

3/30/22

DRAFT DISCUSSION DOCUMENT

Multi-Family and Mixed-Use Development

Design Guidelines Related to Project Streamlining

The purpose of this draft document is to advance the discussion of design guidelines in connection with project streamlining for review and approval of multifamily projects and mixed-use development projects in Culver City. The Planning Commission has engaged in preliminary discussions regarding eliminating discretionary review for certain projects providing the ministerial review is informed a thorough set of design guidelines.

The Multi-Family and Mixed-Use Development Design Guidelines (Guidelines) are based, in part, upon the Multi-Family Neighborhood Design Guidelines, Mixed Use Ordinance and other sources cited below.

The intent of the Guidelines is to ensure that new multifamily and mixed-use development projects are of high quality and contribute positively to the surrounding commercial or residential neighborhood. The Guidelines are also intended to provide clear direction to developers and property owners about the expectations for project design and are proposed as the minimum standards for review acceptable to the City. Should a project fail to conform to the Guidelines, the project could be referred to Planning Commission for discretionary review and approval as authorized under Section 17.120.015 C. Appeals and Referrals.

This draft document and will require additional Commissioner and stakeholder input for refinement.

Multi-Family Design Guidelines

A. Site Design

- 1. Building Location.** To further the objective of respecting neighboring properties and views from the public rights-of-way from the visual impact of a proposed development, new projects are encouraged to:
 - a. Establish setbacks that are consistent with the prevailing setbacks along the block where the project is located.
 - b. Orient buildings towards the adjacent public street by providing windows from living rooms, dining rooms, kitchens, and bedrooms. Porches, balconies, and entryways or other entry features should be oriented towards a street, alley, or common open space if internal to a larger project.

- c. Locate the primary entry area for each residential unit so that it faces the public street or a common courtyard and so that the entry relates to the pedestrian scale of the Neighborhood.
- d. Locate new structures or additions in areas that minimize the impacts on neighboring structures
- e. Establish building lot coverage that is sensitive to the prevailing lot coverage for the block.
- f. Be considerate of neighboring properties' views and access to sun light and natural ventilation.

2. Building Privacy. To further the objective of maintaining privacy and minimizing the disruption of outdoor activities of adjacent sites, new projects are encouraged to:

- a. To the extent feasible, locate windows where they will not directly align with existing neighboring windows.
- b. To the extent feasible locate windows away from, or screen windows from direct views of private outdoor areas of neighboring properties.
- c. Locate second floor balconies and decks in areas that minimize the loss of privacy for neighboring properties.
- d. Provide landscape screening along rear and side property lines where neighbors' privacy may be affected.

3. Parking. To further the objective of locating parking to reduce visual impacts and minimizing the percentage of lot area devoted to parking and driveways, new projects are encouraged to:

- a. Avoid adversely affecting the character of residential streets by the visual impact of parking areas and garage openings. Examples of negative visual impacts are: large blank walls, expansive garage doors, driveway openings that dominate the street frontage, and parking areas located in the front yard.
- b. Locate on-site parking at the rear of the site, when constructing a new project.
- c. Minimize the size of the driveway apron, driveway, and paved areas.
- d. Design carports and garages as an integral part of the project architecture and relate them to the primary building in terms of materials, color, and detail
- e. Design driveways and vehicle maneuvering areas into sub-areas by thoughtful use of pattern and such materials as integral color concrete, slate, brick, or areas of permeable surface.

- f. Locate driveways on the side of the project lot so that the driveway is not the central feature visible from the street. However, if a mature tree is located where the driveway would be placed, an alternate driveway location may be appropriate. Retain existing side-loaded driveways. Retain existing landscaping as feasible. The location of driveways that will require the removal of trees is discouraged.
- g. Use landscaping to screen parking areas from the street.
- h. Where subterranean parking is used, locate it entirely below grade with the driveway located to the side of the lot. To allow opportunities for landscaping on grade rather than over a structure, subterranean parking utilizing more than 3/4 of the site is discouraged. Exposed portions of the subterranean structure which are visible from the street, including grills and ventilation openings, are discouraged.
- i. Minimize the parking footprint to allow for more on-grade landscaping.

4. Landscaping and Open Space. Landscaping and open space are an integral part of any project. Landscaping can be used as a unifying element within a project to obtain a cohesive appearance and to help achieve compatibility of a new project with its surroundings. To further this objective, new projects are encouraged to:

- a. Utilize landscaping that includes a variety of plant materials which provide color and contrast, and shade. Desirable landscape elements include pedestrian-scaled lighting, fountains, decorative paving, and seating opportunities, such as raised planters and walls.
- b. Utilize landscape elements and materials that complement the architectural style and are proportional to the size of the primary structure.
- c. Develop landscaping to contain a combination of low, medium and tall plant materials. For example, low planting may be used in the foreground, proceeding back to the tallest in the background
- d. Landscape all unpaved surfaces on the building site, such as building and property edges and spaces between structures with trees, shrubs, ground-cover, gravel or decomposed granite, or other appropriate surfacing material.
- e. When limited space is available, use raised planters, window boxes, pergolas or trellises to encourage the softening of architectural edges with plant material.
- f. Use planting to soften or screen parking areas, alleyways, trash, and service areas.
- g. Fence and wall materials, colors and detailing should be consistent with the architectural style of buildings on the site.

- h. If included, front yard fences and walls should be consistent with the fence or wall patterns of homes on the block, and they should be setback at least one foot from the sidewalk with lower plantings placed between the sidewalk and the fence or wall to preserve the public parkway environment.
- i. Accommodate and retain existing mature street trees and on-site trees, when feasible. Removal of existing street and on-site trees is discouraged.
- j. Locate landscaping on grade rather than over structure to facilitate the use of large trees and shrubs.
- k. Integrate and connect the design of public and private open space areas to maximize the openness of the development.
- l. Use courtyard design or other designs that increase open space and landscaping
- m. Design common open space to be open to the sky. Patio covers, building projections and similar enclosures that block sunlight and air in a common courtyard or the front setback are discouraged.

5. Lighting. Lighting can be used to complement and enhance the architecture and landscape of projects. In order to further this objective, new projects are encouraged to:

- a. Avoid lighting that spills, reflects, or produces glare onto neighboring properties, into windows, or onto public rights-of-way.
- b. Design any exterior lighting to contribute to the aesthetic quality of the project. Lighting of a building façade that diminishes architectural features is discouraged.
- c. Utilize lighting fixtures that are compatible with the architectural style, materials, and color of the project.

B. Building Design and Architecture

1. Mass and Scale. A structure that is out of scale with its site and the other buildings on the block tends to be incompatible with its surroundings. New projects are encouraged to:

- a. Harmonize building scale with the existing prevailing scale of the block to produce a structure that is compatible with the proportion, size, mass, and height of neighboring houses. If prevailing structures on the block are single-story, a multi-story project should be designed to include one-story height along the street frontage, stepping back to the upper floor by a minimum of X%.

- b. Reduce the perceived height and bulk of multi-story buildings by dividing the building mass into smaller-scale components. Perceived height and bulk can also be reduced by stepping back the upper floors, reducing floor area and building mass and scaling architectural details on the upper story to relate to the overall building composition. Features such as projecting eaves, dormers porches, balconies, and other elements appropriate to the proposed style are encouraged.
- c. Anchor the base of the building to establish a strong visual connection to the ground and the site and design the upper story of the building to appear less massive than the buildings' base. The second story should never be of a taller height than the first story.
- d. Relate buildings to the pedestrian scale by incorporating sufficient small-scale elements (such as entry ways, stoops, steps, windows, canopies, etc.) into the lower portions of multi-story buildings that are adjacent to streets or public pedestrian areas. Large entries that dominate the front façade and appear to be two-stories are discouraged.

2. Building Façade. Façade treatment and building details provide visual interest and can contribute to the overall architectural quality of a building. It is not the intent of these design guidelines to require any particular style of architecture, but rather respect the diversity of architectural styles in the Neighborhood and encourage interesting design that is integrated into the Neighborhood. Thoughtful, considerate design can provide for the needs of the project while maintaining existing qualities of adjacent properties and the neighborhood. To further this objective, new projects are encouraged to:

- a. Design buildings to be attractive from all directions. Consistently apply architectural details and exterior materials on all sides of the structure. Consider the use of details and exterior materials in relation to all possible views of the building. Visual conflicts between the street facade and side or rear views are discouraged.
- b. Design façade details to be appropriate to and consistent with the building's architectural style. Have them carry through the entire structure and any accessory structures. For additions or alterations to an existing structure, use materials and finishes (including windows and doors) that compliment and relate to the existing structure.
- c. Articulate the building façades by appropriate use of reveals, changes in surface pattern or texture and variations in the building plane, while maintaining the integrity of the architectural style, to sustain visual interest. Areas of flat, blank walls and lack of architectural details are discouraged. Façade treatments should be evident and consistent from grade to roofline.

- d. Avoid the use of surface materials that produce excessive reflected glare which could adversely affect the comfort or safety of pedestrians, drivers or neighbors.
- e. Design accessory structures to be consistent in material and color with the primary structures on the site.
- f. When developing multiple lots or double lots, except in the case of courtyard developments, individuate and vary the building forms by change of style or change of massing and articulation, either of which can accentuate the Neighborhood's architectural diversity.
- g. Balconies shall be useable with no dimension less than X feet.

Mixed-Use Design Guidelines

F.Site Planning and Design Standards.

1. Building bulk.

- a. Projects shall be designed to achieve interesting, graceful and articulated buildings by the use of varied rooflines and vertical attachments; clearly define the base, middle and top of each building and other architectural features; and include building line setback and step backs to create visual interest and reduce monolithic design. See [Figure 4-6](#) (Building Elevation Composition).
- b. Upper story windows shall be recessed from the wall surface by a minimum of 2" or shall have surface trim and sills.
- c. Balconies shall be useable with a minimum depth of x feet.
- d. New construction should complement the context of existing buildings by using and adding to the local design vocabulary. Along traditional commercial strips, the new building ground floor areas should mimic existing tenant space frontage design and width.

Figure 4-6 Building Elevation Composition



Figure 4-7 Section of Street Wall

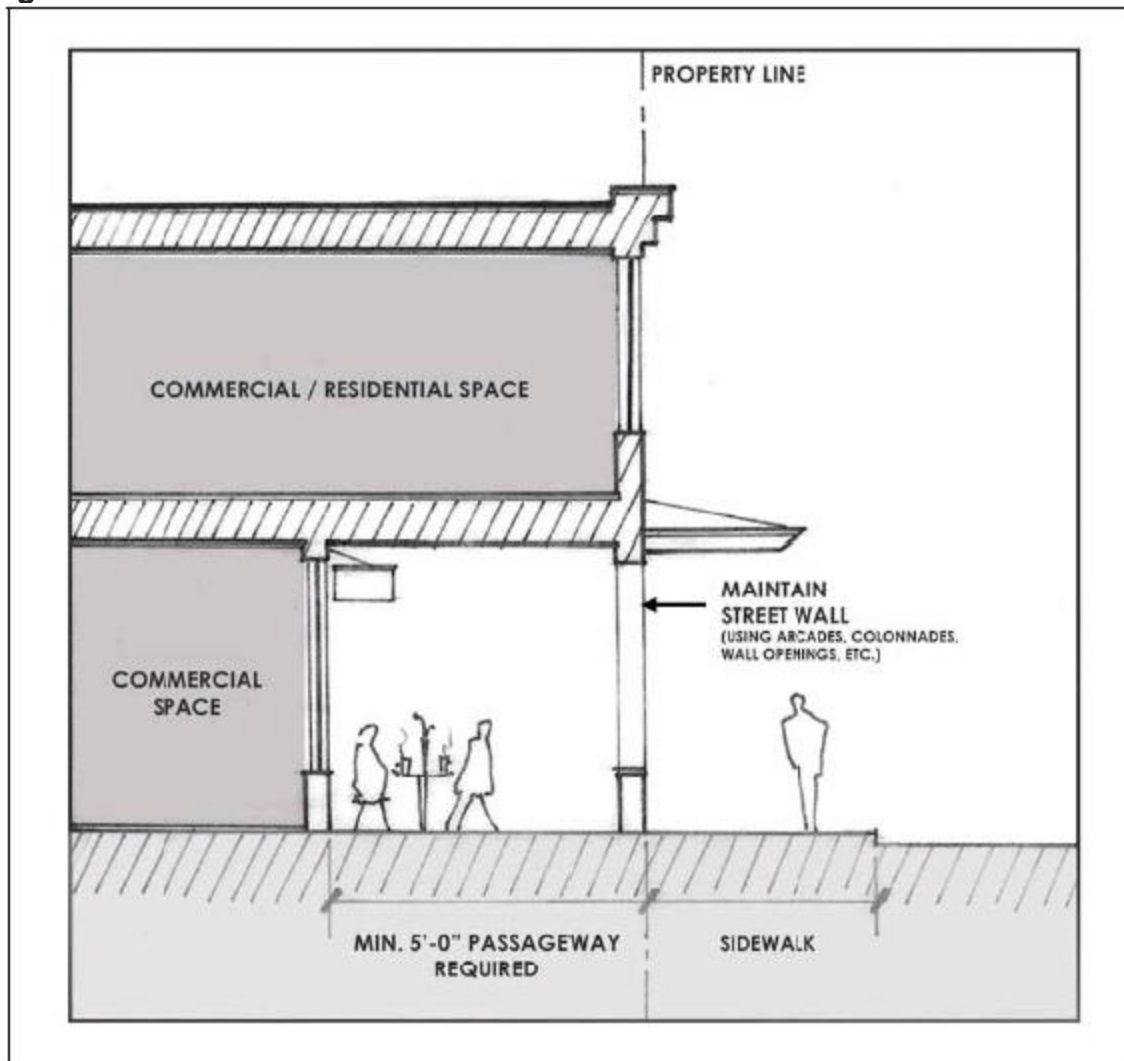
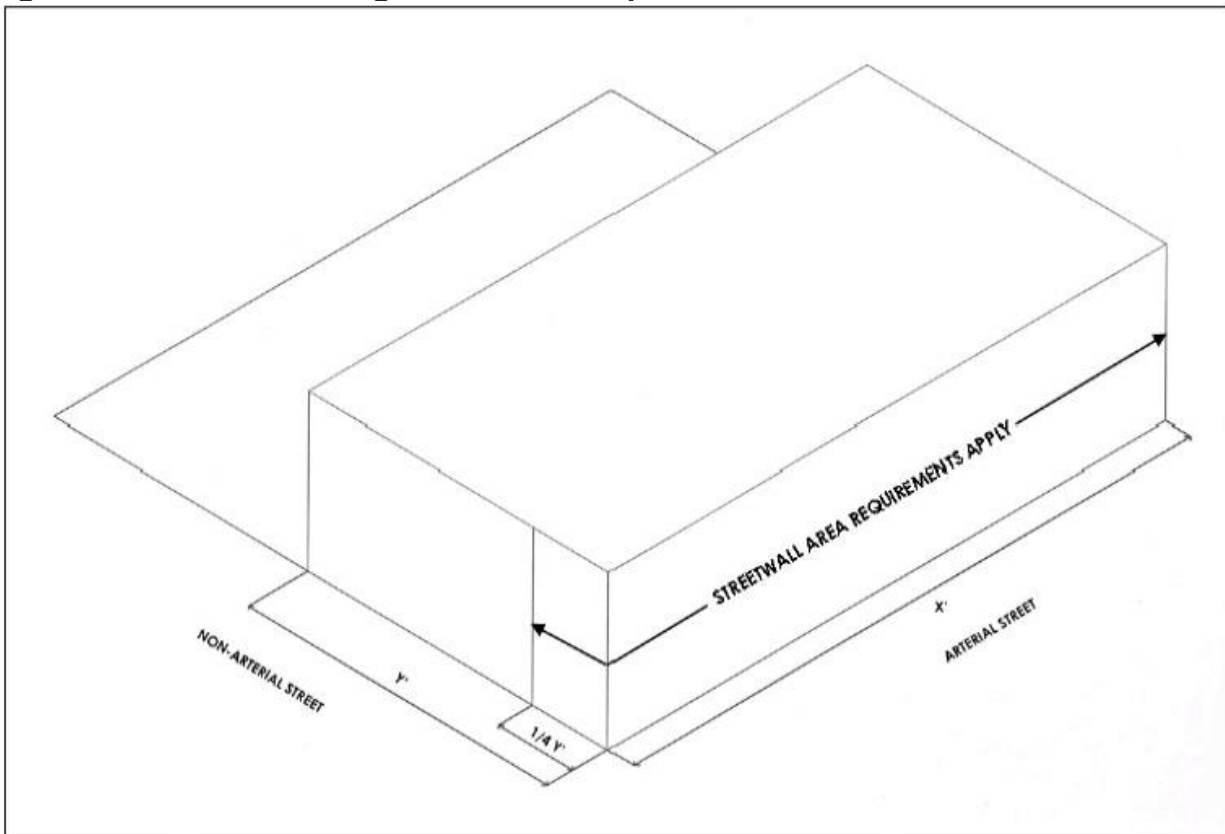


Figure 4-8 Corner Building Street Wall Requirement



2. Street frontage requirements.

a. The street frontage shall be architecturally varied to create visual interest and shall include architectural features and pedestrian amenities such as recessed entries, arcades, colonnades, stairs, art and other architectural features or pedestrian improvements subject to the following:

- 1)** Passageways in arcades and colonnades are, at minimum, 5 feet wide. See [Figure 4-7](#) (Section of Street Wall).
- 2)** Architectural and ornamental features do not impede pedestrian routes.
- 3)** Stairs are decorative and attractive.
- 4)** Develop visual and physical connections into buildings' active interior spaces from adjacent sidewalks.
- 5)** Use architectural elements such as atriums, iconic entries, and large ground-level windows to reveal important interior spaces and activities.

b. With the exception of required driveway curb cuts, street frontage requirements shall apply to 100% of the total property frontage parallel to the street and shall include step backs and building line offsets above the ground level to create visual interest and attractive building massing.

c. No blank wall area is permitted in the street frontage wall area. The maximum width of any continuous blank wall in the street frontage shall be no more than 15 feet. Publicly visible walls containing blank areas greater than 400 square feet are prohibited.

d. Major entrances and corners of buildings shall be articulated within the street wall facade.

e. Individual buildings shall be designed with an articulated front; wall surfaces shall be offset by at least 12", bay windows, if provided, shall include a projection of at least 24" and porches must be closer to the street than garage frontages. (Source: City of Sacramento)

f. 10% of total building area must be treated with changes to roofline, setbacks, or stepbacks to scale and articulate street frontage facades. This reduction must be reflected in greater step-backs, setbacks, stepped rooflines, building offsets, or more ground level or upper level open spaces. Reduction cannot include a simple reduction in floor area. (Source: Ed Ogosta).

g. A minimum of 50% of the width of street-facing building wall above the first story, or above 16 feet in height, whichever is less, shall include recessed or extended windows, balconies, offset planes, or other prominent architectural details that provide three-dimensional relief, as approved by the Director (Source: East Washington Overlay Zone)

h. Design corners that build active intersections. Use design elements including, but not limited to, varying building heights, changes in façade plane, large windows, awnings, canopies, marquees, signs, and pedestrian entrances to highlight building corners. Locate stairs, elevators, and other upper floor building access points toward the middle of the block.

i. Differentiate the sidewalk-level of the building from the middle and top by using elements including, but not limited to, different exterior materials, awnings, signs, and large windows.

j. Develop integrated weather protection systems at sidewalk level of buildings to provide additional opportunities for pedestrian shade.

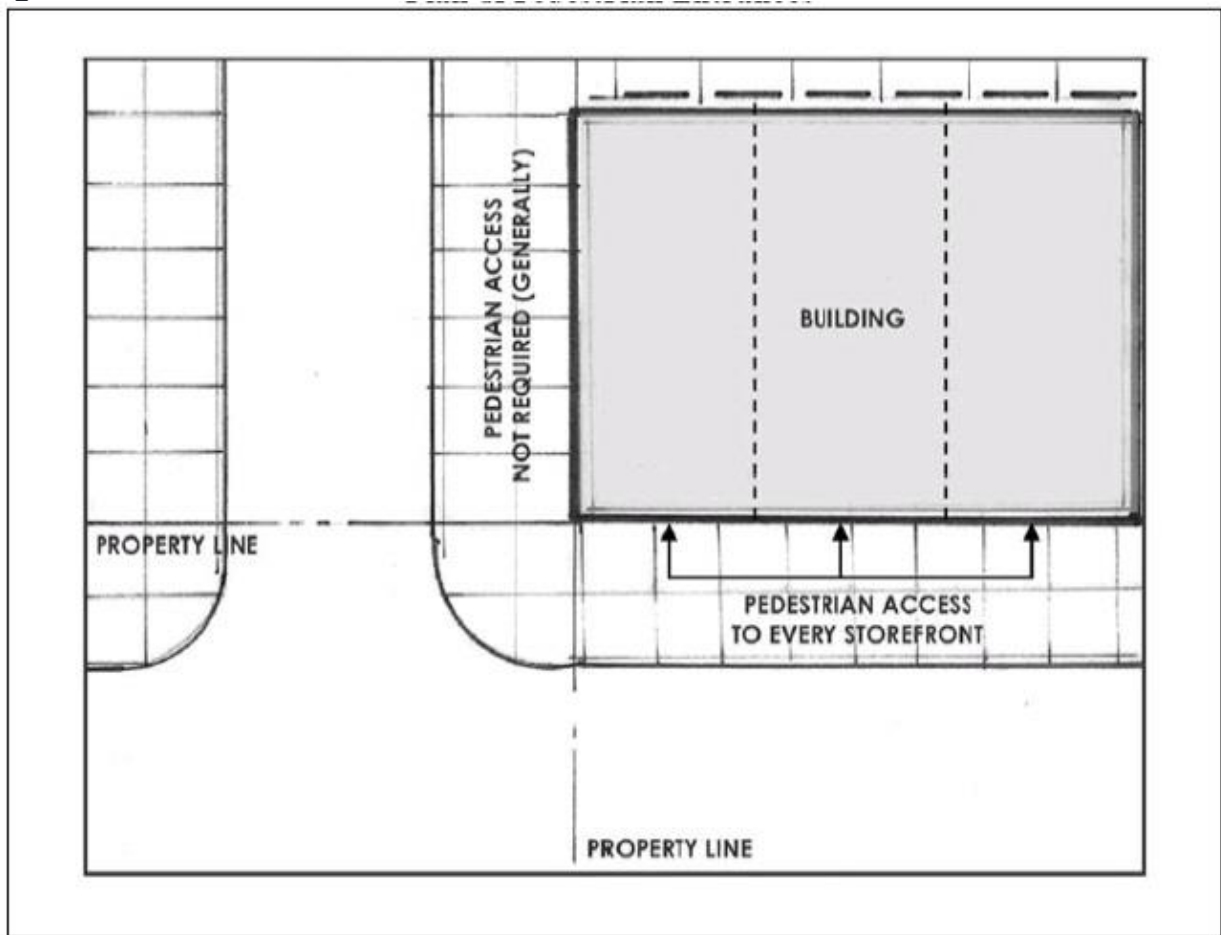
3. Building entrances.

a. Pedestrian entrances shall be provided for all ground floor uses adjacent to arterial streets. Pedestrian entrances are not required on non-arterial streets. See Figure 4-9 (Plan of Pedestrian Entrances).

b. Pedestrian entrances shall be directly accessible from the public right-of-way, and shall have direct access and view from the adjacent sidewalk.

c. Commercial uses and residential uses shall have separate exterior entrances, elevators, and lobbies. The Director may waive this requirement, based on site constraints.

Figure 4-9 Plan of Pedestrian Entrances



4. Signage and lighting. Signs must be developed pursuant to [Chapter 17.330](#) (Signs). Exterior lighting shall comply with the requirements of § [17.300.040](#) (Outdoor Lighting). Exterior lighting and its staging or structural components shall be integrated with the building's overall design concept. Signage and associated structural components shall be integrated with the building's overall design concept.

5. Parking and vehicular access.

- a.** Street level parking facilities and lots shall be screened from view from the adjoining arterial street(s) by ornamental walls or fences, at least 4 feet high above street grade.
- b.** Two-way vehicular ingress/egress areas on arterial streets shall only be permitted on development sites with a minimum of 100 feet of street frontage on the street where the vehicular ingress/egress area is located. The Director may waive this requirement, based on site constraints.
- c.** One-way vehicular ingress/egress areas on arterial streets shall only be permitted on development sites with a minimum of 75 feet of street frontage on the street where the ingress/egress area is located. The Director may waive this requirement, based on site constraints.

d. Vehicular ingress/egress areas are prohibited on arterial streets where the street frontage of the development site adjacent to the arterial street is less than 75 feet. The Director may waive this requirement, based on site constraints.

6.Refuse storage and collection areas.

a. The commercial and residential components of the project shall maintain separate refuse storage and collection areas; the refuse storage and collection areas shall be clearly marked for separate uses or satisfy alternative standards as approved by the Environmental Programs and Operations Division of the Public Works Department.

b. Trash storage areas are to be located away from any views from the public right-of-way.

c. Landscaping is required at the solid walls of any trash enclosures for screening

7.Amenities. For projects of more than XXX dwelling units, provide amenities to serve residents that include at least... Use site design features such as landscape elements, gathering places, and seating opportunities.

8. Rooftops. Integrate roof function, shape, surface material, and colors with the buildings overall design concept.

9. Unit Count. Include a varied mix of unit types and bedroom counts and include a broad mix of affordability.

10. Pedestrians Planning

a. Protect the pedestrian environment from vehicular movement

b. Develop integrated identification, sign, and sidewalk-oriented night-lighting systems that offer safety, interest, and diversity to the pedestrian.

c. Incorporate building equipment, mechanical exhaust routing systems, and/or service areas in a manner that does not detract from the pedestrian environment.

d. Provide safe, comfortable places where people can stop, view, socialize, and rest but ensure that these places do not conflict with other sidewalk uses.

11 Design

a. Promote quality and permanence in development. Use design principles and building materials that promote quality and permanence.

b. Design for Coherency. Integrate the different building and design elements including, but not limited to, construction materials, roofs, entrances, as well as window, door, sign, and lighting systems, to achieve a coherent composition.

c. When possible, integrate Culver City themes with the Development's overall design concept.

d. Define the public right-of-way by creating and maintaining a sense of urban enclosure.