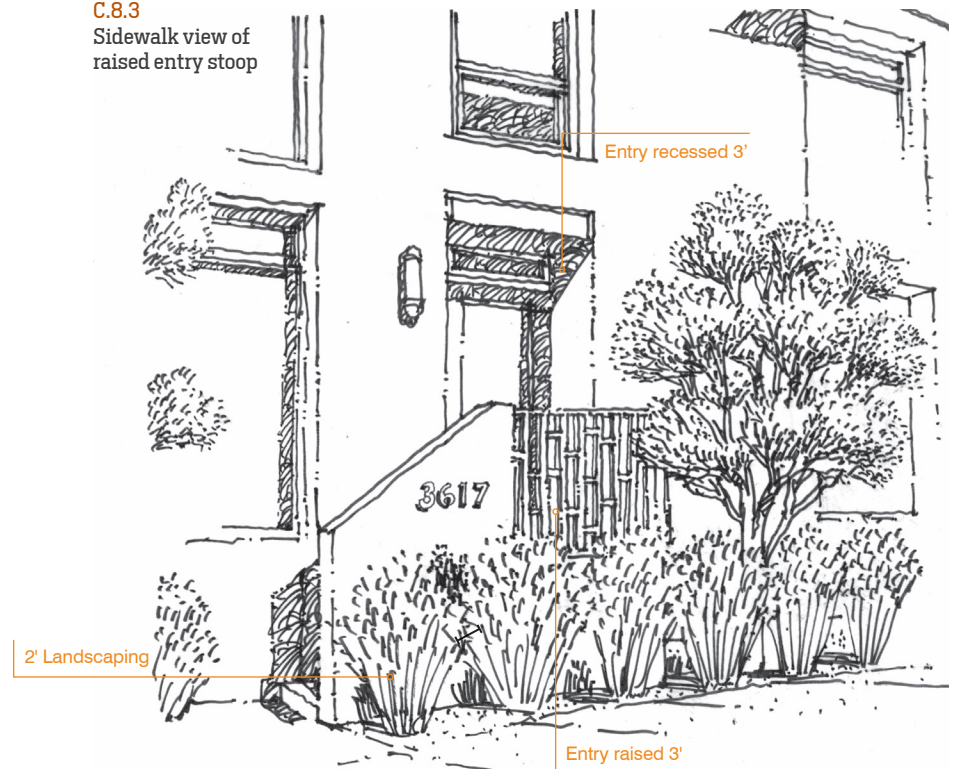
Ground floor residential units with entries from the sidewalk enhance the pedestrian experience and the livability of dwelling units; they provide a clear buffer between the private realm of the building and the public realm of the street.

APPLICABILITY: These standards are applicable to any development citywide that features ground floor residential units and has a frontage width of 50 feet or greater along any of its frontages.

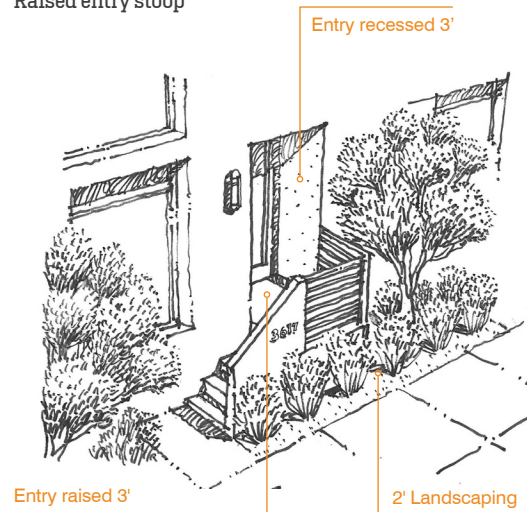
The standards address three primary conditions: raised external entries, at grade entries and raised, recessed entries. Standards apply to the ground floor only – upper floors do not require any setback.

- C.8.1** 75% of ground floor units that face a public street, alley or passageway must have an entry from the sidewalk.
- C.8.2** All conditions shall have a minimum two foot landscape strip for the width of the unit excluding entry paths either on the property or in the public right of way subject to a minor encroachment permit through the Department of Public Works. Where permit is not issued due to sidewalk width restrictions the standard may be waived.
- C.8.3** Raised, external entries shall meet the following:
 - C.8.3.1** Upper landing shall be raised a minimum of three feet from grade
 - C.8.3.2** Entry door shall be setback from the property line a minimum of five feet and a maximum of eight feet.

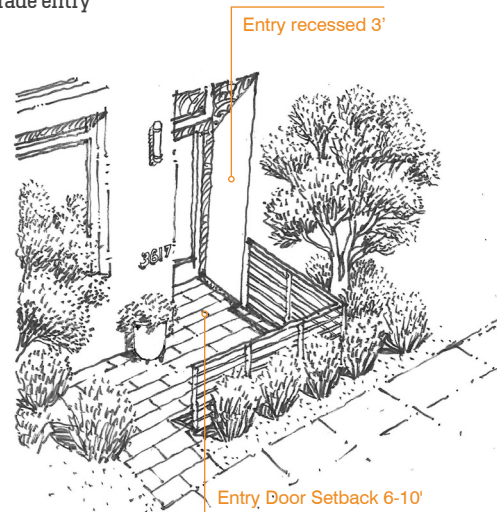
C.8.3
Sidewalk view of
raised entry stoop



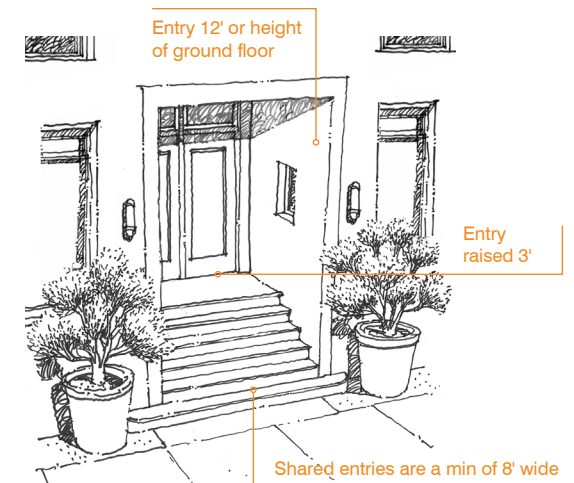
C.8.3
Raised entry stoop



C.8.4
At grade entry



C.8.5
Raised, recessed entry to multiple units



C.8.3.3 Entry door shall either be recessed a minimum of three feet from the primary façade or flush with a canopy that spans the entry opening and projects a minimum of one foot.

C.8.3.4 Entries must be a minimum of four feet wide and eight feet tall.

C.8.4 At grade entries or entries raised less than three feet shall meet the following:

C.8.4.1 Entry door shall be setback a minimum of six feet and maximum of ten feet from property line including a minimum of three feet recess from the primary façade.

C.8.4.2 Entry openings must be minimum of five feet wide and twelve feet tall or the height of the ground floor, whichever is less

C.8.5 Recessed, raised entries shall meet the following:

C.8.5.1 Upper landing shall be raised a minimum of three feet from grade.

C.8.5.2 Minimum clear height of entry shall be eight feet measured from the upper landing.

C.8.5.3 Shared entries to multiple units with stairs that run perpendicular to the property line shall be a minimum of eight feet in width.

C.9 NON-ACTIVE FRONTAGES

Non-active frontages that include functional “back-of-house” features of buildings, including but not limited to, vehicle and loading entries, trash rooms, and electrical rooms should be treated as an integral part of the ground floor façade treatment rather than as blank walls that disrupt the pedestrian experience.

APPLICABILITY: These standards are applicable to any development citywide.

C.9.1 For buildings that front on intersecting streets or alleys (corner buildings), non-active uses and blank walls shall not occur within twenty feet of the corner of the building.

C.9.2 The square footage of frontages of non-active uses shall include a minimum of 10% glazing or a minimum of 5% glazing if a mural treatment is provided and maintained for at least 20% of the ground floor façade area. Glazing may be translucent for these uses.

C.9.3 Non-active frontages shall incorporate the standards for Ground Floor Commercial that are provided by active uses (excepting window and transparency requirements).

C.9.4 Where eligible, projects shall apply to place transformer vaults in an underground sidewalk vault to maximize active uses at the ground floor.

C.9.5 If a project has a ground floor recession including at an entry or open space of sufficient size and clearance the vault shall be placed in an underground vault there.

These buildings maintain the rhythm of the active storefront composition across non-active use.



C.10 BLIND WALLS

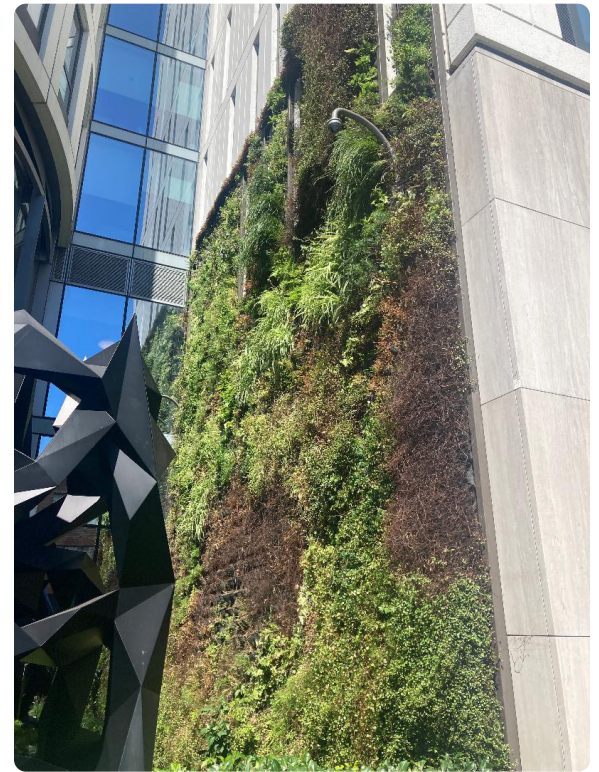
Large blind walls that are visible from the street or adjacent properties increase the visual impact and perception of bulk of taller buildings. Modest treatments can reduce their prominence.

APPLICABILITY: These standards are applicable to any development citywide.

- C.10.1** Blind walls (e.g., windowless walls at side property lines) of twenty feet or more above an adjacent building and over twenty feet in width must be treated in one of the following ways for a minimum of 70% of the visible wall:
- C.10.1.1** A mural. A mural is defined as a purposeful artistic graphical expression, that is not also a sign as defined by Planning Code Article 6, painted or affixed (e.g. tile mosaic) directly on a wall and clearly distinguishable from the building's architecturally painted or tiled surfaces. Area shall be measured from the outer edges of mural. A mural shall be maintained for the life of the project as long as the condition of a blind wall defined in C.10.1 exists.
 - C.10.1.2** A living wall or green wall, which features living plants supported by the building wall or structure affixed to the wall. A living wall or green wall shall be maintained for the life of a project.
 - C.10.1.3** A textured façade that provides a minimum relief of two inches of depth. Spacing of relief shall not exceed four feet either vertically or horizontally.
 - C.10.1.4** A scoring pattern where each defined segment does not exceed one hundred square feet. Scoring must be a minimum of one inch deep by ½ inch wide. Each segment shall be a different color from the adjacent segment.



C.10.1.1 Murals enliven large otherwise blank walls while supporting neighborhood identity



C.10.1.2
Green walls provide a lush, living surface that contrasts with the built environment



C.10.1.3
A patterned façade breaks up the expansive blind wall

C.11 FENESTRATION

The size, detailing and type of windows is essential to overall building quality.

APPLICABILITY: These standards are applicable to any development citywide. Fenestration requirements here are for portions of buildings above the ground.

Minimum and maximum transparency requirements shall be shown in plans submitted as part of the project application materials. Transparency percentages shall be calculated from the floor of the first level of residential use to the ceiling of the uppermost level in elevation view. Spandrels and opaque glass do not contribute to minimum and maximum requirements. Overall window opening excluding frames above the ground floor shall meet the following requirements:

C.11.1 For public right of way adjacent façades:

- » Minimum amount of transparency shall be 30% of the building façade.
- » Maximum amount of transparency shall be 70% of the building façade.

C.11.2 For rear facing façades of properties in Residential Districts as defined in Planning Code Section 201:

- » Maximum amount of transparency shall be 50% of the building façade.

C.11.3 Type, material, and placement of windows are as follows:

- C.11.3.1 At least one operable window must be provided per dwelling unit.
- C.11.3.2 Windows must be clear, non-mirrored and with a minimum transparency of at least 85%
- C.11.3.3 Vinyl windows are not permitted for public right of way adjacent façades.
- C.11.3.4 When used divided lite windows must have true divided lites or have muntins on the interior and exterior with spacers between the panes. Muntins must have a minimum ½" relief. Detail and product information shall be submitted with the project application materials.
- C.11.3.5 Louvers or screens that cover windows must be a minimum of 75% transparent in elevation view and no deeper than three inches. Details shall be submitted with project application materials

C.11.4 Windows shall provide a minimum of three inch shadow line for public right of way adjacent façades. Shadow lines shall be achieved by at least one of the following means:

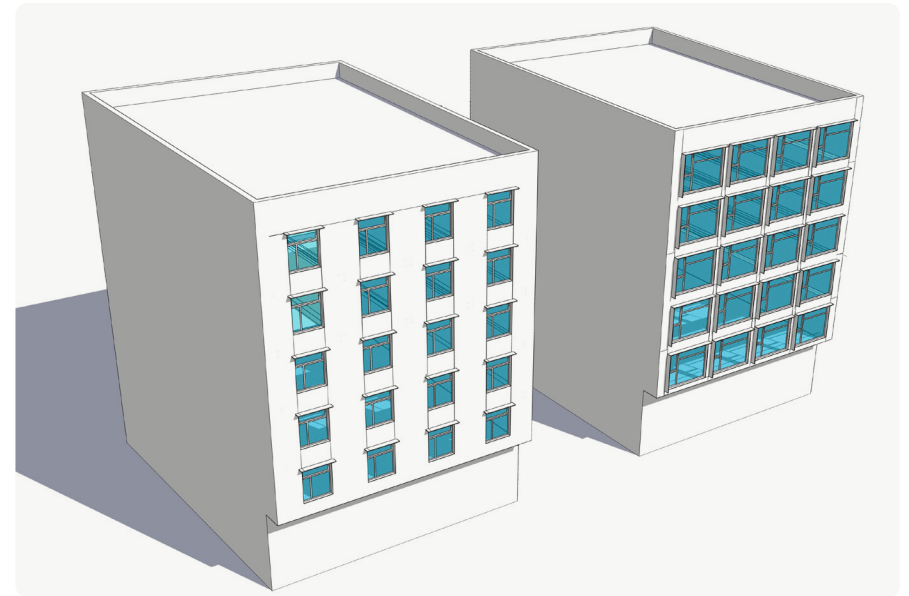
C.11.4.1 A minimum three inch window recess measured from the primary exterior cladding to sash. Window surrounds shall not contribute to three inch requirement.

C.11.4.2 A minimum three inch projecting window measured from the primary cladding to the window sash

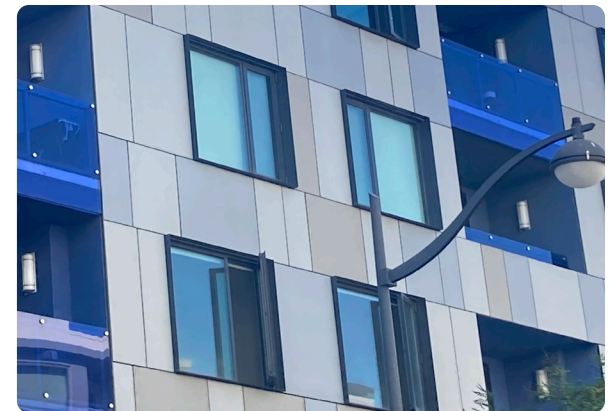
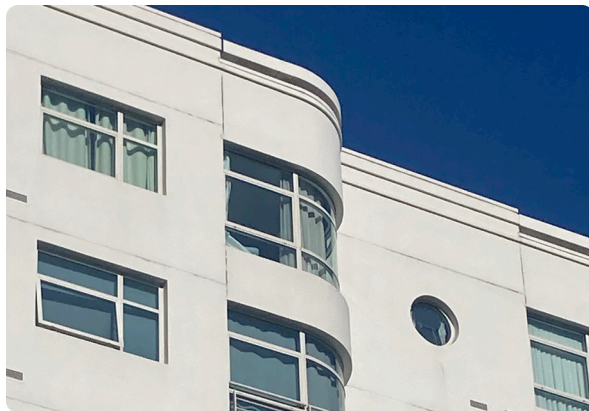
C.11.4.3 A minimum three inch sun screen surrounding all sides of the window. Sun screen shall not exceed one inch width in elevation.

C.11.4.4 For bay windows a minimum one inch recess from cladding is required

C.11.1 Allowable range of transparency is 30-70% for public right of way adjacent façades.



C.11.4 A 3" shadow line can be achieved by recessed windows (left), projecting windows (center) or with a sun screen around all window sides (right).

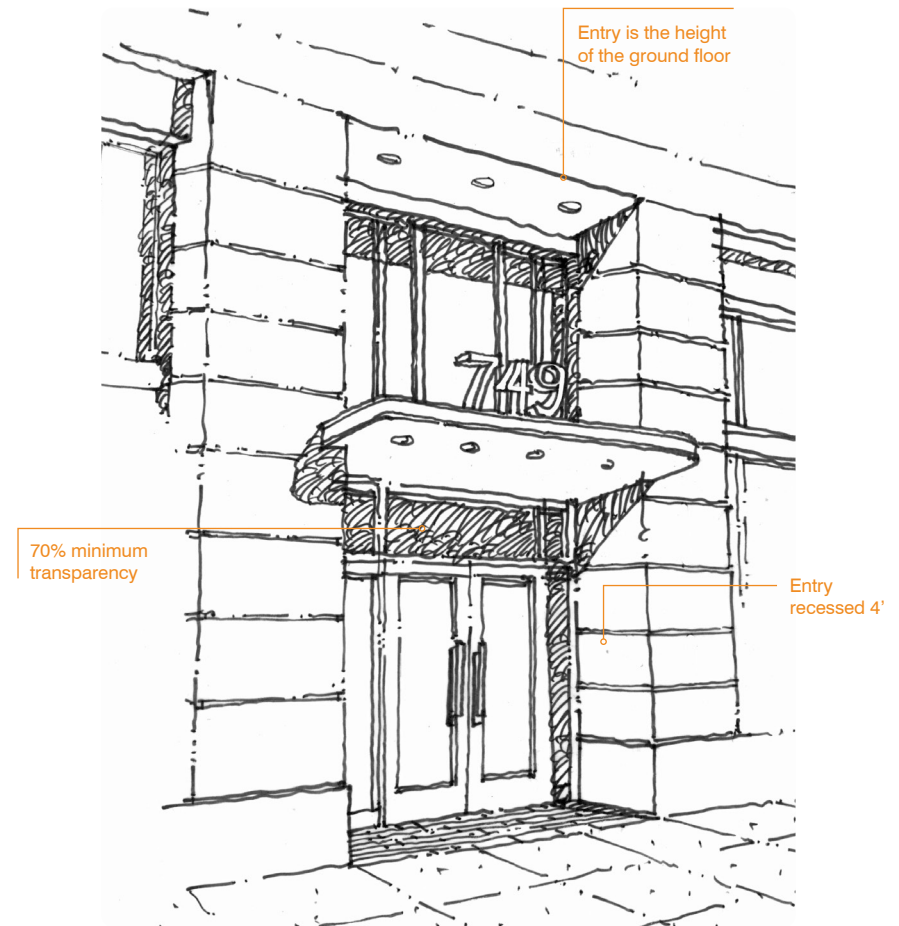


C.12 RESIDENTIAL LOBBY ENTRIES

Lobbies are the main building entry and require the scale and prominence reflecting their importance.

APPLICABILITY: These standards are applicable to any development citywide that features a residential lobby and is not considered a tower.

- C.12.1** Lobbies of buildings must feature entry openings (including door, transom windows, side windows) that are at least as tall as the height of the ground floor measured from the ceiling height.
- C.12.2** Lobby entry opening features (including door, transom windows, and side lites) must feature at least 70% transparency for 75% of the ground floor height, not less than 10 feet.
- C.12.3** Lobby entries to buildings lower than 85 feet shall incorporate alcoves with a recess that is at least four feet deep measured from the building façade.
- C.12.4** Buildings façades that are fifty feet wide or more shall feature lobby entries that are least eight feet wide. Buildings façades that are less than fifty feet wide shall have lobby entries that are at least six feet wide.



Lobby entries in the city are expressed in a number of ways



C.13 BUILDING MATERIALS

Allowing for a diverse range of durable and sustainable cladding materials supports the various styles found throughout San Francisco's neighborhoods.

APPLICABILITY: These standards are applicable to any development citywide.

- C.13.1** The primary façade cladding shall wrap a minimum of 5' to blind walls.
- C.13.2** The following exterior cladding materials shall not be used: Vinyl, plywood, any tropical hardwoods or tropical hardwood wood products, virgin redwood or virgin redwood wood products.



Allowing for a wide range of materials contributes to a rich and varied cityscape.



Glossary

Alcove: A recessed area in the wall.

Alley: A right-of-way, less than 30 feet in width, permanently dedicated to common and general use by the public.

Articulation: The act of giving expression. In architecture, it is the definition of the formal elements of architectural design. Through degrees of articulation, each part is united with the whole in such a way that the joined parts are put together. The articulation of a building reveals how the parts fit into the whole by emphasizing each part separately.

Bay: A space between architectural elements. For example the space between storefront pilasters.

Blind wall: Windowless or doorless walls at side property lines.

Bulkhead: The lower part of a wall, upon which the storefront display window is placed.

Cladding: Application of one material over another to provide a skin or layer. For example wood siding and stucco are common cladding materials.

Clerestory/Transom Window: A high section of wall that contains windows above eye level

with the purpose of admitting light, fresh air, or both. Often found above storefront display windows.

Development: Any construction activity either as new construction or addition to an existing structure(s) that result in at least two units or more is at least two-thirds residential.

Divided Lite Windows: A true divided-light window has multiple panes of glass that are separated by muntins or grilles. Simulated divided-light windows have one piece of glass with removable muntins attached to both the interior and exterior of the glass

Eyebrows: A flat, typically concrete, projection which protrudes horizontally from a building wall, generally located above windows.

Façade: The face of a building, especially the principal front that looks onto a street or open space.

Fenestration: The arrangement of windows and doors on the elevations of a building. Fenestration is often examined as a pattern.

Glazing: Glass windows, doors, or walls.

Light Wells: An open area or vertical shaft that is surrounded by building mass on all sides.

Typically located on the side property line wall and bring natural light to the lower floors or basement.

Living or Green Wall: A wall that features living plants supported by the building wall or structure affixed to the wall.

Mass: The three-dimensional volume or shape of a building or part of a building.

Mid-block: Open space Public or private site area, often including multiple lots, left as open space in the center of city blocks. This is typically created by an ensemble of many lots that follow a similar pattern, for example, consistent application and compliance with rear yard requirements.

Modulation: A three-dimensional modelling and definition of form that repeats, and supports the overall design. Recesses, projections, or other changes in façade planes, can be used to modulate.

Muntins: Strip of wood, metal, or other window material separating and holding panes of glass in a window. Muntins divide a single window sash or casement into a grid system of small panes of glass, called "lights" or "lites".

Mural: A purposeful artistic graphical representation, that is not also a sign as defined by Planning code Article 6, painted or affixed (e.g. tile mosaic) directly on a wall and clearly distinguishable from the building's architecturally painted or tiled surfaces.

Operable Window: Window that can be opened. Common types are single and double hung, casement, awning, hopper

Parapet: A low protective wall along the edge of a roof, deck, or balcony

Pilasters: A vertical architectural member that is rectangular in plan and is structurally a pier but architecturally treated as a column and that usually projects a third of its width or less from the wall

Public Right of Way: Any publicly owned streets, sidewalks, right of ways, parks, passageways publicly accessible open spaces

Residentially Zoned Properties: Properties zoned RH, RM or RTO

Roof Decks: Any occupiable space located on the roof of a volume.

Setback: A recession of the building volume from the property line at the ground level. A setback may extend the full height of the building or just the ground level.

Sidewalk: An elevated paved path for pedestrians at the side of a road and often between the roadway and a building. For the purposes of this document, sidewalks do not include private property or vehicular travel lanes.

Stepback: A volumetric recession on an upper level of a building

Streetscape: The result of natural and built elements combined that define the street.

Streetwall: Combined façades of buildings generally built to the property line facing a street or open space

Sunshades: Devices that block sunlight and reduce the amount of solar gain typically made of metal.

Tower: Any building that is taller than 85 feet in height (exclusive of permitted obstructions) where the building is not subject to Height and Bulk provisions of Planning Code Section 270; for buildings that are subject to the height

and bulk limitations of Planning Code Section 270 (including but not limited to Table 270), any building that is taller than the base height provided therein.

Tower Portion: The portion of a building that is above 85 feet in height where the building is not subject to the height and bulk provisions of Planning Code Section 270; for buildings that are subject to the height and bulk provisions of Planning Code Section 270, the portion of the building that is above the provided base height.

Translucent: Transmits light through but does not allow visibility through. Examples include frosted or fretted glass.

Transparent: Clear, non-mirrored glazing with a minimum transparency of 85%

Tropical Hardwoods: Woods from tropical forests including ramin, rosewood, ebony, mahogany, brazilwood, lignum vitae, meranti, wenge, merbau, and sapele

Volume: A three-dimensional measure of space that comprises a length, a width, and a height. In architecture, a volume can describe a three dimensional portion of a building or shaped element.



San Francisco
Planning

FOR MORE INFORMATION:
Call or visit the San Francisco Planning Department

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49 South Van Ness Avenue, Second Floor
San Francisco CA 94103

EMAIL: **pic@sfgov.org**

*Planning staff are available by phone and at the PIC counter.
No appointment is necessary.*

Introduction Form

(by a Member of the Board of Supervisors or the Mayor)

I hereby submit the following item for introduction (select only one):

- ☐ 1. For reference to Committee (Ordinance, Resolution, Motion or Charter Amendment)
- ☐ 2. Request for next printed agenda (For Adoption Without Committee Reference)
(Routine, non-controversial and/or commendatory matters only)
- ☒ 3. Request for Hearing on a subject matter at Committee
- ☐ 4. Request for Letter beginning with "Supervisor inquires..."
- ☐ 5. City Attorney Request
- ☐ 6. Call File No. from Committee.
- ☐ 7. Budget and Legislative Analyst Request (attached written Motion)
- ☐ 8. Substitute Legislation File No.
- ☐ 9. Reactivate File No.
- ☐ 10. Topic submitted for Mayoral Appearance before the Board on

The proposed legislation should be forwarded to the following (please check all appropriate boxes):

- ☐ Small Business Commission ☐ Youth Commission ☐ Ethics Commission
- ☐ Planning Commission ☐ Building Inspection Commission ☐ Human Resources Department

General Plan Referral sent to the Planning Department (proposed legislation subject to Charter 4.105 & Admin 2A.53):

- ☐ Yes ☐ No

(Note: For Imperative Agenda items (a Resolution not on the printed agenda), use the Imperative Agenda Form.)

Sponsor(s):

Sherrill

Subject:

Hearing - San Francisco Citywide Design Standards

Long Title or text listed:

Hearing on the Citywide Design Standards, as passed by the Planning Commission on November 14, 2024, and the potential to implement these design standards on a neighborhood-specific level while preserving their ministerial, objective, and cost-neutral nature.

Signature of Sponsoring Supervisor: /s/ Stephen Sherrill