City of Oakland
Objective Design Standards and Project Streamlining

4-8 Story Residential of Two or More Units Community Workshop Summary
May 22, 2024

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Community Workshop Summary
4-8 Story Multifamily Residential

May 22, 2024, 5:30 – 7:30 pm, held on Zoom

Workshop Agenda

- Welcome!
- Meeting Objectives and Group Agreements
- Project Process and Details
- Objective Design Standards vs Subjective Design Guidelines
- Introduce Public Draft 4-8 Story Residential Multifamily Checklist
    - o Opportunity for Public Input - Konveio and Survey
    - o Group Discussion: Public Draft 4-8 Story Residential Multifamily Checklist
- Next Steps and Meeting Close

Workshop Materials

- [Presentation](#)
- [Full Draft 4-8 Story Multifamily Residential ODS](#)
- Community Survey (Closed June 3, 2024)
- [Workshop Recording](#)

Participating City Staff

- Laura Kaminski - Strategic Planning Manager
- Ruslan Filipau - Planner IV, Project Manager
- Kelsey Hubbard - Planner II, Project Support
- Stephanie Skelton - Public Service Representative, Project Support

Workshop Overview

As part of Oakland's Objective Design Standards (ODS) Project, the City hosted a community workshop convening residents, developers, architects, designers, historic resource advocates, Oakland residents, and otehrs who have an interest in design and neighborhood form; the workshop was open to the public and over 25 people were in attendance. The focus of the community workshop was to introduce the Public Draft 4-8 Story Residential Objective Design Standards for two or more units and begin to gain community feedback to inform the upcoming revision of the standards which will result in a Public Adoption Draft this Summer/Fall.

The workshop began with a brief overview of the objective design standards project and design review process. City staff explained why Oakland is undertaking this effort - highlighting the fact that the City

needs to comply with state and local legislation, as well as, recently adopted Housing Element actions, and that the ODS will enable Oakland to build more much needed, new housing faster.

Following the overview, workshop attendees participated in an interactive educational game focused on understanding the difference between objective design standards and subjective design guidelines. The City then presented a selection of the draft standards which covered some of the most common community design concerns heard in previous rounds of engagement - including massing breaks, ground floor access, building articulation and more. A group discussion was held, and attendees shared feedback on the draft standards, focusing on the following questions:

1) What additional options would you suggest?
2) Are there any options that are undesirable or difficult to implement and why?

Following the group discussion City Staff introduced a community feedback platform, Konveio, and invited attendees to share additional feedback on the draft standards. A Community Survey was also introduced which mirrored the workshop discussion questions and provided an additional outlet for the public to share feedback on the draft standards. These opportunities to share input were open to the public until end of day June 3, 2024.

Following the group discussion, materials and feedback platform links were shared in the chat then emailed out to over 300 people who were signed up for the project mailing list. Below is a summary of comments received during the group discussion portion of the workshop. Zoom chat notes from the meeting are included in Appendix A.

Discussion Summary

General

- An attendee was curious how the ODS will improve the quality of buildings and if the process allows for more sustainable development. Additionally, another attendee mentioned funding requirements and energy performance standards and the need to intentionally balance this within the ODS
- An attendee asked who had been previously engaged in this project and considered a "stakeholder"
- An attendee asked how an applicant demonstrates that standards are not feasible to be met
- Concerns around subjective architecture taste were brought up and how specific standards are modernizing and imposing Eurocentric designs that are not pleasing to some residents
- An attendee requested that in future drafts, standards that are already mandated should be specifically noted
- Many attendees supported the menu of options format of the standards
- An attendee noted they would like to see language that supports and encourages designs that take the history of the community and local heritage into an account while another attendee noted preserving neighborhood character can be a way for folks to slow or derail projects. This is a difficult topic and should be further explored

Massing Breaks

- Suggestions
  - Provide an option to use articulation in leu of massing breaks. Consider materials, detailing, ornamentation and various other factors that you see in traditional buildings instead of the massing breaks

- o Take a look at North Berkeley Bart ODS standards for cost implications
        - o Its important to find a balance between mandated articulation and architectural busyness
        - o Ornamentation should be an option within the general standards section
- Questions
    - o Can shading devices be substituted for massing breaks?
    - o Where did the 100' to 300' lengths come from?
    - o Does changing design also count as a break?

Building Corners

- Question: What is the goal of the building corners standard?

Blank Walls

- Suggestions**:**
    - o Consider a beautifully textured wall of natural material as an option in addition to public art
    - o Several attendees noted that simply installing an irrigation system for wall planting doesn't work without maintenance, while another suggested that planting maintenance plans should be required as part of the planting option, preferably a self-sustainable water harvesting system

Ground Floor

- Suggestion: "Rhythmic pattern" is hard to make objective and should be reworded

Ground Floor Access

- Suggestion: Standard 3.6.3 and the required stoops and ground floor elevation should be revised to consider accessibility

Roof

- Suggestion: Some attendees were concerned that the roofline articulation standards will result in unnecessary busyness. One attendee noted that 50 feet is relatively frequent and should be revised. Another attendee noted that if the design has quality materials roof articulation may not be needed

Windows

- Question: An attendee asked what does an applicant do when there are many different window shapes in the surrounding context? They noted that the surrounding window context may not be coherent

Corridors

- Suggestion: Several attendees noted that corridors are locations where the city is relying on to meet housing goals, imposing additional requirements within corridors is not necessary and should be scrutinized heavily

Context

- Suggestion: While the standards define context area, the ODS must consider the questions that will come through implementation and adjudication - evaluating a packet of context photos and making

context judgements seems to stretch the workload well beyond what should fall under ministerial approval

Planting and Open Space

- Question: What about incorporating rooftop gardens?
- Suggestion: Planter standard should be a minimum 30' - 36'. The Baxter is a prime example of needing deeper planting spaces.

End of Workshop and Comments. See Appendix A for more comments and questions left in the meeting chat.

APPENDIX A: ZOOM CHAT

17:32:32 From Stephanie Skelton (Oakland Planning) to Everyone:

Welcome! As we wait for folks to join please introduce yourself in the chat - if you're representing an organization please let us know which one. We look forward to the discussion this evening!

17:32:40 From Mary Harper to Everyone:

Mary Harper- Oakland Heritage Alliance.

17:33:04 From Stephanie Skelton (Oakland Planning) to Everyone:

Welcome! As we wait for folks to join please introduce yourself in the chat - if you're representing an organization please let us know which one. We look forward to the discussion this evening!

17:33:45 From Stephanie Skelton (Oakland Planning) to Everyone:

Welcome! As we wait for folks to join please introduce yourself in the chat - if you're representing an organization please let us know which one. We look forward to the discussion this evening!

17:33:54 From Bryan Alcorn to Everyone:

hello - Bryan Alcorn from David Baker Architects and East Bay for Everyone

17:33:54 From kirk peterson to Everyone:

Kirk Peterson is an architect & former chair of landmarks board, former RCPC board member. working on Mosswood Park

17:34:08 From Kelsey Hubbard, Oakland Planning to Everyone:

Welcome, everyone! Excited to be here with you this evening 🙂

17:34:57 From To Niya M Scott-Smith to Everyone:

Rev. To Niya M. Scott-Smith

Chairwoman, City of Oakland Head Start Parent Policy Council and

Treasurer, Westside Baptist Church Trustee Board

17:36:16 From Stephanie Skelton (Oakland Planning) to Everyone:

Welcome! As we wait for folks to join please introduce yourself in the chat - if you're representing an organization please let us know which one. We look forward to the discussion this evening!

17:36:59 From To Niya M Scott-Smith to Everyone:

Replying to "Mary Harper- Oakland..."

 FYI: My aunt has the...

17:37:07 From Christopher Buckley to Everyone:

Christopher Buckley with Oakland Heritage Alliance

17:37:16 From Kelsey Hubbard, Oakland Planning to Everyone:

Reacted to "FYI: My aunt has the..." with ❤️

17:37:56 From To Niya M Scott-Smith to Everyone:

Will the slides be made available afterwards, by chance?

17:38:19 From Kelsey Hubbard, Oakland Planning to Everyone:

Replying to "Will the slides be m..."

Yes, absolutely. We will send out a full package with meeting materials in the coming days

17:38:57 From Kelsey Hubbard, Oakland Planning to Everyone:

Replying to "Will the slides be m..."

Materials will also be posted on the project website

17:39:05 From Kelsey Hubbard, Oakland Planning to Everyone:

Replying to "Will the slides be m..."

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

17:42:04 From kirk peterson to Everyone:

Are buildings illustrated examples of design City staff considers good, and/or would comply with ODS?

17:44:54 From Larry Mayers to Everyone:

Who are the "stakeholders" you just referred to?

17:52:01 From To Niya M Scott-Smith to Everyone:

Thanks for that. The 2nd part was re: BMR projects vs actually affordable projects.

17:53:07 From Kelsey Hubbard, Oakland Planning to Everyone:

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

17:59:10 From Ruslan Filipau, Oakland Planning to Everyone:

Code 2257 9541

17:59:12 From Margaret Laush to Everyone:

22579541

17:59:26 From Larry Mayers to Everyone:

OK, but for example, where did the "15'" dimension comes from? Was there an objective study of that--or is that essentially, a subjective decision?

18:01:01 From Christopher Buckley to Everyone:

Subjective

18:01:08 From Ruslan Filipau, Oakland Planning to Everyone:

please feel free to type your answer here is the website is not working for you

18:04:04 From Chance Boreczky to Everyone:

Subjective.

18:04:09 From Larry Mayers to Everyone:

I didn't get on the link, so I can't vote. But all of these uses for "open space" standards are somewhat arbitrary--different resident programs--especially for special needs housing--may differ from project to project.

18:04:13 From Ruslan Filipau, Oakland Planning to Everyone:

www.menti.com

18:04:21 From Ruslan Filipau, Oakland Planning to Everyone:

Password 22579541

18:06:33 From Larry Mayers to Everyone:

You say that the balcony question is "objective", but I disagree--as such a shallow balcony violates certain accessibility requirements. THAT

18:06:35 From Derek Sagehorn to Everyone:

What problem is the tacked on rule solving beyond increasing costs for balconies?

18:07:35 From Larry Mayers to Everyone:

(continuation): THAT is a objective requirement!

18:09:45 From Kelsey Hubbard, Oakland Planning to Everyone:

www.bit.ly/ODSPublicDraft

18:11:30 From kirk peterson to Everyone:

All examples so far are newish buildings. Will there be any oldish/historic examples? Most sizable buildings built in the last 3000 years have ornament

18:12:47 From kirk peterson to Everyone:

Is ornament excluded from this document? Ornament could be a classic molding, which is different than Fine Art.

18:13:53 From Derek Sagehorn to Everyone:

Reacted to "All examples so far ..." with ❤️

18:15:10 From Kelsey Hubbard, Oakland Planning to Everyone:

https://cao-94612.s3.us-west-2.amazonaws.com/documents/ATTACHMENT-A.-GLOSSARY-AND-DEFINITIONS.pdf

18:15:57 From Hannah R to Everyone:

Replying to "Is ornament excluded..."

Agree, elevating building ornament options seems appropriate given it would fit well with Oakland's existing older building stock

18:16:14 From To Niya M Scott-Smith to Everyone:

They are all hideous.

18:17:15 From Christopher Buckley to Everyone:

Reacted to "Agree, elevating bui..." with 👍

18:17:23 From Christopher Buckley to Everyone:

Reacted to "They are all hideous..." with 👍

18:17:45 From Larry Mayers to Everyone:

Re: Massing Breaks: In example 1, one façade shows shading devices--can't those be substituted for breaks? And where did the 100' to 300' lengths come from? 300' is a pretty long façade! Most planning codes that I have had to design to require more differentiation than 5' in 300'.

18:17:47 From Christopher Buckley to Everyone:

Reacted to "All examples so far ..." with ❤️

18:17:50 From Kelsey Hubbard, Oakland Planning to Everyone:

Replying to "They are all hideous..."

We are attempting to illustrate the elements of each standard - showing what a recess in massing MAY look like for those who may not know

18:18:04 From Derek Sagehorn to Everyone:

Reacted to "Agree, elevating bui..." with 👍

18:19:29 From To Niya M Scott-Smith to Everyone:

Replying to "Re: Massing Breaks:..."

 I am in no wise an e...

18:22:26 From Hannah R to Everyone:

Replying to "They are all hideous..."

I think this illustrates an important point - the standards are supposed to be objective to evaluate but what makes a good standard is still subjective. Agree these examples aren't great! And agree with Chris and Kirk that there should be more options available to meet this standard - ornamentation, high quality materials, some other good ideas people might have...

18:29:18 From To Niya M Scott-Smith to Everyone:

Can you explain and expoubd because, the

18:30:51 From To Niya M Scott-Smith to Everyone:

way that was worded, to reduce building costs for developers in corridors, given marginalized disparities in said corridors, sounds like "build substandard housing where poor POC reside.

18:31:04 From To Niya M Scott-Smith to Everyone:

*expound

18:31:41 From kirk peterson to Everyone:

on #7 the detailing of the curves are very poorly done

18:31:49 From Hannah R to Everyone:

Could you speak to the goal of this standard?

18:34:13 From To Niya M Scott-Smith to Everyone:

I had a question above that.

18:35:38 From Chance Boreczky to Everyone:

The major commercial corridors identified in the draft standards are generally higher-resourced areas, and I'm not suggesting that standards should be lowered for these areas, just that they shouldn't be subjected to additional, arbitrary standards over and above those for other parts of the city.

18:35:45 From Kelsey Hubbard, Oakland Planning to Everyone:

Replying to "I had a question abo..."

Hi To Niya, apologies we missed your question above. We will try to circle back and answer if we have time. If you could privately message me your email we can also follow up with an answer via email

18:35:54 From kirk peterson to Everyone:

Murals should be durable, not just painted and easily destroyed by graffitti

18:35:57 From Chance Boreczky to Everyone:

(In reply to Niya abov)

18:36:14 From Larry Mayers to Everyone:

Wait, what? You just said these images aren't supposed to reflect actual implementation of any standard, yet what you are talking about is approving or not approving future designs under such standards. I see

that as being a much more odious task, not just for the development team, but for Planning as well. (As opposed to say, looking at a proposed building and everyone agreeing that yes--that is a great looking building.

18:36:26 From Heather Coleman to Everyone:

Reacted to "Murals should be dur..." with 👍

18:37:07 From To Niya M Scott-Smith to Everyone:

Replying to "(In reply to Niya ab..."

It clearly says, "To...

18:37:08 From Michael Pyatok to Everyone:

a beautifully textured blank wall of natural material could often be as good as any public art.

18:37:27 From Connie Yip to Everyone:

If planting is chosen there needs to be a standard for a minimum establishment period for success. I have noticed a lot of planting around new developments that are dead after a year and not replaced/maintained.

18:37:36 From Hannah R to Everyone:

Reacted to "a beautifully textur..." with 👍

18:37:46 From To Niya M Scott-Smith to Everyone:

Replying to "a beautifully textur..."

Yes, that can be art...

18:37:51 From Heather Coleman to Everyone:

Reacted to "a beautifully textur..." with 👍

18:38:01 From Derek Sagehorn to Everyone:

Reacted to "a beautifully textur…" with 👍

18:38:02 From To Niya M Scott-Smith to Everyone:

Reacted to If planting is chose... with "❤️"

18:38:16 From Heather Coleman to Everyone:

Reacted to "If planting is chose..." with 👍

18:38:26 From Christopher Buckley to Everyone:

Reacted to "a beautifully textur..." with 👍

18:38:32 From Larry Mayers to Everyone:

I second Connie's comment: For a prominent example, take Kaiser's garage on Broadway!

18:38:55 From Hannah R to Everyone:

Replying to "a beautifully textur..."

Yes my immediate thought is a mural is cheapest so will typically be chosen, but you can't exactly mandate that the mural is actually good…so we might be signing up for something we didn't intend 😆

18:39:07 From Heather Coleman to Everyone:

Reacted to "Yes my immediate tho..." with 👍

18:39:13 From Christopher Buckley to Everyone:

Reacted to "Murals should be dur..." with 👍

18:39:46 From Christopher Buckley to Everyone:

Reacted to "Yes my immediate tho..." with 👍

18:40:16 From Janis Brewer to Everyone:

There are many examples in Oakland of long blank walls where there was an attempt to add planting material to soften the façade. Many of them do not work -- the planting never grew or never covered up a significant majority of the offending blank walls. How to the Objectives enforce a robust planting plan that actually works?

18:40:53 From Bryan Alcorn to Everyone:

Reacted to "a beautifully textur..." with 👍

18:41:02 From To Niya M Scott-Smith to Everyone:

Replying to "I had a question abo..."

 Irrigation should be...

18:41:24 From Connie Yip to Everyone:

Replying to "There are many examp…"

It's lack of maintenance

18:41:58 From To Niya M Scott-Smith to Everyone:

Reacted to There are many examp... with " 👍 "

18:42:14 From Connie Yip to Everyone:

Simply installing an irrigation system doesn't do any good without maintenance

18:42:27 From To Niya M Scott-Smith to Everyone:

Reacted to Simply installing an... with " ❤️ "

18:42:43 From Heather Coleman to Everyone:

I like the "menu of options" approach in most of these standards. I do think "rhythmic pattern" is hard to make objective.

18:42:52 From To Niya M Scott-Smith to Everyone:

Replying to "Simply installing an..."

And knowledgeable ma...

18:43:45 From Heather Coleman to Everyone:

Replying to "I like the "menu of ..."

"Rhythmic pattern" is used in Option 2 in ground-floor base requirement.

18:45:55 From Connie Yip to Everyone:

I would like to see options using historical buildings versus modern buildings. This seems to not work well especially in architecturally distinct neighborhoods with for example Spanish, Art Deco, Beau Arts, Victorian, Craftsman styles.

18:46:14 From Christopher Buckley to Everyone:

Reacted to "I would like to see ..." with ❤️

18:47:08 From To Niya M Scott-Smith to Everyone:

Replying to "I would like to see ..."

And encourage such d...

18:48:28 From Connie Yip to Everyone:

It's a general note

18:48:58 From kirk peterson to Everyone:

What I was about to address. The collections buildings shown seems to tacitly suggest that buildings should look like the illustrations. There are thousands of vintage buildings that could illustrate concepts. The Flatiron building has a great curved corner.

18:49:06 From To Niya M Scott-Smith to Everyone:

Design styles that incorporate historic buildings adds to the value of a community.

18:49:39 From Christopher Buckley to Everyone:

Reacted to "What I was about to ..." with ❤️

18:49:45 From Christopher Buckley to Everyone:

Reacted to "Design styles that i..." with ❤️

18:49:59 From Kelsey Hubbard, Oakland Planning to Everyone:

ods@oaklandca.gov

18:50:12 From Hannah R to Everyone:

Reacted to "ods@oaklandca.gov" with 👍

18:51:03 From To Niya M Scott-Smith to Everyone:

Personally, I am noticing what is NOT said.

18:51:16 From To Niya M Scott-Smith to Everyone:

Reacted to ods@oaklandca.gov with " 👍 "

18:51:21 From Connie Yip to Everyone:

Yes and no Laura. The photos you show in the standards would be subconsciously guiding designs

18:52:09 From To Niya M Scott-Smith to Everyone:

Language not included to support and encourage respect of historic buildings

18:53:09 From kirk peterson to Everyone:

I can supply some examples. New buildings do not need to look like what you are showing.

18:55:51 From Chance Boreczky to Everyone:

I understand that to some extent the standards can be made design-neutral, but I'm struggling to think of historic Oakland structures that incorporate, for example, massing breaks - that's something primarily seen in very modern 4/1 blocks.

18:56:13 From To Niya M Scott-Smith to Everyone:

Reacted to I understand that to... with " 👍 "

18:56:16 From Chance Boreczky to Everyone:

This is also visible in the standards' general failure to examine ornamentation as an option.

18:56:29 From To Niya M Scott-Smith to Everyone:

Reacted to This is also visible... with " ❤️ "

18:56:45 From Hannah R to Everyone:

Reacted to "I understand that to..." with 👍

18:57:14 From Christopher Buckley to Everyone:

Reacted to "This is also visible..." with ❤️

18:57:26 From Christopher Buckley to Everyone:

Reacted to "I understand that to..." with 👍

18:59:44 From To Niya M Scott-Smith to Everyone:

Yet, I have not seen any buildings that respect the community aesthetician in which they are being built. They all are those hideous, modern monstrosities reminiscent of the dystopia society in "Allegiant".

19:00:06 From kirk peterson to Everyone:

Preserving neighborhood character can be a way for folks to slow or derail projects, generally by well-to-do folks. But ignoring this issue seems to suggest that the rest of the people have no opinions about what their neighbors character. This is a very tricky topic.

19:00:28 From Christopher Buckley to Everyone:

Reacted to "Yet, I have not seen..." with ❤️

19:01:53 From Kelsey Hubbard, Oakland Planning to Everyone:

www.bit.ly/ODSPublicDraft

19:02:13 From Kelsey Hubbard, Oakland Planning to Everyone:

www.bit.ly/ODSSurvey

19:02:57 From To Niya M Scott-Smith to Everyone:

Reacted to Preserving neighborh... with "❤️"

19:03:01 From Kelsey Hubbard, Oakland Planning to Everyone:

ODS@oaklandca.gov

19:03:51 From Michael Pyatok to Everyone:

the next time staff sends the standards, can they be printable? some of us like to read these on paper and to make notes for ourselves. i couldn't do this in the form that i received the standards this time.

19:04:07 From To Niya M Scott-Smith to Everyone:

Reacted to the next time staff ... with "❤️"

19:04:13 From Bryan Alcorn to Everyone:

Reacted to "the next time staff ..." with ❤️

19:04:21 From To Niya M Scott-Smith to Everyone:

Thank you.

19:04:28 From DB Associates Consultants Inc to Everyone:

Thanks guys, very informative and productive meeting. Have a great evening. I look forward to additional feedback.

19:04:41 From Stephanie Skelton (Oakland Planning) to Everyone:

Reacted to "Thanks guys, very ..." with ❤️

19:04:55 From Kelsey Hubbard, Oakland Planning to Everyone:

Replying to "the next time staff ..."

Hey Mike - shoot ODS@oaklandca.gov an email and we can send you a PDF of the draft standards

19:07:56 From Connie Yip to Everyone:

Replying to "This is also visible…"

I think you hit the nail on the head. Historic buildings generally have unique ornamentation that didn't require all these 'standards' to prevent plain boxed buildings from being built.

19:10:49 From Connie Yip to Everyone:

Roofline articulation…what about incorporating rooftop gardens?

19:14:51 From kirk peterson to Everyone:

The middle one, IMO, is really a bad example. It's just ugly.

19:15:03 From Stephanie Skelton (Oakland Planning) to Everyone:

Ruslan your sound mic is low

19:15:09 From Kelsey Hubbard, Oakland Planning to Everyone:

we cant hear you ruslan

19:15:33 From Ruslan Filipau, Oakland Planning to Everyone:

my apologies

19:16:51 From kirk peterson to Everyone:

I have to sign off. Great job, planners. It's a huge task. Well run meeting.

19:23:57 From Chance Boreczky to Everyone:

The standards as drafted do define a context area, but there are going to be profound questions about implementation and adjudication - evaluating a packet of context photos and making those judgments seems to stretch the workload well beyond what should fall under 'ministerial approval'.

19:28:19 From Connie Yip to Everyone:

This was a lot to digest and is a good start. Just a last comment, the Baxter is a prime example of needing deeper planting spaces. At least 30" wide. Those narrow planters don't offer much room for plant diversity. Recommend the planter standard be a minimum 30"-36".

19:33:22 From Bryan Alcorn to Everyone:

Thank you!

19:33:29 From Kelsey Hubbard, Oakland Planning to Everyone:

www.bit.ly/ODSPublicDraft

www.bit.ly/ODSSurvey

19:33:33 From Kelsey Hubbard, Oakland Planning to Everyone:

ODS@oaklandca.gov

19:33:43 From Kelsey Hubbard, Oakland Planning to Everyone:

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

19:33:45 From Hannah R to Everyone:

Thank you!!