



City of Oakland

Objective Design Standards

For 1-4 Family & 1-3 Story Multifamily Residential
and Mixed-Use Development

Planning Commission Presentation

June 4, 2025

Adopted 4-8 Story ODS At Work

4-8 Story ODS Help Create Affordable Housing!

- Nearly 200 units of affordable housing are approved by Planning in Jack London Square at 430 Broadway **in record time**
- ODS-based ministerial review together with S-13 zoning helped “**shave years off approvals.**” “It can help developers land entitlements roughly a year sooner than state streamlining laws, and about three years sooner than a traditional planning application”

This tool shaved years off of approvals for affordable housing in Jack London Square



San Francisco-based Related California and East Bay Asian Local Development Corporation are set to build 192-units of affordable housing at 430 Broadway.

RELATED CALIFORNIA



By [Hannah Kanik](#) – Reporter, San Francisco Business Times
Mar 11, 2025 **Updated** Mar 11, 2025 7:45am PDT

Outline

- **Brief Project Description and ODS Basics**
- **ODS Applicability**
- **Key Aspects and Differences from the Adopted 4-8 Story ODS**
- **Key Design Considerations**

Brief Project Description

ODS Basics

- Design standards are objective if they can be measured, verified, and known by everyone before a project is submitted. ODS replace existing Design Guidelines
- Discretionary design review can be unpredictable and resource-intensive and often results in a lengthy process and increased project costs
- ODS support faster and high-quality housing production. State and local laws, and the adopted Housing Element require project evaluation under only objective criteria such as ODS in a ministerial approval process for housing

Objective Design Standards Applicability

How will ODS Apply?

- The ODS proposal is for all 1-4 Family and 1-3 Story Multifamily buildings that do not require other discretionary permits
- These proposals often cause long, resource-intensive Planning reviews
- Projects can opt-out of the ministerial review under ODS and choose a discretionary process



Key Aspects

- Builds on adopted ODS but re-designed to fit the needs of smaller-scale buildings
- Focus is on practicality, reduction of complexity, user base capabilities, and staff efficiency to make the streamlined review of housing applications possible
- Retained only the essential for context integration to streamline design review
- Tested on real projects. Results are used in preparing of these drafts
- Encourages broad architectural variety and stays off style-related requirements

Key Design Considerations

Relation to Existing Neighborhood Contexts

ODS include several context transition topics that help new buildings integrate into existing neighborhoods, without dictating style or being too prescriptive:

- Covered or recessed entries
- Ground floor shade elements and expression/articulation line
- Roof form
- Window materials and privacy
- Building exterior materials

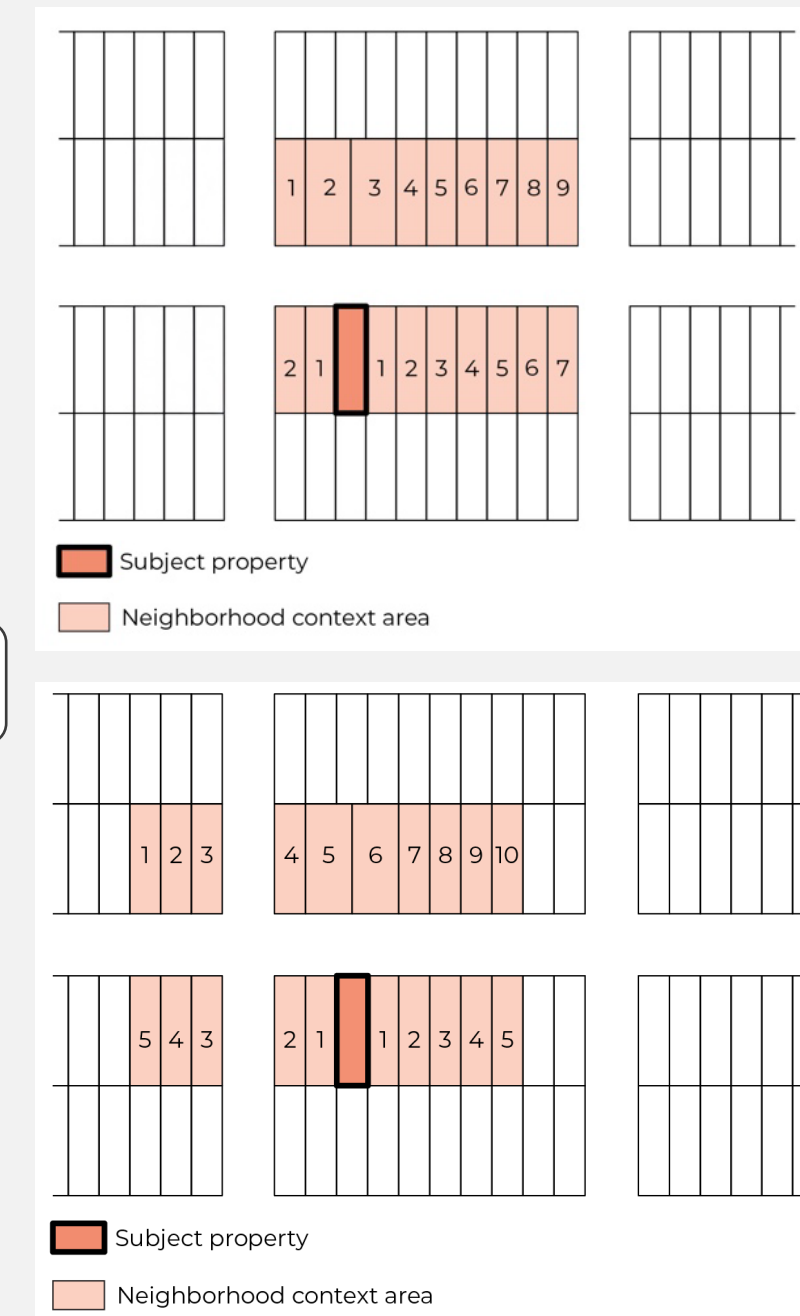
Most context standards apply only in specific cases. The City must balance context considerations with our pro-housing goals

Key Design Considerations

Immediate Context Area Definition

- The methodology is simplified and focused on where the context is the strongest by limiting survey to the **same block** as the subject lot
- Previous approach was more complex and sometimes required discretion, inconsistent with ODS

VS



Key Design Considerations

ODS prioritize accessibility in the built environment:

- Priority for at-grade entries for residential units and limiting the ground floor level height for commercial entries
- Limits on curb cut frequency to minimize conflicts
- Minimum 4-foot-wide direct pedestrian connections to entries
- Recessed garage doors and limits on trash staging



Key Design Considerations

Building Entrances

- Street-facing and accessible entrances support safe and pedestrian-friendly streets
- Features like recesses, porches, plantings, low walls or gates provide privacy, weather protection, and a transition from public to private
- Exterior corridors are limited due to aesthetic, functional, security, and regulatory concerns. They trigger with Building Code requirements for fire walls and increased side setbacks, and conflict with priorities for street-facing frontages



Limitation on Exterior Access Corridors



Key Design Considerations

Façade Treatments & Articulation

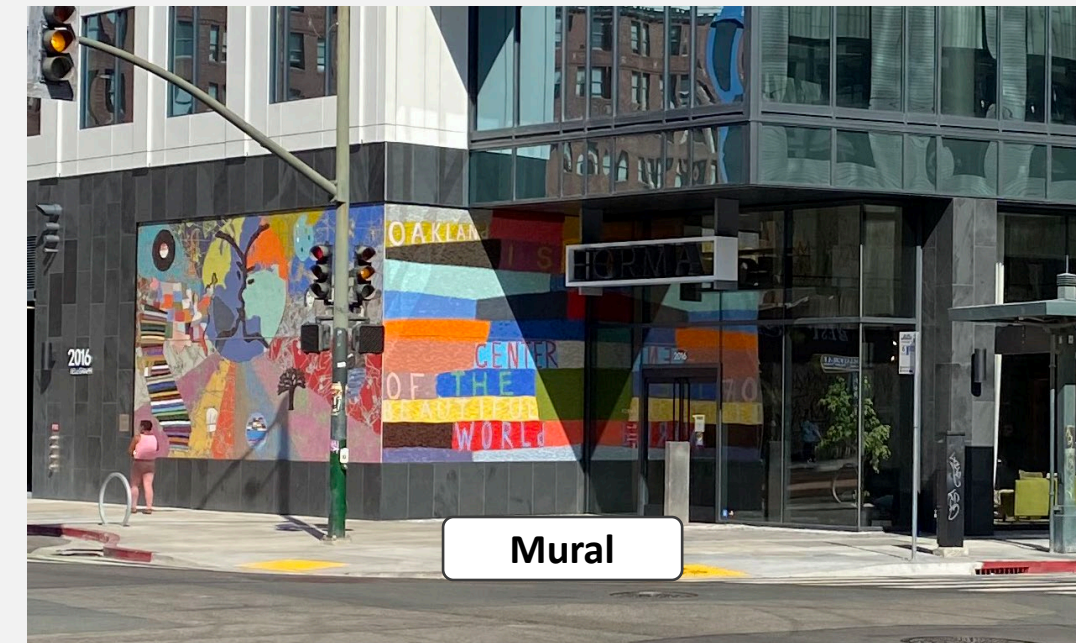
- Enhancing visual richness and reducing imposing appearances by integrating flexible design choices such as bay windows, balconies, changes in rooflines, varied materials, window shadow devices, decorative details and other methods



Key Design Considerations

Mitigation of Blank Walls and Facades

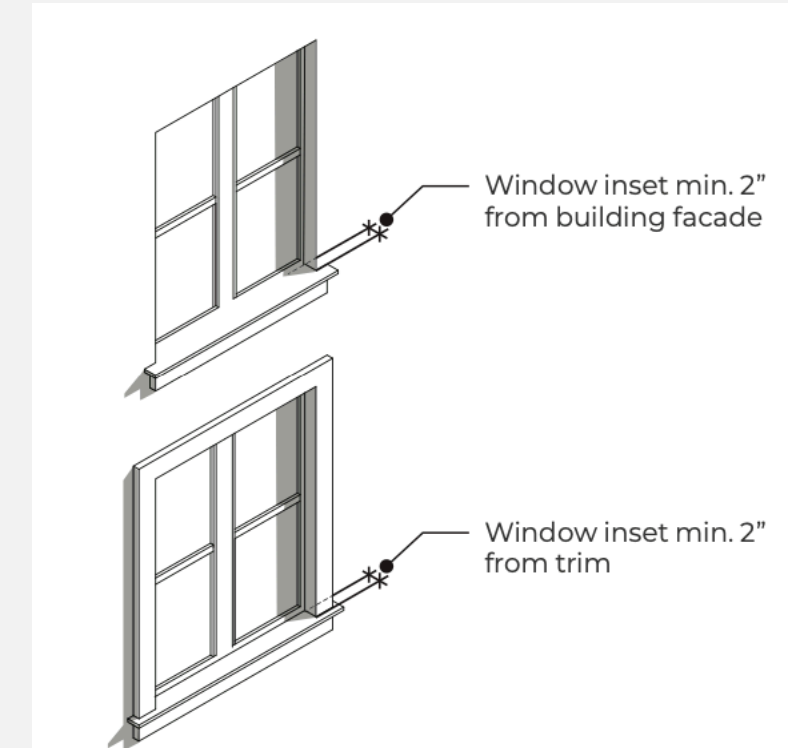
- Minimize long stretches of blank walls on frontages to a maximum of 15 feet, apply treatments to unavoidable blank walls
- Non-residential transparency requirements are addressed in the Planning Code
- Residential fenestration requirements are regulated by Building Code. Staff does not recommend adding these requirements in ODS



Key Design Considerations

Windows

- Key provisions include 2” window recess, window trim, and methods that create desirable shade details
- Detailed window standards for elements such as muntins were avoided to reduce regulatory burden
- Window alignment standards are excluded to provide more flexibility and simplify ODS and due to lower visual impact of smaller buildings



Key Design Considerations

Dwelling Unit Additions to Historic Buildings

- Preserving, repairing or replacing in-kind existing original architectural details
- Retaining or replacing front porches or decks
- Exhibiting the same roof form and slope
- Matching existing building window type
- Regulations for upper story additions and additions by elevating buildings
- Additions that don't create new dwelling units or demolition of CEQA resources are excluded



ODS Information and Materials

**Project documents and meeting materials are posted
on the project website:**

<https://www.oaklandca.gov/topics/objective-design-standards>



Follow-up questions or comments? Email ODS@oaklandca.gov

Appendix: ODS Examples

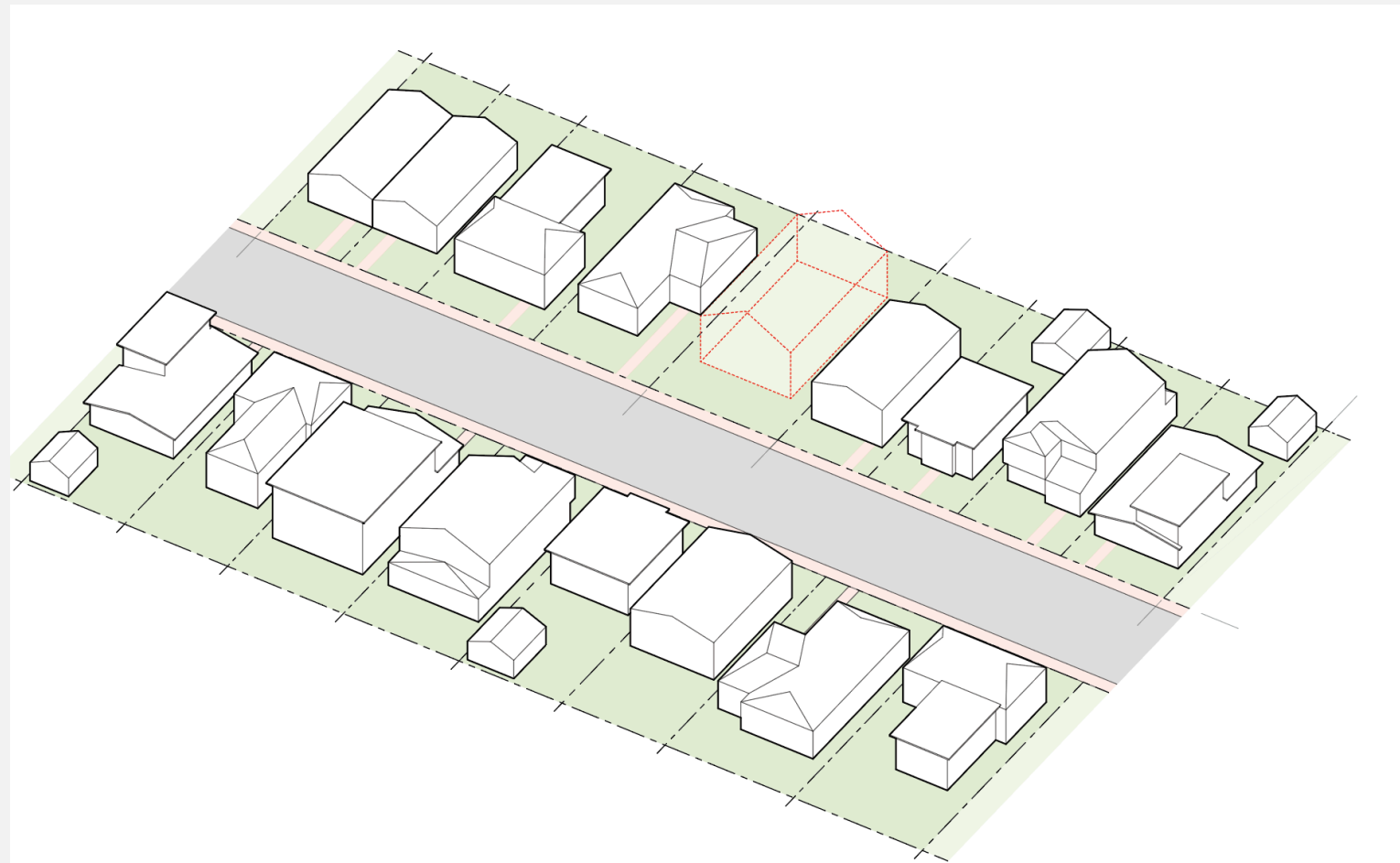
Neighborhood Context Example

2.3.1/2.5.1 Porch Context. For proposals in **Areas of Primary Importance (APIs)** and **Areas of Secondary Importance (ASIs)**, if **60% or more** of existing residential buildings in the Immediate Context Area have porches or another type of covered or recessed entries, a proposed street-facing building shall provide a covered or recessed porch, patio, or deck that is a minimum 4 feet wide and 3 feet deep.



Neighborhood Context Example

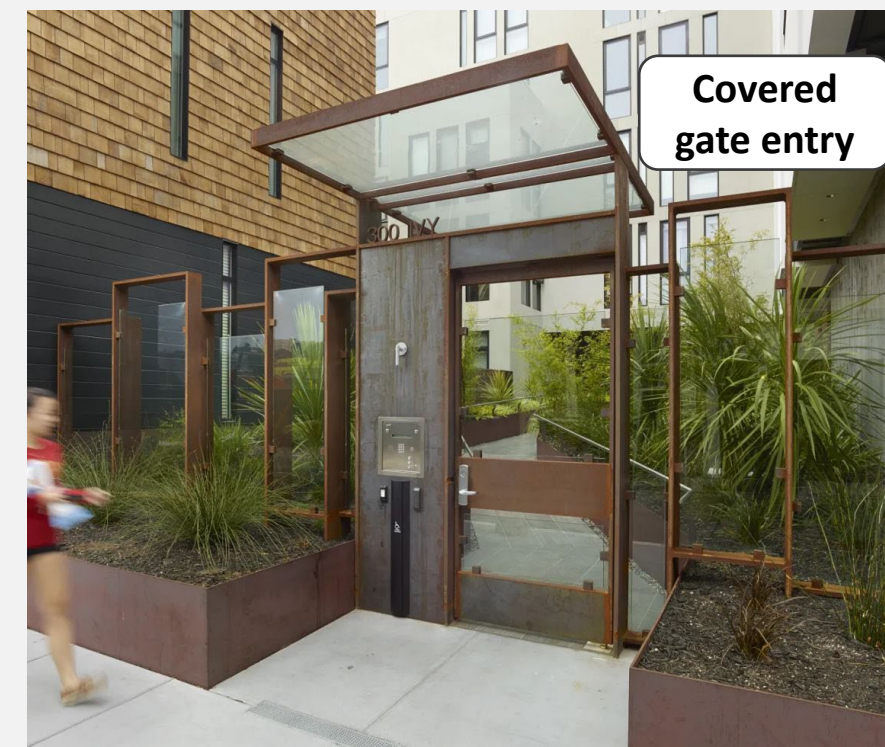
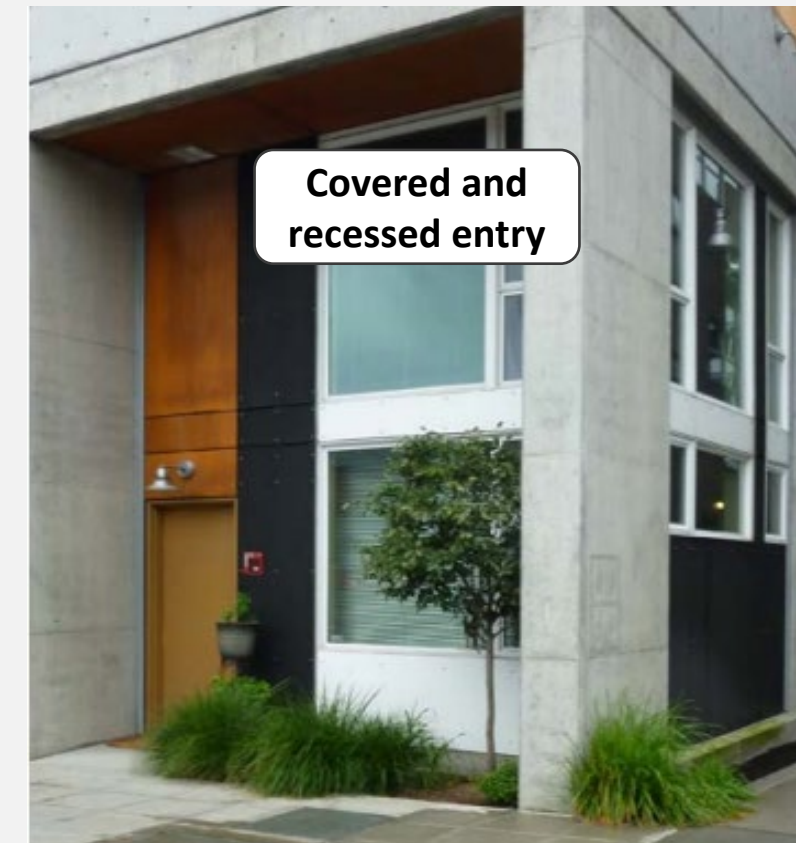
2.4.1/2.7.1 Roof Form Context. For proposals in **Areas of Primary Importance (APIs)**, if the Immediate Context Area has **60% or more** roofs of similar shape, new buildings shall provide a similar roof shape for a minimum of 50% of their roof area that faces the street. For example, if the Immediate Context Area has a context of sloped roofs, the new buildings shall also provide a sloped roof for at least 50% of their street-facing portion of the roof area. This standard applies only to buildings located **outside of Corridor zones**.



Unit Entrances

2.3.1 Building Entrance Recess or Projection (for multifamily). All building entrances, including shared entries, lobbies, gate entries, and individual ground-floor units, shall **include a projection, recess, or combination of both**, totaling at least 12 square feet. Examples of such entries include *porch, portico, patio, deck, alcove* or another type of covered or recessed entryway:

- If a recess is utilized, it shall be at least 3 feet in depth and 4 feet in width.
- If a projection is proposed, the covered area shall extend at least 3 feet from the entry facade or a gate entry and be at least 4 feet in width. This option shall be used for any gate entries leading to lobbies or shared entries.



Shared Building Entrances

2.2.1/2.4.1 Primary Building Entrance for Lobbies or Shared Entries. Any shared building entrance, including lobbies, vestibules, and gate entrances, shall meet each the following standards:

- The primary shared entrance shall be at-grade (no steps) to promote universal accessibility.
- The primary shared entrance for street-facing buildings shall face the street.
- An entry shall have a vertical clearance of at least 8 feet in height measured from the finished floor at the door to a surface above (e.g. finished floor of a story above, canopy, balcony, or other surface) and be at least 4 feet wide.
- A door that is either a double door or a single door with side-lites or full-length windows to achieve at least 6 feet in width.
- Door frame and/or trim of 4 inches minimum width.
- Door recessed from trim or wall by at least 3 inches.



Facade Treatments

2.1.1 Facade Treatments for 1-4 Family buildings. New buildings and street-facing additions shall be articulated using at least **one** of the following:

- Window Bays
- A volumetric projection, recession or a plane change of at least 1 foot
- A street-facing porch or covered entry
- A change in roofline or re-oriented roof ridge



Facade Treatments

2.2.1 Facade Treatments for 1-3 Story Multifamily buildings. New buildings and street-facing additions shall be articulated using at least **two** of the following:

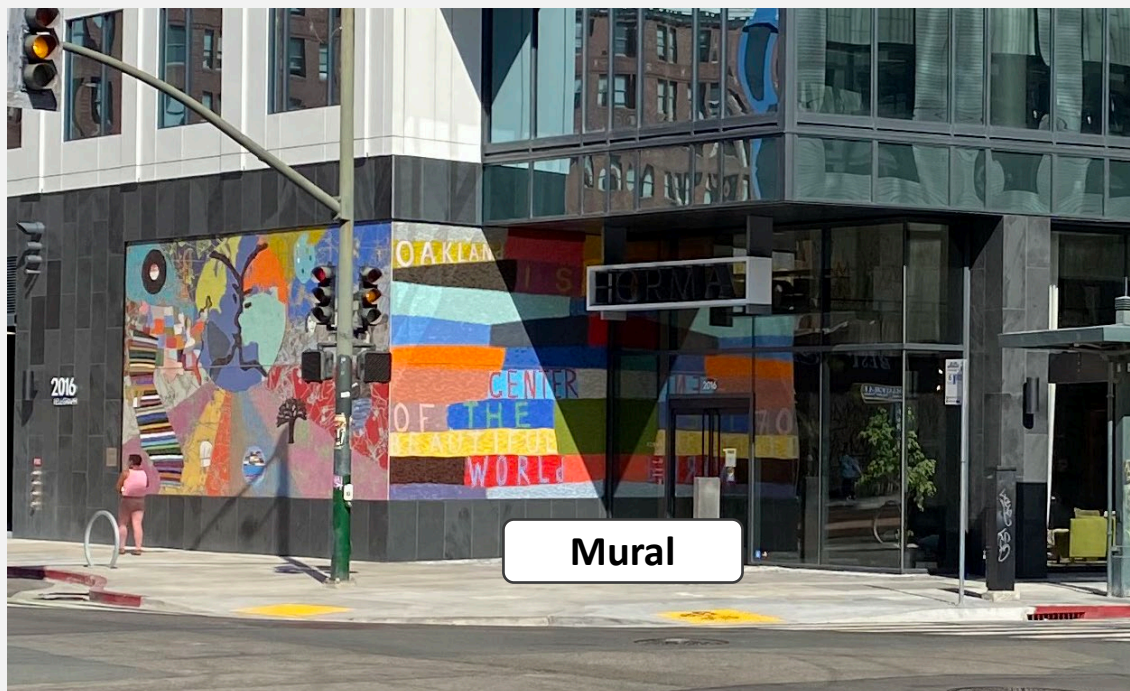
- Window Bays
- Modular or rhythmic massing offsets, plane changes, or volumetric projection or recession of at least 1 foot
- Balconies or Juliet balconies
- Window screening devices
- A variation of roofline or parapet heights
- Window screening devices
- Columns, pilasters or fins
- Awnings, canopies, or screens
- A horizontal expression line above the ground floor
- Covered and recessed entries
- Decorative molding, trims, inlays or reliefs
- Pressed brick, stone, tile or terra cotta surfaces
- Cornices at the roofline or eaves



Blank Wall Treatments

2.1.4 Treatments. All continuous *blank walls* on the ground floor fronting any public street, sidewalk, walkway, or public open space shall have at least **one** of the following design treatments:

- Murals
- Public Art
- Decorative features such as ironwork, grilles, panels, mosaics.
- Architectural/artistic ornamentation
- Planting that covers at least 75% of the blank wall.



Windows

2.6.1/2.9.1 Window Shadow Detail. Street-facing windows shall provide a shadow detail using at least **one** of the following:

- Inset window from the building *facade* or exterior window trim by at least 2 inches.
- Exterior window trim that is at least 3 inches wide and 1 inches thick.
- Windows projecting from building facade or exterior trim by at least 3 inches.
- Window screening devices such as lattices, louvers, perforated metal screens, awnings, sunshades, or canopies that are a minimum of 12 inches deep and are a part of a window trim or assembly.
- Windows grouped in banks that are recessed by at least 2 inches from the rest of building façade.

