Distinctive pedestrian-oriented streets and a sense of human-scale mark Santa Monica’s built environment.
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SECTION 1.0
Introduction to the Multi-Family and Mixed-Use Land Use Designation Design Guidelines

A. What are the Multi-Family and Mixed-Use Land Use Designation Design Guidelines?

The City of Santa Monica adopted the Santa Monica Land Use & Circulation Element (LUCE) on July 6, 2010. Among the LUCE policies are goals, objectives, and development parameters for conservation of the character and scale of the City’s multi-family residential neighborhoods. Additionally, the LUCE directs new development towards the City’s commercial boulevards in the form of context-appropriate mixed-use infill development.

Two key LUCE sections, Chapter 2.2, Neighborhood Conservation and Chapter 2.4, Santa Monica’s Boulevards, respectively outline key quantitative criteria or standards for the maintenance of existing residential communities and the development of new mixed-use residential over commercial structures along commercial corridors.

The LUCE also calls for the implementation of design guidelines that complement revised zoning parameters and further encourage project designs that build upon Santa Monica’s existing built-form character and environmental design legacy. This document provides these design guidelines for the City’s multi-family and mixed-use land use designations.

B. Relationship of these Design Guidelines to the City of Santa Monica Zoning Code

When required by Section X.X of the Zoning Ordinance, projects are subject to a design review process that may include review of the project proposal by City staff, the City’s Architectural Review Board, the Planning Commission, and the City Council. These individuals and groups may be required to and should reference these Design Guidelines as one means to further the design of projects that support the conservation of Santa Monica’s multi-family residential neighborhoods and evolution of Santa Monica’s mixed-use corridors.

These guidelines complement the City’s zoning standards. While not a substitute for meeting the requirements of the Zoning Code, use of these guidelines in conjunction with zoning standards provides a common design starting point and language to successfully interpret City design requirements and thereby facilitate required project approvals.
C. How to use these Design Guidelines.

When it is determined that design review is required per Section X.X of the City of Santa Monica Zoning Code, the following steps provide a guide for submittal of a project design to the City that is compatible with these Design Guidelines:

1. Determine if the project site is located in a multi-family land use (RL, RM, or RH) or mixed-use corridor land use (MU-B, MU-BL, NC, or GC) designation.

First determine per the City of Santa Monica Zoning Map if a project is in a multi-family land use or mixed-use corridor land use area. The City Zoning Map is available on the internet (at the City’s website search for Districting Map) or at the public counter at City Hall. If a project is in one of these land use areas, review Section X.X of the Zoning Code to determine zoning compliance review and requirements.

2. Utilize the appropriate sections of these Design Guidelines to develop compatible designs before submittal of a project to the City for project approval and design review.

While all projects in multi-family and mixed-use corridor zoning districts should be compatible with these Guidelines, when a project requires design review per Zoning Code Section X.X and is in a multi-family district, review and utilize the Multi-Family Residential Design Guidelines Objectives of Section 2.B of this document. Alternatively, if the project is in a mixed-use corridor district, and is subject to design review per this same section of the Zoning Code, utilize the Mixed-Use Corridor Design Objectives of Section 3.B.

To assist project proponents and their design teams in the development of designs that are in compliance with the Zoning Code, and to aid reviewers including Planning Commission members, ARB members, and City staff in the review of project designs, Design Guidelines provide a toolbox covering a broad range of design approaches in both Section 2.C and Section 3.C of these Guidelines for multi-family and mixed-use land use designations. The Design Guidelines found in these sections complement the Design Objectives of this document and present means to realize compatible architecture and landscape that reinforce and enhance the built-form patterns of existing residential neighborhoods and help to ensure the creation of human-scale infill development along the City’s mixed-use commercial corridors.

These Guidelines also describe Additional Design Considerations in Section 4.0 for multi-family housing and mixed-use projects that call applicant’s and their designer’s attention to other City policies and requirements that impact development and design proposals.

To gain understanding of the full spectrum of City requirements and associated entitlement processes, applicants and their design teams are encouraged to meet with City staff before beginning a project design.
1.0 INTRODUCTION

Figure 1.3 Meet Design Objectives and follow Design Guidelines
Every application for required design review shall include a Context Report that documents the site and its surrounds. At a minimum, a Context Report provides photographs keyed to a map or diagram that describes the project site in the context of all adjoining and adjacent properties, as well as the facing properties across streets and alleys. A Context Report additionally includes a dimensioned zoning or parcel map, survey, or assessor’s map showing the dimensions of both the parcel where the proposed project is located as well the dimensions of the parcels on the same block and the facing blocks.

4. Prepare a Design Intent Statement.
Each design application shall include a concise written statement of no more than one page describing the project concept and design intent of both the proposed architecture and landscape. The objective of the Design Intent Statement is to describe the “big idea”. The big idea states in words the organizing design principal(s), or the theme of the project, as well as the key character defining architecture and landscape features that 1) shape the design and 2) relate the design to its context. The Design Intent Statement will be utilized by the appropriate review entity to assist in the design evaluation of the proposed project.

5. Prepare a Preliminary Design Submittal Package for Early Review of a Project.
A Preliminary Design Submittal Package should be utilized for early reaction and input regarding a project. A preliminary review may consist of a meeting with City staff or a presentation to the Architectural Review Board to receive preliminary non-binding input. A preliminary design submittal should include the following items;

   a. Context Report (see 3 above).
   b. Design Intent Statement (see 4 above).
   c. Preliminary Site Plan depicting context and proposed project with all yards dimensioned.
   d. Preliminary Floor Plans of each project level.
   e. Sections across the width and depth of the site cut through open spaces and other architectural features with grade level, all floor elevations, and highest point of structure noted.
   f. Physical or Digital Model of project massing in its surrounds.
   g. Other Materials that clarify and explain the Design Intent Statement (see also requirements for Comprehensive Design Application below).

   All drawings should be to scale, delineate required and provided setbacks, step backs, and height limits, and describe other key design features such as materials.

Given that a preliminary design is utilized for early discussion of a project, a preliminary design can range from a loose sketch concept in combination with a Context Report and Design Intent Statement to a fully conceived design presentation. However, a Preliminary Design will only be used for discussion of opportunities, constraints, and preferred directions by staff and other review entities and may not be utilized for a design approval as required by the Zoning Code.

Figure 1.4 This mixed-use project incorporates pedestrian-friendly open space, bright colors patterned across the building face to create a sense of human scale and varied roof forms to establish skyline interest.
6. Prepare and Submit a Comprehensive Design Application for Design Approval.

A Comprehensive Design Application is utilized by the appropriate review entity for approvals per the requirements of the Zoning Code. A Comprehensive Design Application includes a full description of the project, both in regards to overall massing, bulk, area, and program, as well as a full definition of architectural and landscape character, materials, finishes, and details, all in relationship to the context and the surrounds. A Comprehensive Design Application includes a Context Report and Drawing(s) as well as a Design Intent Statement and is used by the appropriate review authority to formally review, recommend, and as appropriate, approve with recommendations and conditions. Materials that should be included in a Comprehensive Design Application include, but are not limited to, the following:

a. **Context Report** (see 3 above).

b. **Design Intent Statement** (see 4 above).

c. **Site Plan** depicting context and proposed project with all yards dimensioned.

d. **Landscape Plan(s)** including plant materials.

e. **Floor Plans** of each project level.

f. **Block-face Elevations** of the design and character of the project in relationship to all of the buildings and front yards on the affected block with all materials and character defining features noted.

g. **Elevations** demonstrating that the design intent is carried through to all locations and building elevations visible from public right-of-ways with all materials and character defining features noted.

h. **Sections** across the width and depth of the site cut through open spaces and buildings with grade level, all floor elevations, and highest point of structure noted.

i. **Materials, Finishes, and Color Board**

   If a project incorporates 2,000 SF of additional or new building area then a Comprehensive Design Application should additionally include;

j. **Rendering(s)** (minimum of one) from a sidewalk viewpoint, and/or a

k. **Model** of project in its surrounds, and/or a

l. **Digital model** of project in its surrounds that is capable of being manipulated in real time.

7. Submit the Preliminary Design Submittal Package or the Comprehensive Design Application to the City for review.

Once the City determines that a Preliminary Design Submittal Package or Comprehensive Design Application submittal is complete, the project proposal will be forwarded to the appropriate review entity and a meeting or public hearing calendared in accordance with the schedule and approval requirements of Section X.X of the Zoning Code.
Figure 2.1 Existing multi-family residential neighborhoods provide high quality living environments.
SECTION 2.0
Multi-Family Residential Architecture and Landscape Design Objectives and Guidelines

A. Santa Monica’s Multi-family Residential Design Context

In Santa Monica, existing multi-family residential neighborhoods typically include a mix of one, two, three, and four story triplex, fourplex, townhouse, low-scale courtyard, and multi-family residences (see Figure 2.1). There are a few instances where taller structures emerge individually from lower settings, but these are the exception and not the rule (see Figure 2.3).

Along most residential blocks in Santa Monica architecture is eclectic, with juxtaposition of period, mid-20th Century, and contemporary building styles (see Figure 2.2). Given the typically uniform landscape setbacks at front and side yards, the consistency of planted parkways at curbsides, and the regular rhythm of block-by-block street trees, the resulting mix and scales are cohesive (see Figure 2.4).

As in most Southern California cities, multi-family dwelling is shaped by changing attitudes towards the place and role of the automobile. In older buildings cars are typically parked to the rear of structures and not visible from the sidewalks (see Figure 2.5).

In contrast, many mid-20th Century buildings incorporate residences built over open parking with the parking oriented towards the street and vehicular entry cutting across a broad swath of curb frontage (see Figure 2.6). This more recent pattern replaced landscaped front yards and disrupted pedestrian continuity along City sidewalks.
Some of the finest multi-family dwellings in Santa Monica are oriented around common courtyards (see Figure 2.8). This housing type is well suited to the City’s temperate beach climate, creating informal gathering spaces and gardens where neighbors casually meet. The courtyard housing type is also exemplary of a rich lineage of Southern California architecture worthy of further design evolution.

The combination of repeating setbacks, eclectic styles, and two, three, and four story buildings in multi-family residential areas establishes an overall built-form pattern in existing Santa Monica neighborhoods that is human-scale in dimension. This is further reinforced by the original division or platting of land into individual lots that are typically based upon 50 foot widths (see Figure 2.9).

This parcelization has traditionally constrained building footprints and consequent massing and bulk. The recurring built form dimensions based upon the original land division, in combination with the variety of flat roofs, pitched roofs, overhangs, and all form of shaped parapet planes, together with the eclectic architectural character, create a varied and incremental built environment along the City’s neighborhood streetscapes (see Figure 2.7).

The Design Objectives and Design Guidelines of this section seek to build upon and enhance this type of built-form intricacy in new design and construction projects.

Figure 2.7 Santa Monica’s varied residential architecture creates human-scale streetscapes.

Figure 2.8 A courtyard style multi-family complex.

Figure 2.9 Typical block parcelization shows land division with predominantly 50’ x 150’ lots.
B. Multi-Family Residential Design Guidelines Objectives

The Multi-Family Design Guideline Objectives emerge from observation of the existing context and character of Santa Monica neighborhoods. The objectives provide the design framework to maintain and preserve the best of the built form patterns and character seen in existing communities. The objectives support orientation of dwellings to public sidewalks, continuity of setbacks and landscape at front and side yards, massing that builds upon the existing scales seen along the residential streets, and use of scales and dimensions in new construction that are already present in the building fabric.

In multi-family land use designations, every alteration, addition, landscape improvement, and new construction project should conform with the following objectives.

I. A project design should maintain and enhance existing neighborhood urban design patterns that emphasize orientation of residential buildings to sidewalks and streets and incorporate landscape at front, side, and rear yards. The overall design of Santa Monica neighborhoods places structures in landscaped front yards, provides visible connections between sidewalks and building entries, and separates adjoining buildings and alleys with landscaped side and rear yards. This urban design pattern that integrates built form with surrounding landscape should be manifest in each new project.

Design Consideration: delineate the context and surrounds for each design project and demonstrate that new designs maintain a pattern of sidewalk orientation and front, side, and rear landscaped yards and setbacks.

II. A project design should incorporate on-site and landscaped open space with pathways that cross the site to provide visual connections to passing pedestrians, invite visitors towards residential entries, and foster informal exchange between residents and passersby. Open to the air pathways through residential open spaces, plazas, and courts should be visible from public sidewalks, connect alleys to sidewalks, and enhance pedestrian orientation by providing visual connections between public rights-of-way and building entries.

Design Consideration: provide site plans that illustrate adjoining sidewalks, alleys, open spaces, and courts, and demonstrate open-to-the-air pedestrian connectivity between these features and residential entries.

III. A project design should provide built-form transitions between old and new structures through the use of setbacks, landscape buffers, and ground-level and upper-story setbacks. Designs should utilize both horizontal and vertical transitions from adjacent dwellings to sustain the privacy and sense of light and air at existing and adjoining residences.

Design Consideration: delineate the location of adjacent residences and demonstrate transition design components such as landscaping, setbacks, screening, and offsets of openings at and between living spaces at adjoining properties to maintain residential privacy and a sense of light and air for all dwellings.

IV. A project design should incorporate site planning and massing that acknowledges the dimensions of the underlying platting. Santa Monica’s multi-family neighborhood scale is directly related to breaks in massing and built form derived from the dimensions and consequent constraint of the

Figure 2.10 Larger and smaller dwellings both respect underlying platting dimensions.

Figure 2.11 New projects should fit within the predominant pattern of built form.

Figure 2.12 Projects should incorporate on-site open space and pathways.
original lot divisions. This underlying scale should be acknowledged in new designs.

Design Consideration: determine the typical lot widths along a block face and utilize an appreciation of these widths on double and combined lots to incorporate overall breaks in massing and bulk.

V. A project design should utilize distinct skyline character. Roof forms, uninhabited extensions above the roofline, and the upper levels of multi-family residences should be architecturally distinct and contribute to the creation of a varied skyline along each block face.

Design Consideration: distinguish the design of the roof and upper levels and contribute to the realization of a varied skyline within a neighborhood and along block faces.

VI. A project design should utilize continuity and continuation of building and massing lines, as well as colors, proportions, materials, and details. Project architecture should build upon and affirmatively relate to patterns of setback, massing, proportion, and detail observed in the surrounds while enhancing pedestrian orientation and sidewalk life. In Santa Monica’s residential neighborhoods design quality is enhanced when similar architectural components, proportions, and details are present in both old and new buildings.

Design Consideration: document existing neighborhood character-defining elements and show that new built-form components, design proportions, building lines, and details relate to existing neighborhood design patterns and enhance pedestrian orientation and sidewalk life.

VII. A project design should integrate architectural components that support sidewalk and street side activity, gathering of residents, and “eyes on the street”. Buildings should orient entries to public sidewalks, provide entry elements such as stairs, stoops and porches oriented to sidewalks, and provide openings windows overlook public pathways, streets, and alley’s to establish a sense of human presence and oversight at rights-of-way.

Design Consideration: demonstrate how entries, windows, and other architectural components and features overlook public rights-of-way and open space (both on and off site) to realize a sense of “eyes on the street”.

Figure 2.16 Upper-story setbacks create built form transitions between old and new structures, while landscape screening at setbacks maintains privacy.
VIII. A project design should provide building plane modulation to create distinct shade and shadow patterns. Designs should incorporate breaks in building plane, vertical and horizontal offsets, recessed openings, and other shifts at building elevations to create patterns of shade and shadow to realize visual interest at building faces.

Design Consideration: represent the building components that establish primary and secondary shade and shadow patterning along building elevations.

IX. A project design should minimize the presence of parking and the impact of automobiles. New construction should maximize the utilization of alleys and side streets for site and parking access and minimize curb cuts and driveway widths. Drop-offs and parking should be fully screened from surrounds and ideally placed below grade.

Design Consideration: fully describe the location of and access to all on-site drop-off areas and parking and minimize the visual impact of automobile access, drop-off, and parking.

X. A project design should maintain consistency of architectural character, treatments, and details at all building elevations. Architectural intent and detail should be extended to all portions of building structures visible from adjacent, adjoining, and near-by public sidewalks and rights-of-way, as well all elevations at internal areas such as courtyards, and portions of structures visible from adjacent properties.

Design Consideration: document the views to and from sites and validate that architectural expression extends to all portions of structures.
XI. The City of Santa Monica will consider support for design creativity, innovation, and flexibility of design approach in multi-family residential design when a proposed design is compatible with the context of the existing neighborhood surrounds.

In extraordinary situations a proposed multi-family residential project may contribute to the design enhancement of a neighborhood even though it does not meet some of the Design Objectives noted above. Projects that do not meet all of the Design Objectives of this section should still be considered if the authorized review entity determines that a flexible approach to design and architecture promotes housing design creativity and architectural innovation.

When design flexibility is sought, the following considerations should be established by the appropriate review entity.

- a. That meeting a majority of the Design Objectives of these Guidelines will prevent a definable programmatic and/or form-based innovation in multi-family or affordable housing.
- b. That the proposed design supports pedestrian use and activity along public sidewalks;
- c. That the proposed design fully screens from view automobiles and parking;
- d. That the proposed design provides open space in the quantities required by the Zoning Ordinance; and
- e. That the proposed design maintains solar access at immediately adjacent and adjoining residential units as existing at the date the project application is accepted by the City.

Whether a project design demonstrates continuity with existing pedestrian-oriented and human-scale neighborhood built form patterns or singular housing design creativity and innovation, all of the Design Objectives seek to sustain the existing character of Santa Monica’s multi-family residential neighborhoods through emphasis on the utilization of orientation characteristics and existing scales, masses, proportions, and landscaped setbacks that enhance sidewalk life and reduce the dominance of automobiles, while providing integration of respectful built form and landscape transitions between existing and proposed residential structures.
C. Multi-Family Residential Design Guidelines

The following Multi-Family Residential Design Guidelines provide a design toolbox that should be utilized by applicants and their design teams to realize architecture and landscape designs that meet the Multi-Family Design Objectives noted in Section 2.B.

1. Building Height Design Guidelines

When new buildings are proposed to be taller than existing structures, the height of new construction above base height allowances should transition to existing lower buildings through use of one or more of the following design means.

- **a. Increase setbacks and landscape buffers** at portions of building adjacencies where new higher construction is adjacent to existing lower construction.

- **b. Utilize step backs or inward sloping inclined planes at upper portions of new buildings** to define an area of transitional height between new and old construction.

- **c. Increase open space** to establish distinct gathering places or landscape settings between existing lower structures and new higher buildings.

- **d. Decrease building footprint and floor areas at upper building levels** to distinguish between portions of buildings that meet base height criteria versus those portions that exceed base height criteria.

- **e. Orient and shape higher elements** to maintain solar and daylight access to residences.

- **f. Other design means** that provide transitions in height between new and old construction.

![Figure 2.21 Illustrative section with use of Multi-Family Design Guidelines.](image-url)
Upper-story setbacks and reduced floor areas at upper levels

Principle entrance visible from street

Massing that relates to lower scale at adjacent buildings

Increased setbacks and landscape buffers

Incorporation of courtyard

Increased open space at sideyards

Utilization of corner cutout

Variation at roof levels to create varied skyline

**Figure 2.22** Illustrative use of Multi-Family Design Options
2. Building Orientation Design Guidelines

The best multi-family residential buildings in Santa Monica are oriented to public streets and sidewalks, and reinforce the pedestrian orientation of neighborhoods. Orientation of multi-family residential buildings towards public sidewalks, rights-of-way, and open spaces should be realized through incorporation of one or more of the following design means.

a. Design principal building facades, entries, lobbies, and gates to be visible from public sidewalks and streets with clearly demarcated, accessible, and lighted pathways between sidewalks and building access points.

b. Provide windows that overlook sidewalks and outdoor spaces including front yards, and alleys, as well as walkways and associated public and private open spaces, terraces, and courtyards. Walls without windows and openings overlooking public spaces, sidewalks, streets, and alleys are strongly discouraged.

c. Incorporate architectural components such as porches, stoops, terraces, and covered outdoor entries that create places and buffers that sit between the public and private realms.

d. Incorporate shielded night illumination and decorative lighting at entry paths, entrances, and outdoor and common areas. Design night lighting to supplement lighting at streets and alleys and prevent light spill onto adjacent properties.

e. Increase the intensity and quality of materials, details, and landscape features at lower building levels, at entry elements, pathways, and adjacent to public sidewalks.

f. Other design means that enhance building connectivity to public sidewalks and public rights-of-way.
3. Entry Design Guidelines

Optimizing the location, visibility, and design interest of residential entrances, lobbies, main stairs, and elevators, particularly in relationship to public sidewalks and rights-of-way, establishes a sense of presence and safety through design. Building entries should utilize one or more of the following design means.

a. **Provide building entrances visible from both the public sidewalk and the street** and relate entrances directly to gates, pathways, stairs, courts, and other architectural elements on the main entry passage.

b. **Provide a lobby that is visible from the sidewalk** in projects where elevators are used to access residences.

c. **Utilize architecturally distinct entry components** such as porches, stoops, canopies, pergolas, recesses, see-through gates, and outdoor terraces.

d. **Increase the intensity and quality of materials and landscape at entry components** to introduce additional pedestrian and human scale features and details at building entries.

e. **Use high quality materials at entry paths** such as colored and stamped concrete or paving.

f. **Other design means** that create a sense of entry and connection to and from public sidewalks.

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*Figure 2.25* The courtyard of this early 20th Century apartment building is visible through the gated entry.

*Figure 2.26* A visible pathway from the public sidewalk to the front door utilizes high quality paving.
4. Skyline Character Guidelines

The character of multi-family residential structures is distinguished when roof shapes and lines as well as design expressions at upper stories are both a logical continuation of the architecture of lower stories and a visual punctuation that creates a transition between the building and the sky. Skyline expression and variety may be achieved through use of one or more of the following design means.

a. **Use shaped, sloped, pitched and varied roof forms** that are visible to passersby from public streets, open spaces, and rights-of-way.

b. **Utilize cornice expressions, eyebrows, overhangs, and horizontal projections** that draw the eye towards building tops and create a distinct line at the upper building boundary.

c. **Increase the variety of building massing at upper levels** to establish a contrast with the overall bulk and mass of the lower levels of a structure.

d. **Incorporate uninhabited extensions**, such as chimneys, turrets, towers, skylights, clerestories and mechanical penthouses that logically continue the architecture of the structure upward, break the continuity of top level massing, and extend the roof expression into the sky.

e. **Provide height juxtapositions** between the architectural components and building planes of older and newer buildings to establish a distinct silhouette between adjacent structures.

f. **Other design means** that achieve skyline expression and variation along block faces and between new and existing construction.

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**Figure 2.27** A 1930’s streetscape incorporates a variety of roof shapes, building heights, masses and bulks.

**Figure 2.28** “Eyebrows” at windows add character and distinct detail at the upper levels of this Art Deco apartment building.

**Figure 2.29** Mass is stepped at upper levels, distinguishing the upper levels from the mass of the building as a whole.
5. Front Yard Setback Design Guidelines

There is great consistency of front yard depths observed along individual multi-family residential streets in Santa Monica. Front yard setback vitality may be furthered through use of one or more of the following design means.

a. Maintain prevailing front yard setbacks at new construction to establish a consistent setback for structures along a block face.

b. Provide accessible pathways that traverse the front yard setback, providing a path of travel between the public sidewalk and a visible building entry or entry gate.

c. Do not provide parking spaces and storage of vehicles at or visible from front yards.

d. Minimize the width and extent of driveways crossing front yards and ensure that vehicles pass directly to parking at other portions of the site.

e. Fully landscape front yards with a combination of greenscape and hardscape. Canopy trees should be provided at front yards to supplement required curbside street trees.

f. Other design means that allow for alternatives to front yard setbacks and maintain consistency with the existing neighborhood context.
6. Side Yard Setback Design Guidelines

Side yard setbacks provide an essential buffer between adjoining properties and homes. Design of side yards should incorporate one of more of the following design options.

a. **Provide fully landscaped side yards** with a combination of greenscape and hardscape. Greenscape and fencing at side yards should ensure the privacy of residential units at both existing and new construction.

b. **Increase setbacks along all or a portion of side yards** where new construction is of greater height than existing adjacent structures.

c. **Place increased setbacks at side yards adjacent to adjoining open spaces and courtyards** to increase the perception of, and opportunities for, shared open space and pathways.

d. **Program side yard setback areas with passive uses** including, but not limited to, walkways that provide access to units, outdoor common terraces, patios associated with individual units, and side facing courtyards.

e. **Provide unexcavated landscape and planter strips suitable for the planting of columnar trees** adjoining property boundaries and driveways.

f. **Other design means** that allow for alternatives to side yard setbacks, maintain consistency with the existing neighborhood context, and ensure the integrity of adjoining residential uses at residentially designated land.

*Figure 2.32 A fully landscaped side yard with a combination of greenscape and hardscape, transitions to a sidewalk facing landscaped courtyard.*
7. Rear Yard Setback Design Guidelines

Rear yard setbacks afford opportunities for private outdoor gathering, gardens, and separating landscape buffers between adjacent residential uses and alleys or commercial uses. Design of rear yards should use one of more of the following design means.

a. **Provide fully landscaped rear yards** with a combination of greenscape and hardscape. Greenscape and fencing at rear yards should ensure the privacy of ground-floor residential units at both existing and new construction.

b. **Provide useable passive open space** at rear yards including, but not limited to, places for seating, outdoor dining, and toddler’s play.

c. **Minimize the width and extent of driveways** that accommodate movement of vehicles from the curbside directly to parking.

d. **Do not accommodate open to the sky parking and storage of vehicles** in rear yards and place parking in garages, carports, semi-subterranean, and subterranean structures.

e. **Ensure pedestrian and bicycle access** through rear yards to both alleys and front yards.

f. **Other design means** that allow for alternatives to rear yard setbacks, maintain consistency with the existing neighborhood context, and ensure the integrity of adjoining residential uses at residentially designated land.

*Figure 2.33* A fully landscaped yard with a combination of green and hardscape.
8. Open Space and Courtyard Design Guidelines

Open space and landscape are prevalent character-defining features of Santa Monica’s multi-family residential settings. In particular, the City’s inventory of multi-family courtyard housing, where dwellings are organized about figured on-site open space, contributes to the character of the residential communities. Open space as well as courtyard housing types may be realized through use of one or more of the following design means.

a. **Provide at-grade landscaped open space** in addition to required yards.

b. **Provide above-grade landscaped open space** in addition to any required at-grade open space area.

c. **Ensure that open space is designed to accommodate gathering and use** that may include, but is not limited to, seating areas, outdoor dining areas, individual open-to-the-air and useable private terraces or patio areas, sun-bathing areas, toddler play areas, and other passive activity areas.

d. **Visually connect on-site open space to the public sidewalk** and design buildings with openings, gateways, and building faces that allow views to and from the open space.

*Figure 2.34* A Multi-family residence with landscaped open space and above grade open terraces.
e. Consider use of courtyard housing architecture where units and individual residence entries are organized about passive and landscaped open space. Courtyard housing should incorporate the following design principles.

1) Courtyards should be visible from the public sidewalk.

2) Courtyards may be located internal to the project and at both at-grade and upper levels.

3) Courtyards may be placed so that the courtyard and an adjacent on-site yard or off-site open space creates the effect of a larger courtyard or open space.

4) Courtyards may be placed so they adjoin a front yard setback and create a deeper open space area visible to the street.

5) Courtyards should be bounded and framed by habited building planes and include features such as garden walls, recirculating water elements, and landscape.

6) Courtyards should have a minimum plan dimension equal to or greater than the height of the tallest vertical building plane adjoining the court.

7) Courtyard building walls should not exceed the height of the adjoining lesser plan dimension of the courtyard unless incorporating a stepback above this dimension.

8) Courtyards should utilize higher quality paving and landscape materials to provide a contrast to standard sidewalk and path construction.

f. Other open space concepts as long as required yards are maintained.

The human scale of Santa Monica neighborhoods is in part a reflection of repeating two, three, and four story building masses placed on individual small lots that march the length of residential blocks. To reflect and not exceed the existing increments of bulk and mass that resulted from the original lot and parcel sizes, new construction should use one or more of the following design means.

a. Utilize mass and bulk that reflects the original and underlying platting of the residential blocks by limiting building footprints to the building dimension logics established by the original block parcelization.

b. Provide distinct breaks in mass and bulk that are based upon the dimensional logics of the original block parcelization.

c. Use open to the sky massing separations based upon the dimensional logics of the original block parcelization to realize at-grade open space such as courtyards and terraces between building masses.

d. Incorporate horizontal displacement of vertical wall planes based upon the dimensional logics of the original block parcelization.

e. Provide building projections such as bays, entry elements such as porches or recesses, and minor projecting masses that build upon the dimensional logics of the original block parcelization.

f. Other design means that reduce the scale of building bulk and mass based upon the dimensional logics of the original block parcelization.

Figure 2.39 Building bulk and mass should include distinct breaks and reference existing proportions and scales, observed in its surrounds.

Figure 2.40 Repetition of skyline, bay window, and massing components, breaks down overall scale.
10. Modulation Design Guidelines

Modulation of building architecture utilizes building plane setbacks, offsets, projections, and other design means to break down façade scale. Building modulation should be present in new construction and additions through use of one or more of the following design means.

a. **Integrate horizontal and vertical offsets and breaks in building planes** to delineate major and minor architectural façade expressions.

b. **Define horizontal and vertical rhythms** through groupings of openings, details, and architectural components that create shade and shadow patterns.

c. **Incorporate projections** such as window bays, porch additions, stair enclosures, chimneys, and considered clustering of balconies and similar components.

d. **Provide wall plane recesses** at windows, entries, doors, and groupings of openings.

e. **Use materials and colors to emphasize major and minor architectural scales**, to introduce a sense of detail, and to create distinctions between structures on adjoining lots.

f. **Other design means** may be considered that modulate building planes and incorporate a sense of human scale and dimension.

Figure 2.41 Color and recesses are used to create major and minor scales and increase visual interest (courtesy of Lorcan O’Herlihy Architects).

Figure 2.42 Modulation is established in this example through the use of window projection, material and color distinctions, and overhangs.
11. Base, Middle, and Top Design Guidelines

Architectural differentiation between the base or first levels of buildings (base), the midsection or middle levels (middle), and the building tops or upper or skyline levels (top) is often implicit in traditional as well as contemporary architecture. Regardless of whether a building is one, two, three, or more stories in height, base, middle, and top expression at new construction, additions, and landscape may be achieved through use of one or more of the following design means.

a. At lower building levels develop distinct expressions of proportions, design rhythms, detailing, material use, and architectural components that establish an intricate, up-close, and pedestrian-oriented interest.

b. At middle building levels continue the lower level design character with simplified but related proportions, design rhythms, detailing, material use, and architectural components.

c. At top levels introduce distinct architectural components and roof line expression that draw interest from afar yet are a logical evolution and punctuation of the proportions, design rhythms, detailing, material use, and architectural components utilized at lower and middle levels.

d. Provide habitable outdoor uses at lower, middle, and top levels that are visible from public rights-of-way. Lower levels may incorporate porches, stoops, unit terraces, and gathering places. Middle levels may include useable terraces and balconies visible from surrounding sidewalks. Roof gardens, terraces, and green roofs may call attention to the architecture of upper levels, reduce the mass of top levels, and contribute to the creation of a distinct skyline character.

e. Incorporate three scales of landscape; 1) base plantings to establish a transition between the ground plane and the building plane; 2) a middle scale of larger shrubs, hedges, and small trees to provide privacy, mark key building components such as entries, and establish an additional transition between the base and middle of buildings; and 3) a tall scale of columnar and canopy trees that complement and buffer, from both the sidewalk and adjacent buildings, the overall architectural scale of new construction and additions.

f. Other design means may be considered that achieve base, middle, and top building expressions.
12. Landscape Design Guidelines

The City of Santa Monica Office of Sustainability and the Environment (OSE) has an extensive website that outlines goals, objectives, standards, and guidelines for use of plant materials and water-wise landscape. This information should be consulted before beginning a project design. Among the resources that can be found on the City's OSE internet site are links to code requirements and listings of drought resistant plants, shrubs, groundcovers, and trees. The address of this website is http://www.smgov.net/departments/ose/categories/landscape.aspx. In addition to these materials, landscape should be incorporated in project design through the use of one or more of the following design means.

a. **Utilize drought-tolerant plants**, including where appropriate California native plant materials, that will adapt to the local climate and soils conditions.

b. **Use on-site deciduous trees** to minimize solar gain to structures during warmer months and to maximize solar gain to buildings during cooler months.

c. **Provide minor and major setbacks at walls and fences** from front and rear property boundaries and the back of public sidewalks to allow for landscape buffers and edges, as well as vine pockets, on both sides of the wall or fence.

d. **Use high quality paving and permeable surfaces** at pathways, terraces, and drives.

e. **Incorporate landscape materials into all building program areas** including all at-grade and above-grade common and private outdoor open spaces.

f. **Other landscape design means** may be considered that enhance the character of the site and building while meeting City water conservation requirements.
13. Character Design Guidelines

No one approach nor design style dominates multi-family residential architecture in Santa Monica. There are exceptions to this, such as in Ocean Park where there is an historic district. Outside of special districts design character should be realized utilizing one or more of the following design means.

a. **Consider creative and innovative architecture and landscape design** that is complimentary to the proportions, materials, colors, and details of a residential neighborhood setting.

b. **Utilize complimentary and similar proportions, materials, colors, and details** when an established architectural character exists in a neighborhood or along the majority of a block face.

c. **When an established architectural style is chosen, the design should conform to the determinants of the style and incorporate the typical proportions, forms, roof lines, mass, bulk, components, and details of the chosen style.**

d. **Ensure that the chosen architectural character and expression is consistent and utilized on all exterior portions of a structure visible from public rights-of-way.** Accessory and minor components including porches, canopies, railings, gates, fences, garden walls, lighting, mechanical penthouses, trash areas, and other related design elements should all conform to the overall design character. Building systems and services including utility, solar, data, communications, and service equipment should also be integrated into the architectural concept. Any screening of such systems should be designed to be a logical continuation of the character and expression of the architecture of the project.

e. **Use durable materials consistent with the chosen architectural character** and able to withstand an oceanside climate without undue discoloration or deterioration.

f. **Reflective materials and reflective glass should not be used** in residential settings. All glazing should be clear.

g. **Enhance local culture with each building design and landscape act.** Local Santa Monica culture is advanced by enhancement of neighborhood and community design and landscape character, provision of places for informal public and private gathering, inclusion of art and craft in the design of building elements, and acts of design creativity and innovation that redefine practice standards and attract recognition and awards by design peer groups. These factors should be considered as each alteration, addition, and new construction project is conceived, designed, and implemented.

*Figure 2.45 While distinctly contemporary this residential project has a sense of material and detail that promotes a sense of fit within the surrounding community.*
Figure 3.1 This mixed-use project features ground floor retail with large inviting storefront windows, and housing above.
SECTION 3.0
Mixed-Use Corridor Architecture and Landscape Design Guidelines

Santa Monica’s existing commercial corridors, including Wilshire Boulevard, Santa Monica Boulevard, Lincoln Boulevard, and segments of Pico Boulevard and Ocean Park Boulevard, as well as commercially-oriented segments of east to west streets such as Main Street, are typically framed by one, two, and three story flat-fronted buildings set directly to the back of sidewalks (see Figure 3.2). A small number of four and five story buildings, as well as even taller structures are seen along commercial streets. These taller structures punctuate the typical boulevard settings in contrast to the generally lower heights and are the exceptions and not rule (see Figure 3.3).

In addition to plain-faced vernacular buildings fronted with storefronts seen along Santa Monica’s boulevards, numerous architectural styles are represented along the City’s streets. Many earlier buildings are characterized by period modes from the late 1920s and 1930s including examples of the Neo-classical, Spanish Revival, Regency, and Art Deco styles. Modern vernaculars from the 1940s and 1950s, including International Style buildings and Coffee Shop or Googie style edifices, can also be seen along the commercial corridors. From the 1970s to the present, late Modern glass and steel architecture from the 1960s is joined by Post-modern and contemporary expressions. The combination of vernacular structures that are purely functional interspersed with architecturally developed buildings establishes an organic and eclectic built form mix.

Figure 3.2. Commercial corridors in Santa Monica are often framed by a mix of one to three story buildings, such as this segment of Wilshire Boulevard.

Figure 3.3. A taller building in the Neo-Spanish Churrigueresque mode pops above the skyline in this mixed-use corridor streetscape.
While continuous street walls typically characterize Santa Monica’s boulevards, the facades of individual buildings are clearly differentiated from the whole and adhere closely to the original parcelization of the land into lots with typically 50’, 100’, and longer building frontages (see Figure 3.4). This differentiation extends to the skyline. Up and down the streets an additional diversity of overhangs, cornice expressions, uninhabited extensions, and roof shapes are seen, further establishing the sense of built variety (see Figure 3.5).

Along the City’s mixed-use corridors, storefronts and shop fronts with individual entries typically face onto sidewalks (see Figure 3.6). A small number of buildings set back from street intersections and sidewalks and incorporate landscaping and plazas, extending the life of the sidewalk onto private property. Occasionally these setbacks provide for automobile-oriented uses such as surface parking and mini malls and gaps are created in the pedestrian-oriented street scene.

At its best, Santa Monica’s boulevard architecture is marked by incremental design variety that creates visual interest and a sense of human scale for both the pedestrian on the sidewalk and the passerby in a car. The Design Objectives and Design Guidelines of this section seek to reinforce and enhance this type of scale, sensibility, and built-form through encouragement of carefully designed infill architecture and landscape.

Figure 3.4. Typical block parcelization along mixed-use corridors in Santa Monica shows land division with 100’ deep lots and typical 50’-100’ frontages along boulevards.

Figure 3.5. Cornice expressions, horizontal building bands, and a corner tower provide skyline interest along a one-story stretch of Montana Avenue.

Figure 3.6. A sense of built-form intricacy and scale marks the best corridor sidewalks in Santa Monica, such as this scene along Main Street.
B. Mixed-Use Corridor Design Guidelines Objectives

The Mixed-Use Corridor Design Guidelines Objectives of this section promote architecture and landscape that enhance sidewalks and public rights-of-way and provide for built form transitions from new construction to adjoining residential uses. The Objectives also seek to encourage innovative commercial and residential mixed-use infill architecture, open space, and landscape. The goal of the Objectives is to promote infill architecture that advances the transformation of Santa Monica’s corridors into vital sidewalk environments where local residents shop, work, reside, and play.

In mixed-use corridor land use designations, every alteration, addition, landscape improvement, and new construction project shall conform to the following Objectives.

I. The overall project design, massing, and bulk is oriented towards the setting and context of existing corridor streets and sidewalks. Building facades and openings, open spaces at building edges, and upper level masses and uses should push up to, adjoin, and open onto sidewalks, existing open spaces, and public streets.

   Design Consideration: delineate the context for each project and demonstrate that new designs are oriented to public streets.

II. The project design provides built-form and landscape transitions to adjacent residential land uses. Provision of built-form transitions and landscape buffers between new corridor structures and existing residential land uses including step downs in bulk, reduced upper level mass, and landscape screening should be incorporated into project designs.

   Design Consideration: demonstrate the approach to design and landscape transitions between new construction and existing residential land uses, neighborhoods, and associated dwellings.

III. The project design attracts pedestrian interest at ground floors with shop fronts, program areas, entries, lobbies, courtyards and plazas, architectural detail intensification, building edge and corner set backs, as well as at-grade landscape and buffering to support increased user activity and interest at public sidewalk frontages.

   Design Consideration: show ground-level architectural features that increase interest and activity for users and passersby at public sidewalks as seen along existing block faces. To maintain this sense of scale, a similar dimensional logic based upon the underlying and original parcel sizes should be acknowledged in the bulk and mass of new designs.

IV. The project design incorporates massing and bulk that acknowledges parcel sizes. The scale of commercial corridors in Santa Monica is largely the result of buildings and masses that were constrained by the dimensions of the original lot divisions

   Design Consideration: determine the typical lot and building dimensions present along a block face and demonstrate the relationship of these dimensions to overall breaks in the massing and bulk of new construction.

Figure 3.7. New mixed-use architecture should transition from the existing scale of the surrounding structures and contribute to vital sidewalk life.
Mixed-Use Corridor

Side Street

Corner Plaza

Shopfronts

Mixed-Use to Residential Landscape Transition Zone

Adjacent Residential Land Use

Landscaping at Alley

Mixed-Use to Residential Landscape Transition Zone

Reduced Floor Area at Upper Floors

Corner Cutout

Roof Garden

Residential Entry Plaza

Figure 3.8. Illustrative use of Mixed-Use Corridor Design Objectives.

Figure 3.9. Colorado Ave between 19th and 20th Streets. To help fit into this context, new mixed-use infill construction needs to be oriented to the sidewalks, attract pedestrian interest at ground floors, have a sense of distinction at the skyline, and provide transitions to adjoining residential land uses.
V. The project design integrates open space and landscape at the back of sidewalks and through provision of at-grade courtyards, plazas, upper level terraces, and inhabited rooftops to enhance the experience of passing pedestrians, encourage gathering and outdoor activities at sidewalks, provide buffers and transitions to adjacent residential buildings, and given Santa Monica's temperate beach climate, realize increased outdoor amenity areas at all building levels.

Design Consideration: provide site and building plans that illustrate at-grade and above-grade outdoor amenity areas and landscape.

VI. The project design includes opportunistic connections through and around sites to existing and proposed pedestrian networks and sidewalks, adjacent and adjoining neighborhoods, alleys, open spaces, and the broader community.

Design Consideration: incorporate site planning that links adjoining sidewalks and alleys and demonstrate open-to-the-air connectivity between rights-of-way, public pathways, and open spaces.

VII. The project design provides building plane modulation utilizing offsets in bulk, and massing, reduced upper level floor plates, and vertical and horizontal offsets at building planes to realize patterns of shade and shadow.

Design Consideration: delineate building components that establish primary as well as secondary shade and shadow patterning along building elevations.

VIII. The project design uses distinct skyline expression to differentiate buildings from adjacent structures. The roof forms and upper levels of building should have a specific silhouette against the backdrop of the sky that marks their location and place within the overall streetscape and along the specific block face.

Design Consideration: distinguish the design of the roof and upper levels of new construction and show that it varies from adjacent structures.

Figure 3.10. A residential project along a boulevard that incorporates a court opening on to a sidewalk.

Figure 3.11. Upper level set backs, terraces, and a corner element provide building plane modulation in this mixed-use project.
IX. The project design minimizes the presence of parking and the impact of vehicles on pedestrian activity by placing vehicular and service access first at alleys and secondarily at side streets. Any above-grade parking should be surrounded with building program uses and ideally all parking should be placed underground. Loading and servicing of buildings should be fully screened from surrounds and curb cuts at building ingress, egress, and drop-offs should be limited to maintain the primacy of pedestrian access and movement at sidewalks.

Design Consideration: describe the location and access to all on-site vehicular parking and loading areas. Illustrate the architectural and landscape means utilized that minimize the impact of on and off site vehicular uses and movements on designs.

X. The project design integrates building signage within the architectural concept, design, and detail. Signage should be a logical evolution of the character-defining features and detail of the architecture.

Design Consideration: provide design accommodation and detailing for building and tenant signage that builds upon and reinforces the overall architectural idea and building design character.

XI. A project design maintains consistency of architectural character, treatments, and details at all building elevations. Architectural intent and detail should be extended to all portions of building structures.

Design Consideration: document the views to and from sites from surrounding streets and validate that architectural expression extends to all portions of structures.

Figure 3.12. Parking uses are screened and architecturally float over ground floor retail.

Figure 3.13. Signage floats in front of the storefront within an area formed by the lines of the architecture.
XII. The City of Santa Monica will consider design flexibility regarding these Design Objectives in mixed-use corridor districts when a project contributes to the realization of vital pedestrian-oriented sidewalk life.

In unique circumstances a proposed mixed-use corridor project may support the life and activities of the sidewalk and community even though it cannot meet the Objectives noted above. Projects that cannot meet the Objectives of this section should still be considered if the authorized review entity determines that a flexible approach to design promotes design creativity, architectural innovation, and the vital sidewalk life and activity of the both the site of the project and the overall street corridor setting.

When design flexibility is sought, the following considerations should be established by the appropriate review entity.

a. That meeting the Design Objectives of these Guidelines will prevent a program desired by the community and/or form-based innovation in mixed-use development and/or building design;

b. That the proposed design reinforces and enhances the establishment of a mixed-use pedestrian-oriented environment and sidewalk life along a mixed-use corridor;

c. That the proposed design supports local uses including, but not limited to the provision of housing, daily community needs and/or services, and/or public open space and green connections to adjoining neighborhoods;

d. That the proposed design integrates features and amenities such as, but not limited to, wider sidewalks, landscaping and trees, and/or arts and cultural uses;

e. That the proposed design maintains solar access at existing and adjoining residential land uses as existing at the date the project application is accepted by the City.

All of the above Design Objectives promote the realization of mixed-use corridor architecture in Santa Monica that is pedestrian-oriented, human-scaled, and respectful of adjacent neighborhood residential uses. Most important, these Objectives are intended to guide the evolution the City’s mixed-use corridors with each new infill project into more inviting avenues. The Design Objectives are intended to support improved sidewalks, landscaping, neighborhood-friendly services and stores, and distinctive architecture where local residents live, shop, work, and play.

Figure 3.14. The juxtaposition of varied architectural styles contribute to a rich and diverse skyline.
C. Mixed-Use Corridor Design Guidelines

The following Mixed-Use Corridor Design Guidelines provides a design toolbox that should be utilized by project applicants and their design teams to realize architecture and landscape designs that meet the intent of the Mixed-Use Corridor Design Objectives noted in Section 3.B.

1. Building Height Design Guidelines: Between Mixed-Use Corridor Structures and Residential Land Use Districts

Mixed-use corridor sites in Santa Monica typically back onto residential neighborhoods. New construction along mixed-use corridors needs to ensure the continued integrity of Santa Monica’s adjoining residential land uses. Transitions between mixed-use corridor projects and adjacent residential land uses may be achieved through use of one or more of the following design means.

a. Contain the mass and bulk of new construction abutting residential land uses within an inwardly sloping building envelope plane. The transition should commence at two stories above the mixed-use property line adjoining the residential land use, and from that point extending at a 45-degree angle from vertical away from the residential land use and towards the mixed-use corridor site.

b. Establish a setback adjacent to an abutting residential land use boundary or next to an adjacent residential structure to assure access to light, air, and privacy for the adjacent residential land use.

c. Provide additional open space and increased yard areas next to existing residentially designated yards, open areas, and dwellings.

d. Incorporate landscape, landscape screening, and trees in planting areas unobstructed by subterranean structures along the length of the property boundary between a mixed-use project and residential land use.

e. Orient upper level balconies, terraces, and rooftop open spaces towards mixed-use corridor streets and side streets and away from residential land uses and structures.

f. Other design means that achieve increased access to light, air, and privacy between mixed-use corridor projects and adjacent residentially designated land uses.
Figure 3.15, Illustrative use of Mixed-Use Corridor Design Options at typical corridor site.
2. Building Height Design Guidelines: Mixed-Use Corridor Structures

Height transitions between new mixed-use projects and existing one and two story corridor buildings reinforces neighborhood street wall scale at the sidewalk and increases the sense of architectural continuity. Where mixed-use projects are proposed, new architecture can incorporate height transitions through use of one or more of the following design means.

a. Decrease the area of upper level floors and orient these smaller floors away from residential land uses and towards mixed-use corridor streets.

b. Utilize setbacks at upper levels of mixed-use corridor-facing building planes to relate new construction to existing lower height buildings.

c. Increase the amount of at-grade and on-site open space when height is proposed and reduce the building footprint to establish distinct community-oriented open spaces and landscape areas.

d. Incorporate areas of lower building massing and building lines that reference lower adjoining buildings.

e. Provide building plane offsets and corner cutouts at the ground plane and along the back of sidewalk where new taller buildings adjoin existing lower buildings. Indentations at building planes establish back of sidewalk open areas and spaces that can be used for activities such as outdoor dining, urban gardens, or residential entry plazas, but should not be so extensive in length along the sidewalk edge so as to interrupt the integrity of the mixed-use corridor street wall.

f. Shape upper levels to increase solar access, light, and air to adjacent lower structures, on and off-site open spaces, and adjoining residential land uses.

g. Other design means that establish transitions in height between old and new construction and maintain the storefront scale of mixed-use corridor sidewalks.

Figure 3.16. A building with both low and high roof lines, building plane offsets, and setbacks at the top level.
3. Building Bulk and Mass Design Guidelines

The scale of buildings seen along Santa Monica’s corridors is in part the consequence of the limiting dimensions of the original and underlying lots and parcels. Depending upon the specific mixed-use corridor observed, a range of parcel lengths along sidewalks is observed; from small 25 feet long lots along portions of Pico Boulevard, to 150 foot and longer sites where parcels are consolidated for institutional uses such as hospitals. To maintain the City’s unique sense of sidewalk scale and relate new mixed-use corridor projects to the existing built-form scene, new construction should acknowledge the dimensions of the original platting observed along block faces through use of one or more of the following design means.

a. Reflect the original and underlying platting of the block face by incorporating the dimensional rhythms of the parcel sizes into the footprints and massing of new construction.

b. Provide distinct breaks in mass and bulk and open to the sky separation of building elements that are based upon the dimensions of the original parcelization.

c. Incorporate horizontal and vertical breaks within wall planes based upon the dimensions of the original parcelization.

d. Provide building projections such as bays or minor projecting masses that reflect the dimensions of the original parcelization.

e. Limit the ground floor footprint of buildings to a maximum of half a block in size less any required ground floor open space and provide reduced floor plate areas above the second story of new construction.

f. Other design means that reduce building bulk and mass along corridor block faces.

Figure 3.17. Contrasts in material, projecting bays, and a modulated facade reduce the overall mass of this mixed-use project (courtesy of Koning Eizenberg Architects).
4. Building Frontage and Ground Floor Design Guidelines

Building frontages, street walls, and ground floors along mixed-use corridors should reinforce and build upon the existing prevailing context of one, two, and three story street wall facing buildings that open onto sidewalks. New construction should contribute to an active and interesting interface of architecture, landscape and the public sidewalk through use of one or more of the following design means.

a. Provide for the continuity of street walls along mixed-use corridors. Building faces along mixed-use streets should generally be located at the back of the sidewalk and reinforce the prevailing height of the street wall observed along the block face and within the surrounds. New street walls higher than the prevailing street wall should be designed to minimize the visual bulk of upper portions of the overall building through utilization of changes in material, building lines, and massing that reference lower adjoining structures, vertical and horizontal offsets within the building plane, setbacks at upper levels, reduced upper level floor areas, and other means that reduce the sense of mass above the prevailing built form condition.

b. Orient windows, shop fronts, show windows, residential lobbies, and dwelling entries at building frontages and street walls to overlook and support public sidewalks. Mixed-use corridor buildings should incorporate storefronts and commercial space along the majority of corridor and side street frontages. Stores and building lobbies, as well as open spaces and courtyards, should open directly to public sidewalks and provide flexible ingress opportunities along the length of parcel frontages. Consider setting residential entries back from the sidewalks and provide stoops, patios, and garden walls oriented to the sidewalk to allow pedestrian transition from the public to the private realms.

c. Establish active and flexible open space at building sidewalk edges. Building edge open spaces may include corner plazas, courtyards, and linear setbacks and should informally encourage gathering for people watching, dining, and other sidewalk activities.

d. Limit the length of at-grade building facades and walls without openings that are oriented to and placed along public sidewalks. Building planes without openings should be limited to no more than a third of the overall wall length and designed as an extension of the primary architectural concept.

e. Relate ground floor levels and uses to the elevation of sidewalks and on-site open space. First floor levels should align with sidewalk elevations and be at most a step or two above, and never below, the public sidewalk level. Residential uses may sit several steps above the adjacent public sidewalk to maintain residential privacy, but should never be placed below the level of the public sidewalk.

f. Increase the quality of materials, detailing and intensity of color adjacent to public sidewalks. Particular attention should be paid to enhancing materials and detailing abutting building entries and ground level openings.

g. Orient building signage to the pedestrians level and design building and storefront signage as an integral element of the building architecture.

h. Other design means at building street walls and frontages that reinforce activity and establish a sense of design intricacy and human scale along mixed-use corridor sidewalks.

Figure 3.18. This supermarket spills out onto the sidewalk, continuing the existing street wall and activating the building frontage with sidewalk-facing activities.
5. Open Space, Lot Coverage, and Landscape Design Guidelines

The creation of small open spaces, including terraces and courtyards visible to the street, provide opportunities to enhance the public and private realms of mixed-use corridors. New construction and additions, and to the extent feasible, major alteration of existing structures, should incorporate one or more of the following landscape design means.

a. **Provide ground level open space at each project.** New projects should contribute ground level open space to realize a block-by-block open space network.

b. **Incorporate corner plazas, courtyards, forecourts, and other at-grade open spaces** to identify and establish special locations in the City such as gateways, to provide increased area for passive recreation and gathering, to reinforce Santa Monica’s outdoor/indoor living style, and to realize increased opportunities for landscape and tree canopy within the City.

c. **Utilize building edge open space** along portions of building frontages for landscape, outdoor gathering and dining, enhanced sidewalk width, bicycle storage, and other amenities that enhance the use of the public sidewalk realm. Utilize landscaped perimeter open space at property boundaries to demarcate and screen corridor uses from adjoining residential land uses.

d. **Provide upper-level and rooftop open space** to create increased opportunities for experience of Santa Monica’s temperate oceanside climate and to enhance the quality of indoor space by identifying it more directly with outdoor space.

e. **Landscape all on-site open spaces** including open space at upper levels. In this regard Santa Monica promotes the implementation of low water use landscape. For more information about landscape policies and requirements see [http://www.smgov.net/departments/ose/categories/landscape.aspx](http://www.smgov.net/departments/ose/categories/landscape.aspx). The City also promotes the planting of trees and the development of its urban forest along streets and within public parks and open spaces, as well as at private projects. For more information regarding urban forest policies see [http://www.smgov.net/portals/urbanforest/](http://www.smgov.net/portals/urbanforest/).

f. **Other design means** that increase the provision of public, common, and private open space at building projects.

Modulation of building architecture, including but not limited to vertical and horizontal offsets, projections such as window and building bays, use of contrasting colors and materials, and provision of recesses at windows and doors creates patterns of shade, shadow, and color interest that contribute to the realization of human-scale building expression. Architectural modulation should be present in new construction and additions through use of one or more of the following design means.

a. **Utilize horizontal and vertical offsets and breaks** to delineate major and minor architectural façade planes and details and create shade and shadow patterns.

b. **Incorporate built form projections** such as window bays, projecting building planes, and distinct rhythms of projecting ground floor elements such as storefronts and entries that contrast with the overall building bulk and mass.

c. **Provide wall plane recesses** at windows, entries, doors, and groupings of openings.

d. **Use contrasting materials and colors** to emphasize major and minor scales within building planes and to create architectural differentiation between structures on adjoining lots.

e. **Establish base, middle and top expressions.** Architectural modulation is often organized utilizing integrated but distinct design expressions at the first and lower floors (base), the intermediate stories (middle), and the top floors (top). Base, middle, and top expression for new construction and additions may be achieved through use of one or more of the following design means.

f. **Other design means** that achieve architectural modulation through shade and shadow patterning and visual contrast at building planes and massing.

1. **At lower levels develop distinct expressions of repeating proportions, design rhythms, detailing, material use, and architectural components** that establish an intricate, up-close, and pedestrian-oriented interest.

2. **At middle levels simplify and continue the lower level design character with simplified yet related proportions, design rhythms, detailing, material use, and architectural components.**

3. **At upper and top levels introduce distinct architectural components and roof expression that draws interest from afar yet is a logical evolution and punctuation of the proportions, design rhythms, detailing, material use, and architectural components utilized at lower and middle levels.**

**Figure 3.21.** The use of color and material contrasts punctuate the facades of this affordable housing project (courtesy of Kanner Architects).

**Figure 3.22.** Articulated skin delineates planes while creating depth and shadows at the facade of this institutional building (courtesy of Morphosis Architects).
7. Skyline Design Guidelines

The character of Santa Monica’s mixed-use corridors is enhanced when new construction introduces roof shapes, varied parapet lines, and distinct design expressions at upper stories that combine to create a sense of skyline interest. Each new building, and additions to the upper levels of existing structures, should incorporate architectural expressions at upper levels and rooflines that contribute to a varied and vital skyline. Skyline interest may be achieved through use of one or more of the following design means.

a. **Use of set backs and shaped, sloped, and pitched roof forms** that are visible from public streets, open spaces, and rights-of-way.

b. **Increased building mass variety at upper levels** that is distinct from, yet a logical evolution of the overall bulk and mass of the structure.

c. **Utilization of varied parapet heights, cornice expressions, eyebrows, overhangs, and horizontal projections** at upper levels that draw the eye toward building tops and establish distinct lines and character at the building’s boundary with the sky.

d. **Incorporation of uninhabited extensions** that provide breaks in the roofline along the corridor block face such as corner towers, pylons, and mechanical penthouses that are each a logical continuation of the expression and detailing of the overall architectural concept.

e. **Provision of clear height juxtapositions between adjoining buildings** to establish variety of heights between adjacent structures and along block faces.

f. **Other design means** that achieve skyline expression and variation between new and existing buildings and along block faces.

Figure 3.23. A superscale trellis adds interest to the skyline of this boutique hotel.
8. Vehicle and Parking Design Guidelines

In some cases automobile-oriented uses adjacent to public sidewalks such as stand-alone parking structures, automobile showrooms, vehicular-oriented entries, and surface parking may be permitted. In these cases the automobile use should be designed to enhance the pedestrian-oriented character and quality of corridor sidewalks. Compatibility of vehicular oriented uses adjacent to corridor sidewalks may be achieved through use of one or more of the following design means.

a. **Screen above-grade parking and vehicular storage uses**
   with uses other than parking, particularly at ground floors, and ensure that ground floor uses associated with parking are oriented towards public sidewalks and rights-of-way.

b. **Provide a landscaped setback at the back of sidewalks**
   and incorporate trees, open and inviting fencing, garden walls, gating, public art components, lighting, and other design elements that create a park-like open space that separates vehicular uses from sidewalks and enhances and continues the continuity of the corridor sidewalk network.

c. **Provide designated and detailed pedestrian pathways**
   from public sidewalks through surface parking areas to site destinations such as building entries and rear parking areas.

d. **Limit vehicular ingress and egress to side streets and alleys.** Where alleys exist, vehicular access should be from alleys. Where use of a side street curb cut for vehicle ingress will enhance and protect the privacy and quality of adjoining residential land uses, provide the minimum side street curb cut.

e. **Consider use of high quality paving materials** such as pavers, colored concrete, and stamped and scored concrete for all at-grade surfaces utilized by vehicles and pedestrians.

f. **Other design means** that limit the impact of vehicular-related uses and enhance the pedestrian continuity and design quality of mixed-use corridors.

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Figure 3.24, Small scale mixed-use screens a parking garage in Boulder, Co.

Each building project needs to adopt a clear and strong architectural idea or design conception that shapes the building’s overall organization, look, sensibility, and attitude towards architectural and landscape detailing. Most important, the design conception should be extended to all portions of a building. Architectural character can be realized through use of the following design means.

a. Define and illustrate the organizing architectural concept(s) and principle(s) using a Design Intent Statement (see Section 1.C.4), diagrams, drawings, illustrative photographs, and samples of materials and demonstrate how the concept and principles shape each experience and component of the project.

b. Ensure that the architectural character and expression are consistent and utilized on all exterior portions of a structure. Major and minor design elements as well as accessory components including railings, gates, fences, free-standing walls, lighting, mechanical penthouses, trash areas and other related design elements should all conform to and reinforce the overall design intent and resulting character. Building systems and services including utility, solar, data, communications, and service equipment should also be integrated into the architectural concept and be designed to be a logical continuation of the character and expression of the overall project architecture.

c. Use durable materials consistent with the architectural concept and character that are able to withstand an oceanside climate without undue discoloration or deterioration.

d. Do not incorporate highly reflective materials and reflective glass for building skins and glazing. Ground floor glazing should be clear. Glazing at upper levels may be lightly tinted.

e. When an established architectural style is chosen, the design should conform to the determinants of the style and incorporate the typical proportions, openings, forms, roof lines, mass, bulk, components, and details of the chosen style.

f. Enhance local culture with each building design and landscape act. Local Santa Monica culture is advanced by acknowledgement of neighborhood and community design character, provision of places for informal as well as formal public and private gathering, inclusion of art and craft in the design of building elements, and acts of design creativity and innovation that redefine practice standards and attract recognition by design peer groups.

Figure 3.25. Consistent architectural character and detail are visible from all public right-of-ways at this mixed-use project (courtesy Sant Architects).
Figure 4.1. Looking towards the ocean, a Santa Monica streetscape incorporates a street wall oriented to the sidewalk and variety of mass, bulk, facade, skyline, and ground level built-form diversity. Santa Monica encourages infill development that reinforces the pedestrian and human essence of this characteristic scene.
SECTION 4.0
Additional Design Considerations

The following Additional Design Considerations compliment the Design Objectives of these Guidelines and are covered by other City policies and requirements. Applicants should carefully review all City requirements and codes during project design and the associated entitlement process to ensure that the following objectives are addressed in the design of a project.

1. Maximize accessibility for people with disabilities. To improve the quality of life for people of all abilities, projects need to meet accessibility code requirements. Design for accessibility should be an integral aspect of each project and support and enhance the underlying architectural and landscape design intent (for more information on the City’s accessibility policies see http://www.smgov.net/Portals/AccessibleSM/content.aspx?id=16032).

Design Consideration: call out accessibility features and describe how they support the design intent.

2. Optimize use of sustainable design principals, technologies, and materials. Santa Monica is a leader in adopting and implementing sustainable building and landscape policies. The City also actively promotes minimization of energy and water use, natural cooling and heating of buildings, utilization of green building materials, recycling and reuse of materials, and aggressive diversion from land fills of construction debris and waste. All projects should seamlessly integrate sustainable design methodologies, following and exceeding City ordinance requirements (for more information on the City’s sustainable design policies and requirements see http://www.smgov.net/Departments/OSE/categories/landscape.aspx.).

Design Consideration: summarize design factors that meet or exceed the City’s sustainability policies and ordinances.

3. Utilize climatically appropriate and water conserving landscape and hardscape. Incorporate water conserving landscape plantings, trees, and hardscape materials including paving, garden walls, and appropriate fencing and gating at building edges, yards, courtyards, and upper level and rooftop balconies, terraces, and open spaces (for more information on the City’s landscape policies and requirements, see http://www.smgov.net/Departments/OSE/categories/landscape.aspx.).

Design Consideration: depict landscape design and planting materials and demonstrate their relationship to both the architecture and climatic setting.

Figure 4.2 An accessible entry at a multi-family residence.

Figure 4.3 Use of solar cells to make a decorative and sustainable design statement at a multi-family residential building (courtesy of Brooks + Scarpa, image credit Marvin Rand).

Figure 4.4 Drought tolerant landscaping should be used in Santa Monica’s temperate climate.
Glossary

• **Additional Design Consideration** – compliment the Design Objectives and Design Guidelines. The Additional Design Considerations should be implemented in every project.

• **Arcade** – A pedestrian walkway delineated by vertical structural members supporting a roof, which provides shade, accessible through large openings at either end and along the length of the walkway. Openings extend to the ground and are separated only by structural members allowing for access and views from the interior to the exterior and vice versa.

• **Bay, Storefront** – A division of storefront at the exterior of buildings marked off by vertically oriented architectural elements other than window mullions including but not limited to columns, pilasters, wall planes, or other separate from the storefront vertically oriented building components.

• **Building Frontage** – The line or space between a right-of-way and/or sidewalk and the front of an adjoining building.

• **Build-to Line** – A line parallel to a property line adjoining a right-of-way or sidewalk to which a building façade and/or vertical plane of a structure aligns.

• **Building Scale** – Building scale describes the perceived effect of the combined elements of a structure in relationship to the scale of the individual person and/or group or the relationship to the other components of the surrounds such as adjoining buildings, urban and/or natural features and/or open spaces.

• **Design Objectives** – overarching urban design and built-form principles. When a project is required to be in compliance with the Multi-Family and Mixed-Use Land Use Designations Design Guidelines, the project needs to meet the intent of the Design Objectives as determined by the appropriate review authority.

• **Design Guidelines** - a toolbox of a broad range of design approaches that assists project proponents and their design teams in reaching compliance with the Zoning Code.

• **Eyes on the Street** – a concept popularized by Jane Jacobs in the book The Death and Life of Great American Cities. She argues in this book that urban streets, especially informal mixed-use streets where the windows, entrances, uses and occupants directly overlook and are connected to the public sidewalk, contribute to a city’s sense of security and community.

• **Elevation** – The elevation of a building is its height above a fixed reference point.

• **Façade** – A face and/or plane of a building typically incorporating windows, entries, and architectural treatments.

• **Floor Plate** – the flat surface of a building level contained within the extent of the exterior walls and including habited outdoor areas.

• **Human-Scale Design** - design of the mass, bulk, disposition of active and passive uses, building planes, landscape, and details that provide reference to the scale, activities, ergonomics, and dimensions of the human body and everyday settings. Typically, the human-scale components of a building design establish rhythms, dimensions, or expression of details, minor massing, and public functions that allow for design character and use that is the sum of smaller-scale parts as well as the overall whole of the design.

• **Juxtaposition** – the placement of two things (usually abstract concepts, though it can refer to physical objects) near each other so as to permit comparison or contrast.

• **Lot Coverage** – The percentage of the lot area covered by structures and buildings including accessory buildings.

• **Plat, platting** - a plat is a defined and dimensioned piece of land or a plot. Platting is the act of determining the dimensions of lots or a description of a collection of plots and their dimensions.

• **Modulation, Architectural** - Adjustment and variation of proportion, scale, detail, and/or change in expression of architectural components, elements, and design to realize architectural variety and enhanced complexity of design expression; to modulate.

• **Modulation, Façade Plane** - Adjustment and breaking of façade plane to realize variation in massing and proportion, reduction of façade scale, and creation of building plane rhythm.

• **Sense of Place** – the positive and constructive characteristics, perceptions, or feelings of a unique locale as defined by the people who dwell there. Aspects of climate, light, use of materials, lifeways, building patterns, and local culture and expressions all contribute to the definition of the qualities of a geographic setting.

• **Setback** – a set back exists along a horizontal plane, it is the distance between the parcel line and a building, not including permitted projections.

• **Scale, Pedestrian** – The direct relationship of environmental design, architectural, and landscape elements, components, and details to the dimensions of the human body and its components.
• Step back – A step back exists along a vertical plane, a building is setback a specified distance at a prescribed number of stories above the ground. Step backs are generally used to create more light and air at the façade, decreasing the mass and bulk above a certain height in order to increase the overall building’s height.

• Streetwall – a generally consistent vertical building plane with few interruptions made up of one or more buildings along a block face and set generally at or near the back edge of a public sidewalk. Two streetwalls on opposite sides of a public right-of-way or street define a street room defined by streetwalls.

• Vernacular – Vernacular architecture exemplifies the commonest building techniques based on the forms and materials of a particular historical period, region, or group of people. Also referred to as informal architecture; the so-called “anonymous architecture” or “architecture without architects;” and even “non-pedigree” architecture.
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