



**City of Oakland**

## **Objective Design Standards**

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

## **Community Workshop**

April 15 & 17,  
2025



# Previously Adopted 4-8 Story ODS At Work

## 4-8 Story ODS Used to Create Affordable Housing!

- ODS for 4-8 story development adopted by the Planning Commission in October 2024 are being applied successfully by Developers and Planners to create new affordable housing!
- Nearly 200 units of affordable housing just got approved by Planning in Jack London Square at 430 Broadway in **record time**, thanks to combination of the S-13 zoning overlay and the streamlined review process under ODS.
- S-13 zoning together with ODS-based review process helped to “**shave years off approvals**”.
- “It can help developers land entitlements roughly a year sooner than state streamlining laws like SB 35 and AB 2011, 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

# Agenda

- **Meeting Objectives and Group Agreements** (5 min)
- **ODS Basics, Project Description and Details** (10 min)
  - Why ODS are required? State law and local contexts
  - ODS Applicability
- **Intro to Public Drafts 1-4 Family and 1-3 Story Multifamily Checklists** (5 min)
- **Key Design Considerations** (55 min)
- **Q&A and Next Steps** (15 min)

# Group Agreements

- Raise your hand to speak. Be brief if many hands are raised
- One Mic, One Speaker- Please allow one person to speak at a time. Please mute yourself when not speaking
- Please hold questions until designated time for discussion
- Use chat function to comment or add questions if unable to speak up
- Treat one another with respect
- 'Step up' if haven't contributed, 'step back' to make room for others
- Assume good intentions and look for shared opportunities

# ODS Basics

## What are Objective Design Standards (ODS)?

- Design standards are **objective** if they can be measured, verified, and known by everyone before a project is submitted. ODS replace existing Design Guidelines.
- ODS provide foundation for a design review, using a simplified, transparent, and measurable "**checklist**" approach that eliminates the need for subjective evaluation.
- Provides certainty to housing developers that their projects will be approved faster if they meet applicable ODS (in addition to all other Planning Code requirements, Standard Conditions of Approval, and other existing objective criteria).
- It also assures neighbors that new buildings will meet basic design quality requirements specified in ODS.
- Speeds up the production of a wide variety of quality housing and aids in affordability.



# Project Description

## Why ODS are required? State and local contexts.

- Build more new high-quality housing, faster.
- Comply with state laws such as Housing Accountability Act, SB35/SB423 Project Streamlining, SB330 Housing Crisis Act and other laws intended to move cities toward streamlined review processes for housing.
- These laws require that housing projects are reviewed only under **objective criteria** such as ODS.
- Comply with local legislation for ministerial “by-right” approval for S-13 Affordable Housing Combining Zone and S-14 Housing Sites Combining Zone.
- Implementing Housing Element Action to adopt ODS



# Existing Design Review Process

## Design Review Today Often Based on Subjective Guidelines:

- Discretionary design review can be **unpredictable** and resource-intensive due to the reliance on subjective guidelines that are open to interpretations.
- Often results in a **lengthy process** of staff comments and revisions causing a backlog in development applications.
- Can contribute to development **delays** and increase project costs.
- Includes a **public review** process that can result in housing projects being delayed or blocked by groups or individuals based on subjective criteria, such as "maintaining existing neighborhood character."





# Objective Design Standards Applicability

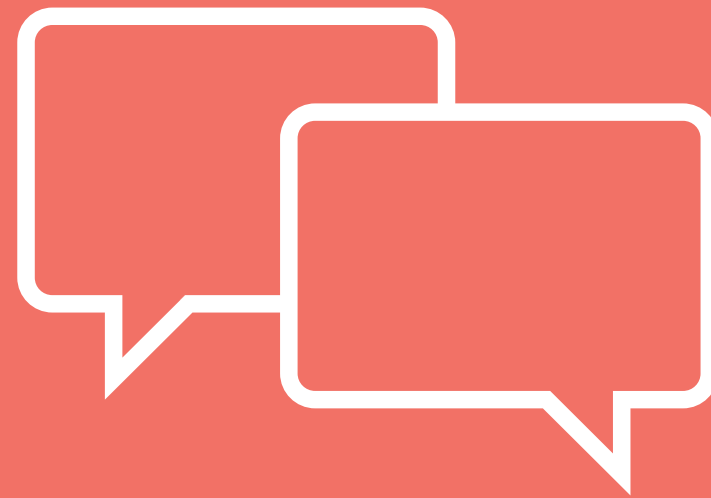
## How will ODS Apply?

- The proposal would create ODS for all eligible 1-4 Family and 1-3 Story Multifamily developments, applicable Citywide.
- These building categories include the “missing-middle” and lower-density housing, including detached and attached structures such as duplexes, triplexes, fourplexes, townhomes, stacked apartments, single-family homes, and other building typologies.





# Questions on ODS Basics or Applicability?



# Public Drafts ODS



## OBJECTIVE DESIGN STANDARDS

### One-Family and Two- to Four-Family Residential and Mixed-Use Developments

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## OBJECTIVE DESIGN STANDARDS

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Full Public Drafts ODS  
1-4 Family and  
1-3 Story Multifamily  
Available for review and  
comment until April 21!

<https://www.oaklandca.gov/ods>



# Using ODS

## Understanding Checklist (Guide)

- Each standard has three checkboxes: “Yes”, “No”, and “N/A”.
- A proposal must meet all applicable ODS
- N/A can be checked if a standard does not apply to a project.
  - For example, if cornices are not proposed, a proposal does not need to meet the minimum cornice dimensions.
- “N/A” or “No” may be selected when a standard includes multiple choices, and only one or two options are required to meet the standard. The remaining options can be marked as “N/A”.
- Checklist serves as a guide – applicants must show required elements on plans for Planning review to verify compliance.

### 2. FACADE TREATMENTS AND BUILDING ELEMENTS

#### 2.1 Facade Treatments

Facade Treatment Standards	Yes	No	N/A
<b>2.1.1 Facade Treatments.</b> New buildings and street-facing additions shall be articulated using at least one of the following:			
a. Window bays that project from the street-facing building facade no more than 3 feet. Any projections into public right-of-way must comply with Zoning and OakDOT permitting requirements.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. A volumetric projection or recession of at least 1 foot.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. A plane change of at least 1 foot.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. A street-facing porch or covered entry.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e. A change in roofline or re-oriented roof ridge.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>2.1.2 Blank Facades.</b> Facades that face front property line shall have windows and at least one entry door.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

#### 2.2 Shared Building Entrances

Shared Building Entrance Standards for Two- to Four-Family Buildings	Yes	No	N/A
<b>2.2.1 Primary Building Entrance for Lobbies or Shared Entries.</b> When a shared building entry is provided, including any gate entrances, the following standards shall be met:			
a. The primary shared entrance shall be at-grade (no steps) to promote universal accessibility, unless unreconcilable physical site conditions such as cross-slope over 20% preclude creation of at-grade entries.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. The primary shared entrance for street-facing buildings, including lobbies, vestibules, or gate entrances, shall face the street.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. Entry shall have a vertical clearance of at least 8 feet in height measured from the <i>finished floor</i> 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.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. In addition, an entry shall provide at least two of the following:			
i. Door frame and/or trim of 4 inches minimum width.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
ii. Door recessed from trim or wall by at least 3 inches.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
iii. Recessed entry area, minimum of 4 feet in width and at least 3 feet in depth.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
iv. Projected area (roof or canopy) that extends out at least 3 feet from the entry facade or a gate entry (while meeting any OakDOT permitting requirements if projecting within the public right-of-way) and at least 4 feet in width. This option shall be used for any gate entries leading to lobbies or shared entries.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
v. A covered porch, portico, patio, deck or another type of covered or recessed entryway.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



# Key Design Considerations





# Key Design Considerations

## Relation to Existing Neighborhood Contexts

ODS include several context transition standards that help new buildings integrate into existing neighborhoods, without dictating style or being overly prescriptive. These ODS address the following key aspects of building design:

- Covered or recessed entries (e.g. porches)
- Roof form and roof eaves
- Windows and window materials
- Ground floor expression/articulation line
- Building exterior materials
- Awnings, canopies, cornices
- Avoiding Historical Imitation

Most context standards apply only in narrow cases, only when necessary, and the applicability varies depending on a standard. City must balance context considerations with housing goals and Oakland's 'pro-housing' designation.



# Neighborhood Context

## Questions to consider:

- What other context standards would you suggest?
- Is this difficult to implement or not desirable? Why?

**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.



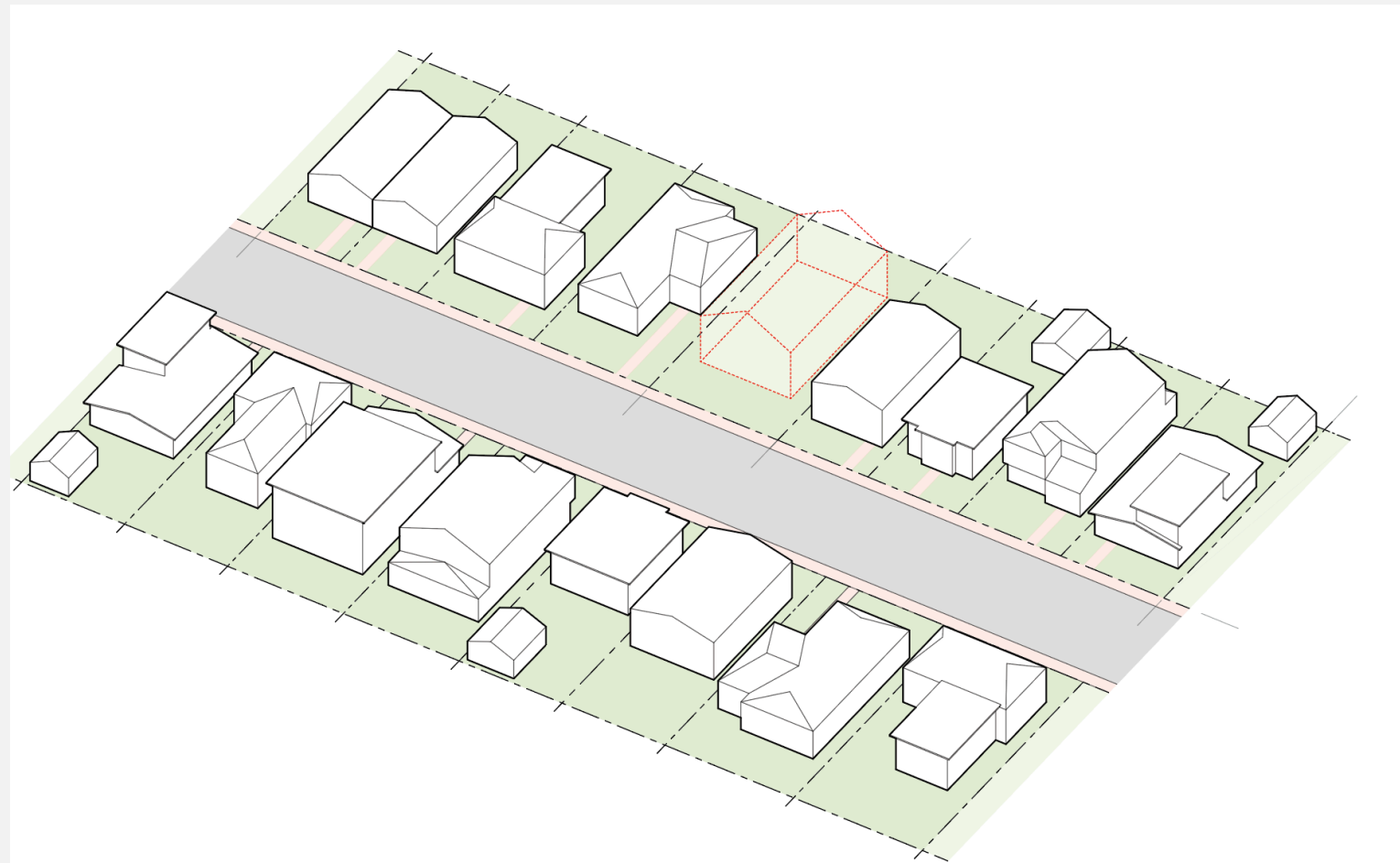


# Neighborhood Context

## Questions to consider:

- What other context standards would you suggest?
- Is this difficult to implement or not desirable? Why?

**2.4.1/2.7.1 2.4.1 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**.





# Key Design Considerations

## Façade Treatments & Articulation

- Enhancing visual richness, reducing imposing appearances, adding character, high-quality materials, and facilitating context transitions.
- Residential Ground Floor: welcoming and prominent entries that face the street, windows, and transition elements between public and private spaces such as landscaping create safer pedestrian-friendly environment.
- Commercial Ground Floor for Mixed-Use buildings: transparent storefronts, architectural detailing, and high-quality materials create lively street experience and support commercial success.





# Facade Treatments

## Questions to consider:

- What other options would you suggest?
- Is this difficult to implement or not desirable? Why?

**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 or recession of at least 1 foot
- 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

## Questions to consider:

- What other options would you suggest?
- Is this difficult to implement or not desirable? Why?

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

- Window Bays
- Modular massing offsets, volumetric projection or recession of at least 1 foot
- Modular plane changes of at least 1 foot
- Balconies
- Window screening devices
- Awnings, sunshades, canopies or screens
- Columns, pilasters or fins
- 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





# Key Design Considerations

## Mitigation of Blank Walls and Facades (in multifamily buildings)

- Minimize long stretches of blank walls on non-active frontages to a maximum of 15 feet, apply treatments to unavoidable blank walls.
- Transparency requirements for non-residential ground floors are handled separately in the Planning Code.





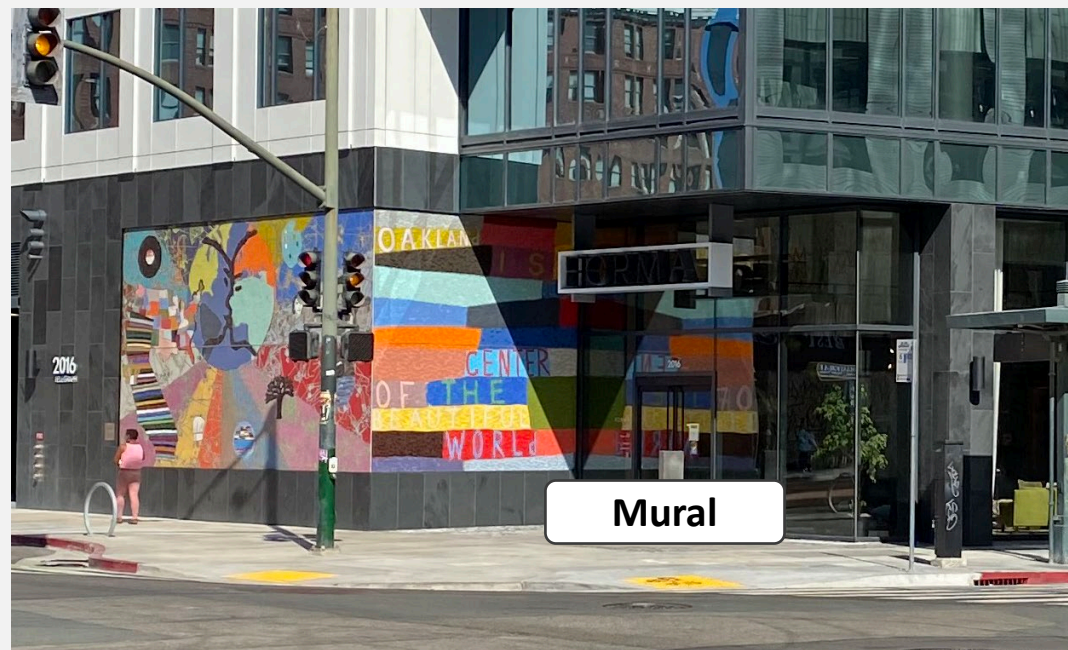
# Blank Wall Treatments

## Questions to consider:

- What other options would you suggest?
- Is this difficult to implement or not desirable? Why?

**2.1.4 Treatments (for 1-3 story multifamily buildings).** 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.
- Ornamentation such as frieze and swag
- Planting that covers at least 75% of the blank wall.

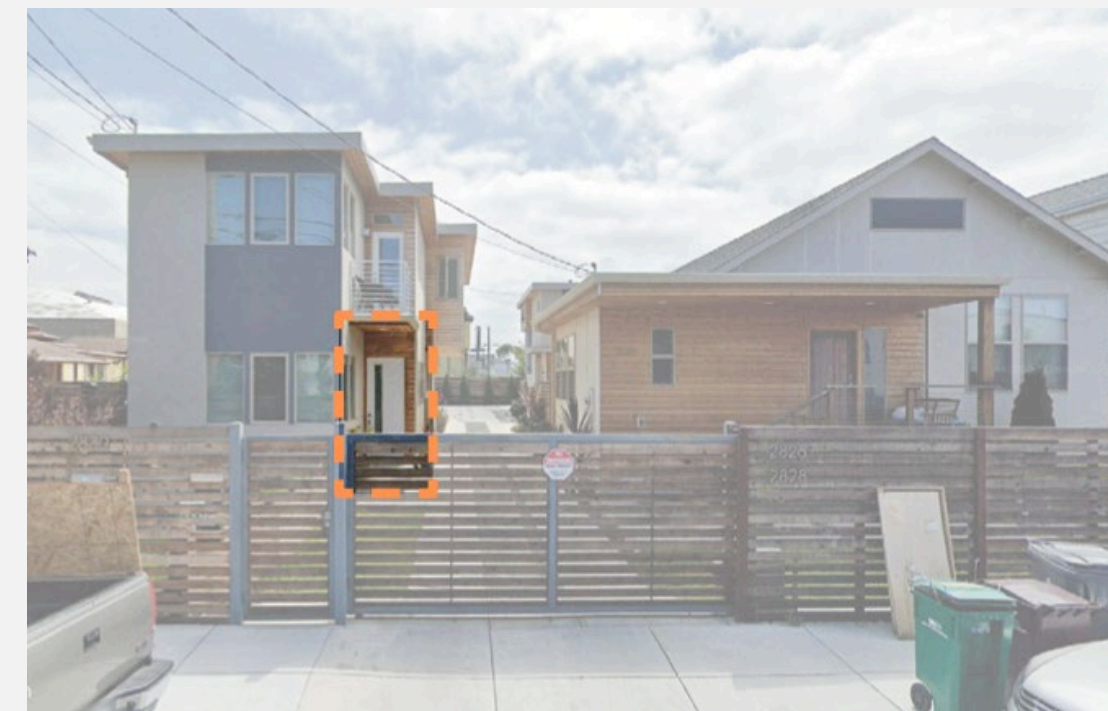




# Key Design Considerations

## Building Entrances

- Shared Building Entrances:
  - Promote universal accessibility with emphasis on street-facing, at-grade entries, with direct access to the sidewalk. Stoops are de-emphasized.
  - Include a recess or a projection or a combination of both for weather protection, prominence, and a sense of privacy.
- Individual Unit Entrances:
  - Entries facing the street or shared access easements (open space).
  - For Multifamily buildings, include a projection, a recess or a combination of both.



# Key Design Considerations

## Accessibility Priorities

ODS prioritize accessibility in the built environment, particularly for people with limited mobility, by implementing several key measures including:

- Priority for **at-grade entries** for residential units in buildings with ground-floor residential uses and limiting the ground floor level height for commercial entries.
- Limits on **curb cut frequency** and **shared driveways** for adjoined townhomes. Curb cuts are prohibited on streets with existing or proposed protected bike lanes and along Corridors, unless no other street frontage is available.
- **Continuously lit pedestrian pathways** required within a development.





# Shared Building Entrances

## Questions to consider:

- What other options would you suggest?
- Is this difficult to implement or not desirable? Why?

**2.2.1/2.4.1 Primary Building Entrance for Lobbies or Shared Entries.** When a shared building entry is provided, including any gate entrances, the following standards shall be met:

- The primary shared entrance shall be at-grade (no steps) to promote universal accessibility, unless unreconcilable physical site conditions such as cross-slope over 20% preclude creation of at-grade entries.
- The primary shared entrance for street-facing buildings, including lobbies, vestibules, or gate entrances, shall face the street.
- Entry shall have a vertical clearance of at least 8 feet in height 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.



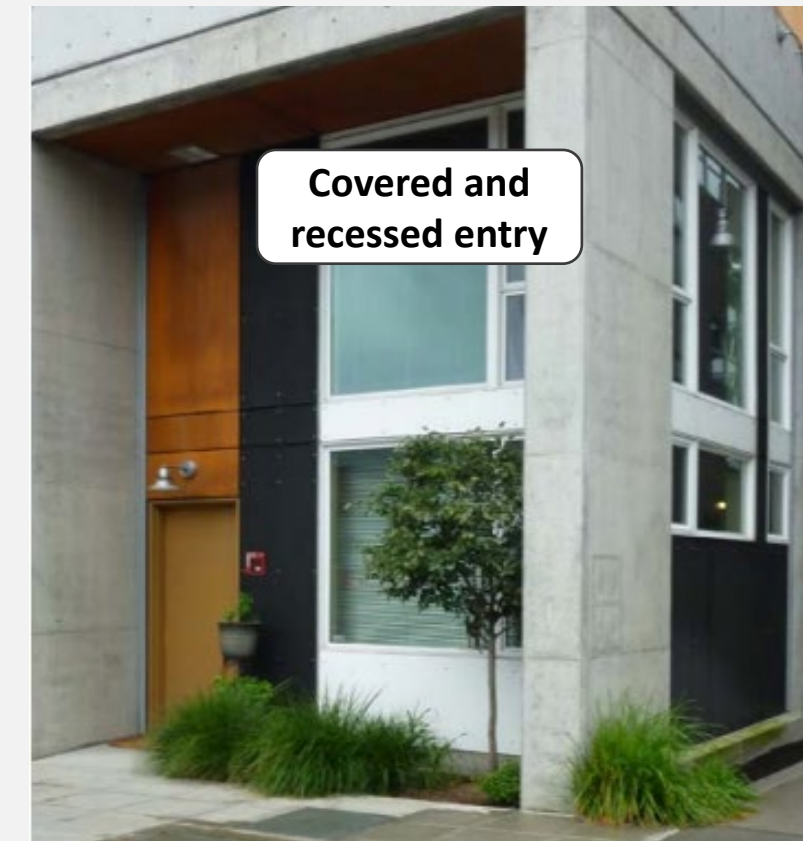
# Individual Unit Entrances

## Questions to consider:

- What other options would you suggest?
- Is this difficult to implement or not desirable? Why?

**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.





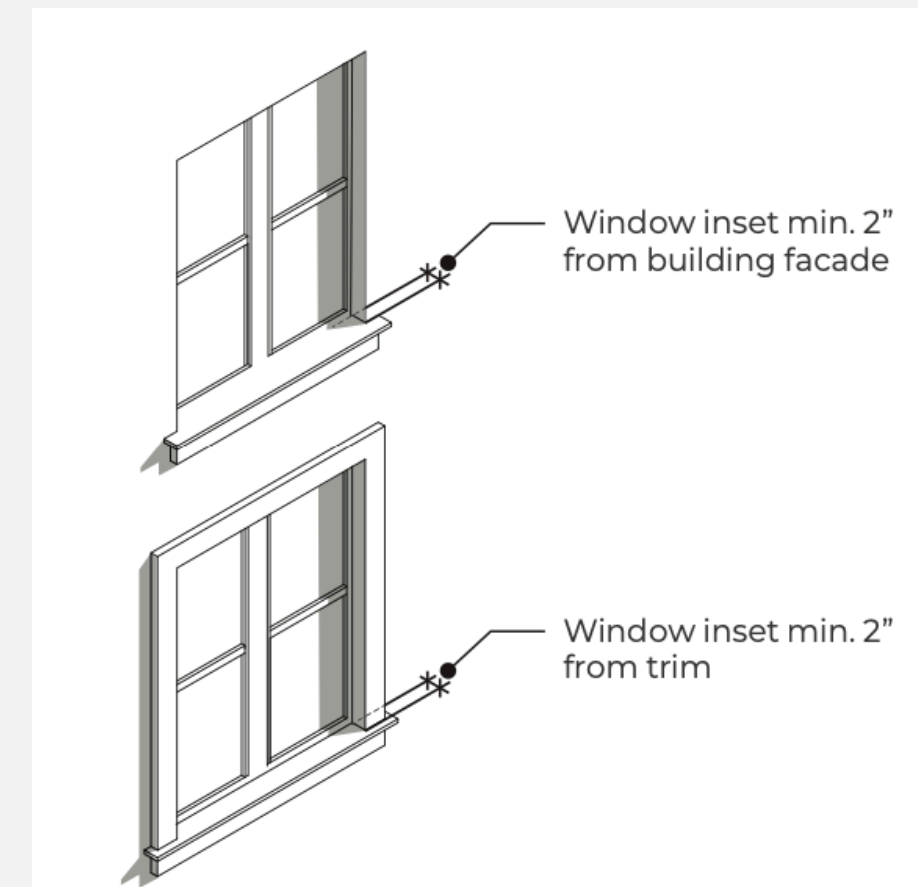
# Windows

## Questions to consider:

- What other options would you suggest?
- Is this difficult to implement or not desirable? Why?

**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 2 inches thick.
- Windows projecting from building facade or exterior trim by at least 3 inches, or 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.





# Key Design Considerations

## Dwelling Unit Additions to Historic Buildings

- Preserving, repairing or replacing in-kind existing original architectural details.
- Avoiding historical imitation (new additions shall not replicate or duplicate the original)
- Retaining front porches or decks
- Exhibiting the same roof form and slope
- Matching existing building window type or predominant context area window type
- Preserving original building form while adding upper stories to buildings with pitched or flat roofs





# Additions to Historic Buildings

## Questions to consider:

- What other options would you suggest?
- Is this difficult to implement or not desirable? Why?

**5.2 Avoiding Historical Imitation.** New additions to **Local Register Properties** at the front or side of a main historic building shall use the same forms, materials, and color range of the historic building, but in a manner that **does not replicate or duplicate the exact detailing** of the existing historic building.





# Next Steps + Questions and Answers

Provide your comments on the 1-4 Family and 1-3 Story Multifamily Residential Public Draft Standards!

**Due April 21** by the end of the day to  
**[ODS@oaklandca.gov](mailto:ODS@oaklandca.gov)**



**<http://oaklandca.gov/ods>**

**Thank you for attending!**  
**The City of Oakland values your time and input**

**Follow-up questions or comments?**  
**Email [ODS@oaklandca.gov](mailto:ODS@oaklandca.gov)**