



## Design Review Board Staff Report

**Date:** November 17, 2022

**To:** Design Review Board

**Prepared by:** Joan Ryan, Principal Planner  
[Joan.ryan@cityofconcord.org](mailto:Joan.ryan@cityofconcord.org)  
925-671-3370

**Reviewed by:** Mindy Gentry, Planning Manager  
Frank Abejo, Principal Planner

**Subject:** **Continuing the discussion on the City's Objective Design Standards (ODS) document with a focus on the draft standards and diagrams for the Corridors and Special Case/Infill areas and the different methods to achieve an objective standard.**

**CEQA: Not a project/exempt pursuant to Public Resources Code Section 21065, CEQA Guidelines Sections 15060(c) or 15378.**

---

### Report in Brief

This Design Review Board (DRB) meeting is a follow-up to the August 29 special joint meeting with the Planning Commission regarding the development of the City's Objective Design Standards (ODS) and the subsequent October 20 DRB special meeting focused on Downtown and Neighborhood standards. The focus of this meeting will be to build on the framework of the ODS document by discussing, reviewing and recommending specific architecture and site planning design standards for the Corridors and Special Case/Infill areas.

### Recommended Action

Continue the discussion on the City's ODS document with a focus on the preparation of draft standards and diagrams for the Corridors and Special Case/Infill areas and the different methods to achieve an objective standard.

### Background

The State has limited a local jurisdiction's ability to apply subjective design standards for qualifying housing projects, whereby the City can now only rely on the application of

objective design standards<sup>1</sup>. Objective standards are those that do not involve discretion or subjective judgment. Those standards can typically be referenced to an external and uniform benchmark or criterion.

The proposed approach will ensure the City establishes a strategy for new housing developments to maintain quality design with creative, economically feasible, and sustainable standards. More specifically, the City seeks to establish ODS to apply on residential housing development projects when the City's discretionary review is limited or prohibited.

Staff has held four meetings to date, which included the Design Review Board:

- **April 6 - Joint Special Meeting of the Housing and Economic Development Committee, Planning Commission, and Design Review Board** – Previewed the project intent, approach, timeline and invited feedback on important design issues as related to recent DRB and Planning Commission meetings for review of projects.
- **August 29 - Joint Special Meeting of the Planning Commission and Design Review Board** – Reviewed highlights of prior comments, provided a draft outline for the document, and provided opportunity for discussion on specific design issues.
- **October 13 – Staff Primer for the Special Meeting of the Design Review Board** – Provided outline for the ODS document, and preview of the different methods to achieve an objective standard as preparation for discussion of specific architecture and site planning design standards for the **Downtown and Neighborhood** areas.
- **October 20 – Special Meeting of the Design Review Board** – Discussion of the City's ODS document with a focus on the preparation of draft standards and diagrams for the **Downtown and Neighborhood** areas and the different methods to achieve an objective standard (Attachment A).

Staff has emphasized the project's goals are to support Concord's tradition of high quality design while generating standards that support the requirements of State law to streamline the processing of housing projects. The design of qualifying housing projects would be required to meet the objective design standards or alternatively, applicants will continue to also have the opportunity to pursue design flexibility beyond the Objective Design Standards under the City's current discretionary review process.

As a reminder, the intent of the ODS project is to create objective design standards based on the City's existing design documents and through this process enhance the existing

---

<sup>1</sup> SB 330 defines objective design standards as, "involving no personal or subjective judgement by a public official and being 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."

character within the City. Those standards will reside in a new section within the City's Development Code. The ODS project is intended to streamline the City's development process by also creating an illustrative companion document demonstrating examples of the design standards, the preparation of new checklists and forms, and establishing processes that provide clear guidance to applicants on objective design standards as well as the submittal and permitting requirements.

## **Analysis**

The presentation for the November 17 meeting will review the updated Downtown and Neighborhoods section of the ODS document based upon the comments received from the DRB at the October 20<sup>th</sup> special meeting, as summarized below. The review and input provided by the DRB assisted the project team in firming up those sections of the document, as well as progressing on the preparation of draft standards for the next two sections, Corridors and Special Case/Infill. The presentation will also discuss the more detailed written comments received from a few of the DRB members:

### Downtown

#### Site Planning and Orientation

- *Provide clear direction as to where setback is measured.*
- *Locate entrance to parking garage on minor streets away from busy streets, where possible.*
- *Provide standard for access when no side street is available.*
- *Allow for courtyard entries for multifamily buildings.*
- *Landscaping – allow for flexibility; Concord is a Tree City.*

#### Architecture and Building Design

- *Utilize percentages for building elements across a façade (articulation).*
- *Provide standards for mixed-use and ground level commercial uses, a minimum, may be focused on certain corridors.*
- *Support style for inner vs. outer core, vs remainder of the downtown and define.*
- *Provide clear expectations in terms of variety for façade. (Inner Core)*
- *Materials provide list. (Outer Core)*
- *Offsets – diagram works best. (Outer Core)*
- *Standards needed for window placement and use of obscure glass, depending upon proximity of adjacent buildings and setback distance.*
- *With respect to four-sided architecture, focus on improvements to visible features of side and rear elevations.*

### Styles

- *Define style allowed (Downtown) and provide reference.*
- *Menu of options may be best; indicate style elements*

*Example: Approach - Pick 3 out of 4*

- *Roof style*
- *Material, clay tiles, parapet, etc. (pick 3)*
- *Roof elements, hip, gable, etc. (pick 2)*
- *Color (pick 3)*

### Other standards

- *References to sustainability are needed (example – solar), may utilize a point system.*
- *Lighting standards needed, in particular when adjacent to residences.*

## Neighborhood Standards

### Site Planning

- *Turtle Creek Single family mixed with Multifamily, provided as unobtrusive example*

### Architecture

- *Consistent Architecture on all facades: need some common elements with logical transitions of materials; focus on visible areas for 4-sided architecture*
- *Cape Cod-Canterbury may be best noted as special infill*
- *Landscape between driveways?*
- *Roof treatment with respect to solar panels, Green roofs, etc?*
- *Window treatments: providing trim, other elements, shutters, awnings, etc.*

### Landscape standards

- *Concord is a "Tree City" have standards supporting*
- *Recognize impacts on solar panels (shadowing)*

## Presentation and Discussion

The presentation (Attachment B) this evening will allow staff and the consultant time to review with the DRB the draft standards for the Corridors and Special Case/Infill areas. Corridor areas are being referred to for those housing and mixed use sites facing along the primary roadways within the City (example, Clayton Road, Willow Pass Road, Treat

Boulevard, Monument Boulevard, etc.). Corridor areas will also include those commercial sites which due to new State laws<sup>2</sup> will be made available for housing.

Design topics for establishing standards in the Corridor areas will focus on similar topics as the earlier sections, which include site planning and orientation, treatment/screening of parking, building massing and articulation, roof treatments, windows and doors, materials, colors, landscape design and details.

Special Case (Infill) areas include those infill sites, primarily within single family zoned districts, which transition to other lower density zoning districts or neighborhoods or those sites that have different zoning than adjoining parcels. Special Case/Infill may also include other unique sites or situations, for example those parcels with a commercial zoning designation that are not located along a Corridor, that can have side or rear boundaries adjacent to other single family zoned districts.

The DRB's feedback on both the Corridors and Special Case/Infill sections will help form the specifics regarding design as well as selecting the most appropriate tools/approaches (i.e., counts and measures, ratios and calculations, lists, scorecards) to inform the various design elements for each section; therefore, participation is highly encouraged (examples Attachment C). Staff will distribute the written sections at the meeting and again be inviting the DRB's review and written comments on these sections to be submitted back to staff by November 30-December 1.

#### Next Steps

Staff will provide an update and check in with the Planning Commission at a December 23 workshop. An update to the full City Council is planned for early 2023 for a progress check-in, to ensure the documents are aligned with the City Council's objectives prior to preparing an administrative draft and then publishing the draft for public input.

#### **Public Contact**

The Agenda was posted at City Hall and on the City's website at least 10 days prior to the public hearing.

#### **Attachments**

- A. Summary Minutes, dated October 20, 2022
- B. Power point presentation, dated November 17 (to be sent Nov. 17)
- C. [HCD-Technical Assistance Briefing](#) on Objective Design Standards, June 2021<sup>3</sup>

22srdrb.061

---

<sup>2</sup> Senate Bill 6 and Assembly Bill 2011

<sup>3</sup> The full URL is: <https://hcdcagov.app.box.com/s/baznxdyweq6a8txcrb22li0gogqodzz6>