

TITLE 21 CH. 21.88 OBJECTIVE DESIGN STANDARDS PROCESSING GUIDE

For Multifamily Housing & Mixed-Use Development

The Multifamily Housing and Mixed-Use Development Objective Design Standards Manual as referenced in Title 21 Chapter 21.88, provides local control over the design of future multifamily housing and mixed-use development projects within the city boundary, excluding the Village and Barrio Master Plan area. These standards assist the city in sustaining the unique character of the area while complying with state housing laws designed to expedite housing production. Objective design standards are defined in California Government Code Sections 65913.4 and 66300(a)(7) as standards that:

... 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 development applicant or proponent and the public official before submittal.

The following guide details the steps for applicants to follow when applying the Objective Design Standards Manual to eligible projects:

STEP 1: REVIEW PROJECT SITE LOCATION & APPLICABLE LAND USE DOCUMENTS. Applicants proposing new multifamily housing or mixed-use development in Carlsbad should first review the site's zoning district, general plan (GP) land use designation and if applicable Master Plan (MP) or Specific Plan (SP) it is located in. Determine if the proposed multifamily development or mixed-use development is consistent with the applicable General Plan, Specific Plan/Master Plan and Zoning Code designations.

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STEP 2: DETERMINE APPLICABILITY & PERMITTING REVIEW PROCESS. All applicable multifamily housing or mixed-use development projects proposing at least two attached residential units are required to comply with the Objective Design Standards Manual. For detached residential unit projects, please refer to Planned Development Ordinance (Title 21 Ch. 21.45) and Policy 44 [here](#).

Applicable projects include: • Townhomes • Duplexes • Condominiums • Apartment complexes • Mixed-use development projects

Non-Applicable projects include: • Previously approved multifamily housing or mixed-use projects (unless modifications are proposed)

- Projects that are in process and deemed complete either through SB 330 or the Permit Streamlining Act prior to the new standards becoming effective.
- Single-family residential developments/subdivisions
- Accessory dwelling units (ADUs)
- Single-family homes with attached ADUs
- Multifamily or mixed-use projects requiring an amendment to the General Plan or zoning ordinance
- Non-residential developments such as commercial, industrial or office sites

After determining if your project must apply objective design standards, review the different processing options and the required criteria for each process:

PROCESSING OPTIONS	PROJECT TYPE CRITERIA
Ministerial Approval Process	Min. two attached residential units
	Mixed-use project with at least two-thirds sq. ft. of residential uses
	Outside Coastal Zone
	50% affordable residential units
	Fair labor practices required
	See SB-35 IB for more criteria info
Limited Discretionary Approval Process	Min. two attached residential units
	Mixed-use project with at least two-thirds sq. ft. of residential uses
	See SB-330 IB for more criteria info
Standard Review Process	Min. two attached residential units
	Mixed-use development consisting of residential units.

STEP 3: DETERMINE DENSITY BONUS ELIGIBILITY

If the project exceeds the maximum density allowed under the General Plan/Zoning Ordinance and meets the required density bonus criteria pursuant to the State Density Bonus Law, then the project can be processed as a density bonus project (see State Density Bonus Law [IB-112](#) and Title 21 [Chapter 21.86](#)). **NOTE:** The Density Bonus Incentive/Concessions and Waiver Process is a separate process from the waiver process identified in Section 21.88.030(B).

STEP 4: APPLY THE OBJECTIVE DESIGN STANDARDS MANUAL

Apply all applicable objective design standards provided in the Multifamily Housing and Mixed-Use Development Objective Design Standards Manual as listed below:

1. [Ch. 1 - Site Design Standards](#)
This section discusses design standards related to site planning such as private driveways, pedestrian access, common and private open space and landscaping.
2. [Ch. 2 - Building Design Standards](#)
Building design standards are related to the design of the buildings such as building form, massing, articulation, and architectural design elements such as windows, doors, balconies and building color & material.
3. [Ch. 3 - Additional Mixed-Use Design Standards](#)
This section addresses standards only for mixed-use development projects.
4. [Ch. 4 - Utilitarian Standards](#)
Utilitarian standards relate to design standards for utilities, equipment, and other accessory structures such as fences, walls, mailboxes, etc.
5. [Ch. 5 - Definitions](#)
The definitions section is for terms that have not been defined in the CMC but are needed to implement the standards.

STEP 5: APPLY REQUIRED EXISTING OBJECTIVE STANDARDS

Projects must adhere to the existing objective development standards as applicable (e.g. maximum building height, setbacks, lot coverage, etc.). Existing development standards can be found here:

1. Carlsbad General Plan <https://www.carlsbadca.gov/departments/community-development/planning/general-plan>
 - a. Land Use & Community Design (Density & Intensity Standards)
2. Specific Plan/Master Plans (Existing Specific Plans and Master Plans are provided here: <https://www.carlsbadca.gov/departments/community-development/planning/specific-plans-master-plans>)
3. Carlsbad Municipal Code: https://library.qcode.us/lib/carlsbad_ca/pub/municipal_code
 - a. Title 17 “Fire Protection” (Building and Developable Area)
 - b. Title 18 “Building Codes and Regulations” (Building Regulations)

- c. Title 20 “Subdivisions” (Lot Area/Lot Coverage)
- d. Title 21 “Zoning,” Including but not limited to the below chapters:
 - i. Residential/Mixed-Use Zoning Designations - Title 21 Sections 21.07-.10, .12, .16, .18, .20, .22, .24, .26, .28, .29, .31, .84
 - ii. Parking Ordinance Title 21. Section 21.44
 - iii. Yards Title 21. Section 21.46 (Setbacks restrictions)
 - iv. Beach Area Overlay (BAO) Zones Chapter 21.82 (Height restrictions)
 - v. Hillside Development Regulations - Chapter 21.95 (Developable Area)
 - vi. Coastal Resources Protection Overlay Zone – Chapter 21.203 (Developable Area)
 - vii. Habitat Preservation and Management Requirements - Chapter 21.210 (Developable Area)
- e. Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan for McClellan-Palomar Airport (Developable Area)
- f. Climate Action Plan (CAP Checklist)
- g. Open Space Management Plan (Developable Area)
- h. Carlsbad Tribal, Cultural, and Paleontological Resources Guidelines (Developable Area)

Additional existing objective design standards can be found here:

- a. Landscape Manual
- b. Title 21 - Sign Ordinance
- c. Community Forest Management Plan (tree plantings)
- d. City of Carlsbad Noise Guidelines Manual (building design)

NOTE: Conflicting Standards: Any conflicting *design* standards found in the Objective Design Standards Manual and any other city document, the design standards in the Manual shall prevail with the exception for projects located within Master Plans/Specific Plans; the conflicting standards provided in existing (active) Master Plan/Specific Plans shall prevail (see list of Master Plans/Specific Plans [here](#)). Please coordinate with the project planner to determine what standards in the Master Plan/Specific Plan are conflicting standards.

Subjective Standards/Guidelines: Pursuant to state law existing subjective design guidelines are not required to be implemented since they cannot be used to approve or deny eligible projects. Subjective guidelines are those guidelines that provide poorly defined, ambiguous and/or unmeasurable direction for when and how to apply development requirements and therefore involve personal judgement by a public official or decision maker due to the lack of specificity in direction provided.

STEP 6: SUBMIT A COMPLETE APPLICATION. Submit a project application with the Objective Design Standards Compliance Checklist filled out and all other permitting forms and fees required for a complete the project application. The objective design standards compliance checklist is a tool used to determine if the objective design standards are met, not applicable or not in compliance. If not in compliance, applicants can request a waiver for up to four individual standards. If a waiver(s) is being requested pursuant to Title 21. Section 21.88., please indicate which standard(s) is being requested to be waived in the provided checklist and provide supporting documentation that indicates how the waiver finding(s) are met.

NOTE: The City of Carlsbad is not required to grant waivers if the decision maker determines the findings cannot be met. For applications that do not comply with required objective design standards (excluding granted waivers), pursuant to state law these applications are NOT consistent with Title 21 Section 21.88.030, and therefore provides grounds for the city to deny eligible projects based on incompliance with the objective design standards as defined by Government Code Section 65913.4 and 66300(a)(7).

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