



Objective Design Standards

La Puente City Council

June 23, 2026



Objective Design Standards (ODS)

- SB 330 (2019) requires that the denial of any multifamily residential/mixed-use project be due to inconformity with an objective design standard
- Streamlined ministerial approval processes prescribed in state law (e.g. SB 35/423) limit design review to be “strictly focused on assessing compliance with...reasonable objective design standards published and adopted...” (GOV 65913.4(d)(1)), requires 90-day timeline
- Objective standards involve “no personal or subjective judgment by a public official and are uniformly verifiable by reference to an external and uniform benchmark or criterion available and knowable by both the applicant or developer and the public official before submittal.” (GOV 65913.4(a)(5))



- These objective design standards were developed as part of a Regional Objective Design Standards project funded by SGVCOG and with participation of four San Gabriel Valley cities.

Background Research

- Review of participating cities' existing design guidelines and standards, and experience implementing them
- Fieldwork within key areas of participating cities
- Analysis of other local and regional objective design standard efforts
- Identification of successful projects within the San Gabriel Valley, including design topics that they successfully implement



House and Block Scale Zones

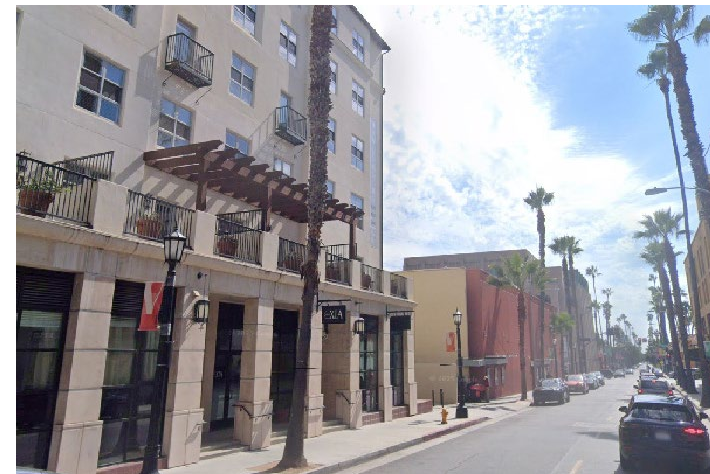
Different building types are anticipated in house- and block-scale zones

Some standards differ between house-scale and block-scale zones, e.g. house-scale zones:

- Have tighter modulation requirements
- Allow porch frontage type
- Require upper floor shared decks to be stepped back from neighbors
- Allow shared walkways/driveways for small projects



House Scale Context

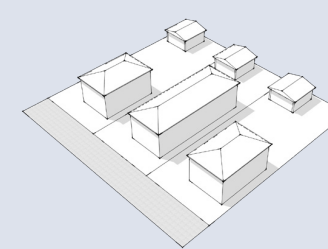


Block Scale Context

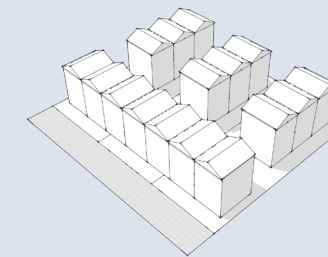
HOUSE AND BLOCK SCALE ZONES

House Scale Zones (R-3, R-4)

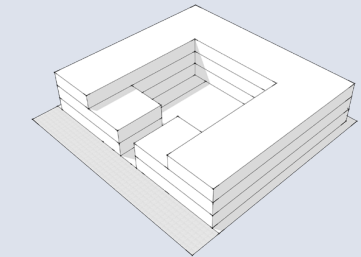
Zones that contain buildings that contribute to a smaller-scale, neighborhood-oriented environment. House scale buildings include multiple detached dwellings on a lot, duplexes, triplexes, fourplexes, bungalow courts, courtyard apartments, rowhouses, townhouses, and small-scale mixed-use buildings with neighborhood-serving ground-floor uses.



Two- to Four- plexes



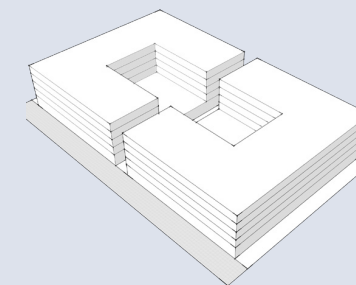
Rowhomes



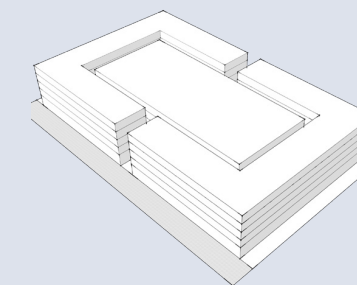
Courtyard Apartments

Block Scale Zones (C-2, DBD)

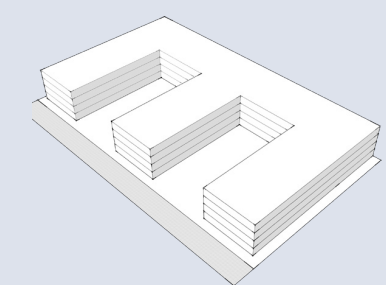
Zones that contain buildings that contribute to a larger-scale, urban environment, often occupying most or all of a city block. Block scale buildings include mid-rise buildings, podium buildings, and wrap buildings.



Podium Mixed-Use



Wrap



Multiplex

House Scale vs. Block Scale

Standards Approach

Section 1: Site Planning and Access

INTENT

Buildings should be placed and oriented to reinforce a pedestrian-oriented public realm and to establish a strong visual and physical relationship with adjacent streets, sidewalks, and open spaces. Site planning should prioritize pedestrian access and activity by aligning building frontages along public streets, streetscapes, and other publicly accessible spaces, including sidewalks, street edges, primary entrances, courtyards, terraces, and transparent facades toward the public realm to support street vitality.

emphasize open spaces and enhancing connectivity by linking sidewalks, transit stops, open spaces, and neighboring parcels. should be legible and well integrated into the circulation network, while pedestrian access should be designed to minimize conflicts with pedestrians and impacts on the public realm. Overall site planning should activate streets and open spaces to contribute to a cohesive, human-scaled environment.

STANDARDS

Street Relationships

- 1.1 The primary entrance to all buildings adjacent to a public street shall be visible from the sidewalk and directly connected via a pedestrian pathway.
2. All projects shall comply with the Frontage Type Standards in Section 4.
3. In house-scale zones, the length of any building along the primary street shall not exceed 80'. However if the ground floor is broken by an opening of at least 10' wide and 10' high, leading to a visible interior courtyard or other common open space on the ground level, the building may continue above one such opening. The length of any building, along a secondary street shall not exceed 150'.

- 1.4 In block-scale zones, the length of a building along a public street shall not exceed 80'.
- 1.5 Developments with at least 150' of frontage along the primary street shall include at least one of the following open spaces along the primary street:
 - a. A community plaza, commons, forecourt, or publicly accessible neighborhood park.
 - b. A terrace of a minimum 50' deep and 15% of the primary frontage width above the first level.
 - c. A paseo is provided from the primary street, connecting to a courtyard in the interior of the site.

All open spaces shall comply with standards defined in Section 5: and Appendices B and C, as applicable.

Residential Privacy

- 1.6 When units face each other through the open air in a 30' buffer zone, windows shall be landscaped as shown in Figure 1.6: one tree per 30' of buffer zone. In areas of sufficient density and active visual separation in house-scale zones only, this standard may be waived for units built to face each other in a 30' buffer zone.

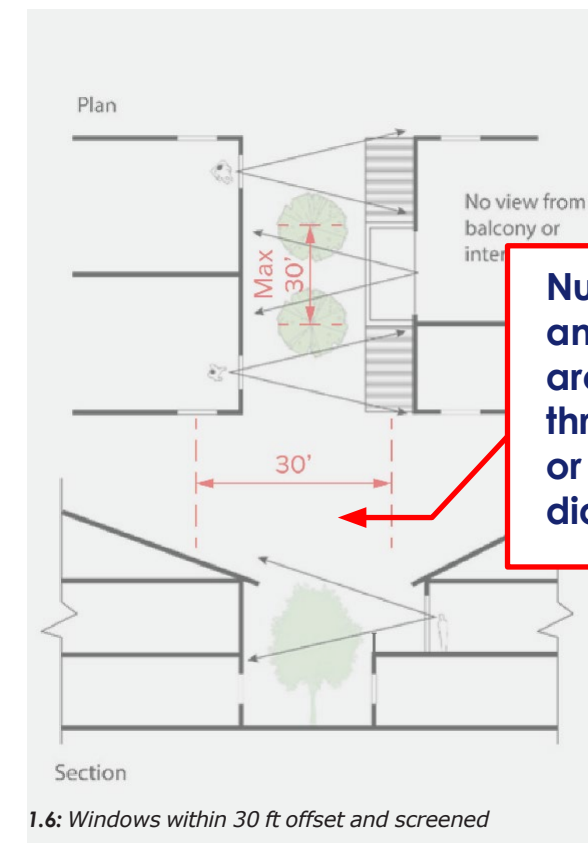
The paper format is ledger size (11x17), landscape format, single-sided. This format adapts well to computer monitors and TV screens.

Each topic's discussion begins with a short set of guidelines expressing the design intent of the standards. This forms the basis for findings to deviate from the standards.

This is followed by numbered standards expressed with clear, regulatory text meeting the state's definition of an objective standard.

Standards may apply across an entire jurisdiction in "house-scale" or "block-scale" zones, or only in unique zoning districts.

Other standards are supplemented with photographic examples, drawing from projects within the San Gabriel Valley where possible.



1.6: Windows within 30 ft offset and screened



an opening leading to a common open space on the ground level

Numerical, dimensional and spatial standards are further described through simple, two or three-dimensional diagrams.

Topics Covered

1. Site Planning and Access
2. Building Modulation and Articulation
3. Materials, Finishes and Color
4. Frontages
5. Open Space
6. Entries
7. Exterior Lighting
8. Walls and Fences
9. Loading Areas, Trash and Utilities

A.4 Porch

Applicable Uses: Residential

The front door is accessed through a decently-sized, covered outdoor living area which provides an opportunity for seating and "eyes on the street," while maintaining significant privacy for residents. The porch accentuates residential character and provides a unifying element between single-family and modest-density multifamily structures within house-scale neighborhoods.

Required Dimensions	
Width, Clear (A)	10ft min.
Depth, Clear (B)	6 ft min., 10ft max.
Finish Level above Sidewalk (C)	1ft min., 4 ft max.
Distance Between Porch Elements And Right-of-Way (D)	5 ft min., Max. is the min. setback of the zone
Building Setback from Right-of-Way (E)	Min setback applicable to the zone.
Transparency, Ground Floor	35%min.

Other Standards

Porch shall serve a single residential unit or building entry.

Reasonable accommodation shall be provided as appropriate.

Stairs shall be perpendicular to the building façade.

Entry doors shall be covered or recessed.

All yard areas adjacent to porches shall be filled with landscaping, and all semi-subterranean parking areas shall be hidden with landscaping.

The Director may exempt projects from the requirement in each of these frontage types to provide access from the sidewalk when compliance is infeasible or impractical.



Frontage Type Example

B.2 Neighborhood Parks and Recreational Amenity Areas

Accessible local parks and recreation spaces offering nearby residents places for activity, exercise, play, and community connection, featuring amenities like outdoor seating and shade, green spaces, recreational facilities, barbecues/picnic, and more. They serve as essential neighborhood hubs for physical activity, social interaction, and easy access to nature, fostering healthier, more resilient communities. Designed for people living in the surrounding residential developments, usually within a quarter-mile radius or less.

Size: spaces can vary significantly in size / shape but shall have a minimum area of 1,000 square feet and a minimum dimension of 25 feet in each direction.

Location & Application: located at ground level, to be visible from an adjacent roadway or primary circulation route. Spaces intended to be accessible for all residents within a 1/4 mile (1/4 mile, 5-minute walk) and can be a single space or a distributed series of spaces as required to serve the full development.

Development Frontage: primarily residential uses, can also include small or limited ground floor retail / commercial uses required to support park / amenity area programming, eg. corner shops, small cafes, vending kiosks, etc.

Access & Usage: publicly or privately accessible. Permitted to provide barrier controls to limit public access to the space after business hours or at night consistent with city park hours of operation. Public street with sidewalk, or pedestrian walkway of at least 15 width required on at least one side of the space connecting to key circulation routes and destinations within and outside the development.

Landscape: include a minimum of 50% planted areas and a minimum of one 24-inch box tree for every 500 square feet of common open space for the first 2,500 square feet of common open space thereafter. Exceptions may be given for small spaces dedicated to dense, more active programming that provide significant community benefit.

Programming: primarily active uses with focus on serving resident recreation, activity, and social needs including sports courts, kids play, community swimming pools, picnic and barbecues, etc. Refer to 5.8 for shortlist of potential programming options to consider when planning the space.

Additional Requirements: n/a.



B.3 Courtyards

An open, unroofed outdoor area, often paved, that is partially or completely enclosed by the walls of adjacent buildings, providing a semi-private, secluded outdoor space for light, air, relaxation, or gathering.

Size: spaces shall have a minimum area of 600 square feet and a minimum dimension of at least 20' wide, with secondary dimensions relative to the height of the abutting building(s) wall. Secondary dimensions shall be: up to 2.5 stories = 30' wide, 3 to 5 stories = at least 40' wide, 6 to 8 stories = at least 1/2 the height of the tallest wall.

Location & Application: located at ground level, buildings shall define at least two edges of the courtyard space. Courtyards encouraged to be accessible from a primary roadway when requiring public access, otherwise discretionary for private access but should comply with and support all frontage and building break requirements (e.g. visibility from public street required when using paseo and Courtyard to comply with building break standard 1.3).

Development Frontage: primarily residential uses, can also include small or limited ground floor retail / commercial uses required to support Courtyard programming, eg. corner shops, small cafes, vending kiosks, etc.

Access & Usage: publicly or privately accessible when in residential frontage conditions, publicly accessible when in retail or commercial frontage conditions. Permitted to provide barrier controls to limit public access to the space after business hours or at night consistent with city park hours of operation. No specific pedestrian thoroughfare requirements for this type of space but linking Courtyard spaces to other open spaces, including other Courtyards, is always encouraged.

Landscape: include a minimum of 25% planted areas and a minimum of one 24-inch box tree for every 500 square feet of common open space for the first 2,500 square feet, then one 24-inch box tree for every 1,000 square feet of common open space thereafter.

Programming: more passive uses focused on fulfilling resident needs for quiet, intimate spaces serving as tranquil areas for relaxation, connection to nature, socializing, dining, or gardening, while also improving a building's microclimate and aesthetics by integrating indoor/outdoor living. The physical spaces may vary significantly from hardscape type courtyard plazas to more heavily planted courtyard gardens. Refer to 5.8 for shortlist of potential programming options to consider when planning the space.

Additional Requirements: n/a.



Open Space Types Example

Recommended Changes from Staff Report Version

Completed cover, introductory sections and images

Clerical changes identified from other cities' review of the document

- Providing more precise language to ensure that readers understand the exact meaning of the standard
- Clarifying the meaning of “length,” “width,” and “depth” / clarifying the precise direction that was being referred to with a particular standard
- Harmonizing number and unit measurement formats
- Providing additional flexibility to designers complying with privacy standards



Section 2: Building Modulation and Articulation

Roof Design

2.17 The building roof height or roof form shall have a minimum of one roof variation for every 50 feet of facade length along the street. Each roof variation shall meet at least one of the following requirements:

- A change in roof plane that results in a minimum two-foot projection or recession, measured perpendicular to the facade.
- A shift in the roof line of 18 inches or greater, measured vertically from the highest point of the adjoining roof line(s).
- The use of a dormer, gable, ridge break, offset eave, or similar architectural element that creates a minimum five-foot horizontal break or relief in the roof plan before continuation of the primary roof form.

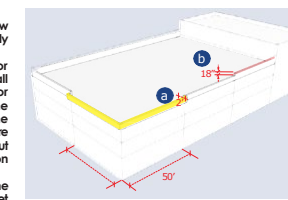
2.18 Roof forms shall terminate in a manner that accurately expresses the true building volume and prevents the appearance of a false or enlarged building mass. All roof terminations shall comply with the standards in this section.

- When a sloped roof adjoins a side wall or a shared lot line, the sloped roof profile shall terminate directly at the lot line or side wall. The sloped form shall not wrap, project beyond, or extend around the adjoining wall or lot line.
- Flat roof parapets may extend along the rear facade, side wall, or shared lot line, provided the parapet accurately reflects the true building mass and does not imply additional interior volume.
- Where a roof parapet transitions from or connects to a sloped roof form, the parapet shall extend to the point necessary to maintain the continuity of the sloped roof profile.
- Where a roof parapet extends beyond the roof plane, the parapet return shall measure a minimum of six feet (6'), measured horizontally from the roof edge, before terminating or changing direction.

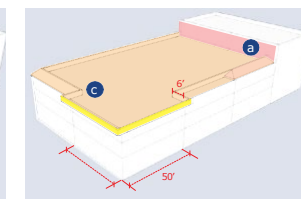
Design in Proximity to Historic Resources

2.19 The following standards apply to all new developments located on a site that is directly adjacent to a designated historical resource:

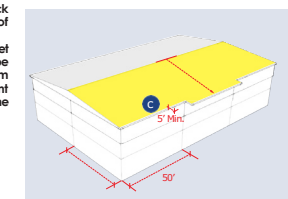
- The building facade along the primary or secondary front of new development shall incorporate a ground floor expression line or entablature that aligns with the height of the corresponding architectural feature on the adjacent historical resource. Where there are two existing historical resource buildings about the site, the resource with the taller expression line applies.
- The height within the first 20 feet of the development shall be no more than 15 feet greater than the historic resource.
- The side setback shall match the side setback of the historic resource, up to a maximum of 15 feet.
- The street-facing setback of the 20 feet adjacent to the historic resource shall be no less than the average of the minimum permitted setback on the development property, and the existing setback of the historic resource.



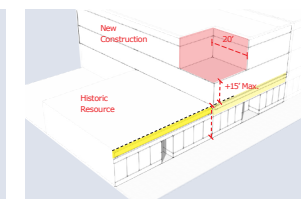
2.17 a,b: Roof form variation options



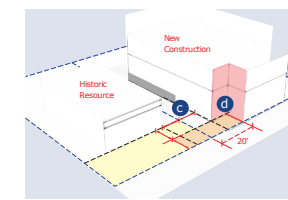
2.18 a,c: Roof termination



2.17 c: Roof form variation options



2.19 a,b: Expression Line and Transitional Height adjacent to historic resources



2.19 c,d: Setback requirements adjacent to a historic resource

Design Review Process

LEGAL BASIS FOR OBJECTIVE DESIGN STANDARDS

Per Government Code 65913.4, Objective Design Standards "involve no personal or subjective judgment by a public official and are uniformly verifiable by reference to an external and uniform benchmark or criterion available and knowable by both the applicant or developer and the public official before submittal."

SB 167 (2017)

Prohibits local governments from disapproving or conditioning approval in a manner that renders infeasible, a housing development project for very low, low-, or moderate- income households or an emergency shelter unless the local agency makes specific written findings based upon substantial evidence in the record.

Housing Crisis Act (SB 330) (2019)

Streamlines housing development processes by imposing timelines on the approval of housing projects, limits the number of public hearings to 5, and limits denial of projects to non-compliance with objectively written design standards.

AB 2011 (2022)

Allows eligible residential development projects in commercial areas that comply with housing affordability and/or labor standards to be subject to a streamlined, ministerial review process that is exempt from CEQA. As part of the ministerial process, design review may be undertaken by the City if only objective standards are evaluated.

SB 4 (2023)

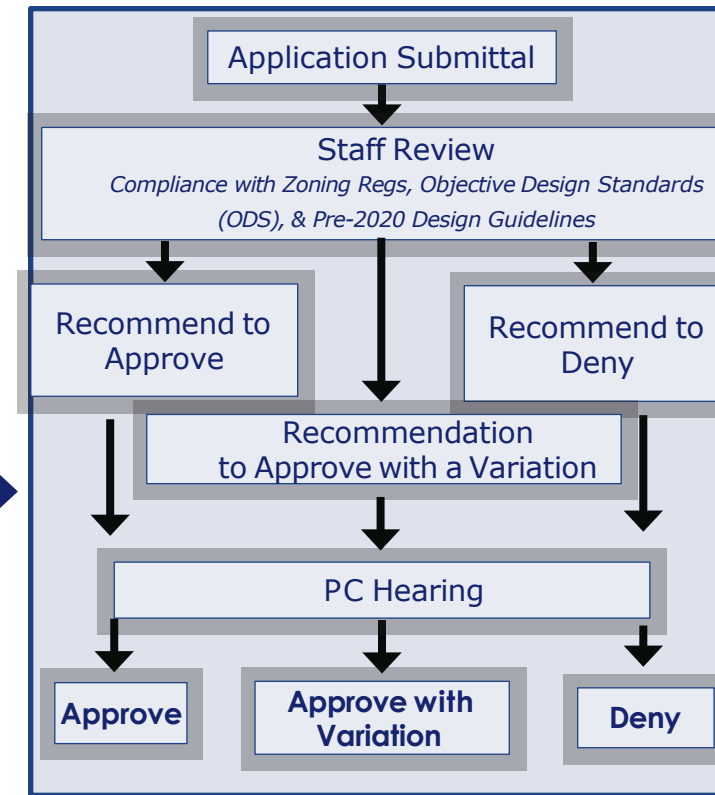
Requires 100% Affordable Housing Projects proposed on land owned by religious institutions (and that meet all other requirements of SB 4) comply with all objective development standards of the city or county they are located in that do not conflict with SB 4. As part of the ministerial process, design review may be undertaken by a City if only objective standards are evaluated.

SB 423 (2023)

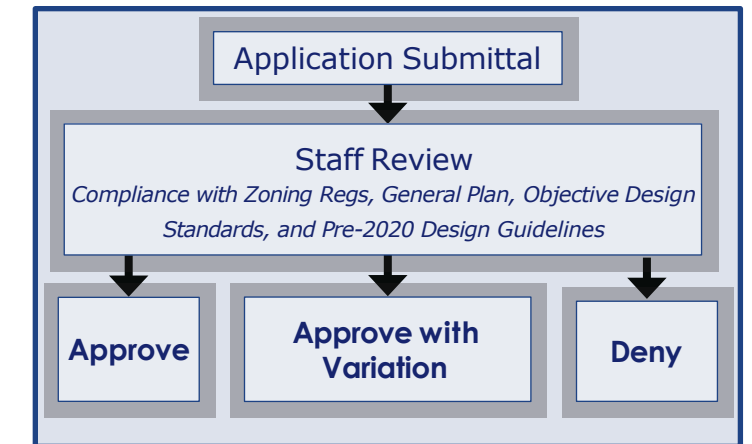
Requires cities to streamline review and approval of eligible affordable housing projects through a ministerial process. As part of the ministerial process, design review may be undertaken by the City if only objective standards are evaluated.

SB 684 (2023)

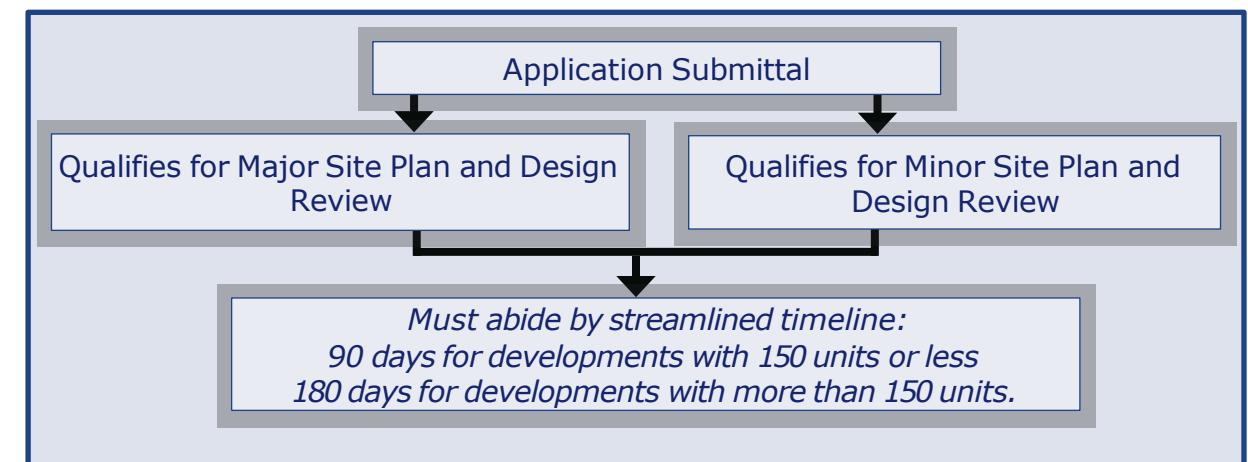
Requires local agencies to ministerially approve, without discretionary review or a public hearing, parcel map or tentative and final maps for housing development projects of ten or fewer residential units on urban lots of less than five acres. SB 684 further specifies that the proposed subdivision must be located on a parcel zoned for multifamily residential use, no larger than five acres, and substantially surrounded by qualified urban uses.



Major Site Plan and Design Review Process



Minor Site Plan and Design Review Approval Process



Streamlined Ministerial Review Process

Legal Basis for Objective Design Standards in California State Law



Objective Design Standards

La Puente City Council

June 23, 2026

