August 22, 2021

Fm: Cecilia Brown

To: Chair Branch and members of the Design Review Board

Re: Comments: DRB Agenda Item D1: Multi-unit and Mixed-use project Objective Design Standards

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input on the proposed City's objective design standards (ODS) for SB 35 projects. A robust set of objective design standards is critical for protecting Goleta's unique community character. New development should complement and enhance the city streetscape and neighborhoods and not detract from it.

Any objective design standards developed should be broad enough in scope but with lots of detail to address the various kinds of projects that might occur under SB 35 from a few townhomes on a vacant lot in an established neighborhood to a many unit mixed-use project on a commercial site to be redeveloped. With these written design standards, incorporate photos and diagrams of acceptable building styles and building elements to more fully describe what is intended. "A picture is worth a thousand words."

While the City will be producing objective design standards for the applicant to use, should the applicant not want to follow them, then the City must state in their documentation that developer of a qualifying project seeking exceptions to the City's applicable objective design standards, the City's existing discretionary design review process with the Design Review Board is available.

Below are responses to some of the questions seeking feedback in the staff report.

Question #2: Are there multiple-unit and mixed-use projects that contain preferred design elements.

Mixed-use residential buildings: The City has few mixed-use projects; those I know about are few apartments on a 2nd floor above a bakery in Old Town. But, based on my experience living in urban areas elsewhere, my preference is that buildings at street frontages and along sidewalks be "human scale." The first floor of a mixed use project is retail space which have higher ceilings (need a standard), so mixed-use projects over one story need to have massing breaks for a proscribed length of frontage and varying setbacks and stepbacks. Objective design standards for the ground floor could include covered walkways, recessed building entries, courtyards. Retail spaces must have windows.

Multiple-unit buildings: The multi-family projects built in the last 10 years are situated in/near business parks where their size, bulk and scale fit in with the large scale industrial buildings. But it is the **landscaping, common and personal open space, and on-site recreational amenities** that helped to mitigate the "big box multi-story building" effect to make these projects feel more residential. Thus, objective design standards are needed for these elements in a multi-unit project of any scale where these issues might be relevant. Ensure that a standard for personal/private open space includes a dimensional aspect so this space is actually usable.

An example of what is not acceptable is also instructive. Thus, an objective design standard for **360 degree architecture and site planning** is needed. Hollister Village with its regimented, barrack-like structures at the rear of the project along Highway 101, a designated scenic corridor, is an example where there should have been some variation in building orientation, variety in wall plane and roof forms, façade articulation, and more landscaping to improve the attractiveness of the project from Highway 101.

Response to Question #3: Design features to ensure neighborhood compatibility when new residential development next to existing residential development

Other than the multi-family complexes described above, elsewhere in the City, the "hot button issue" will be **neighborhood compatibility** where objective design standards will be needed to codify this General Plan policy statement: Ensure that new construction… maintains the character and livability of existing neighborhoods and is designed to fit appropriately within the context of the surrounding area. Note that it is more than compatibility at issue, but also the **neighborhood character** which must be recognized in any objective design standard. A source for design standards can be found in the pending Historic Preservation Ordinance.

Objective design standards dealing with massing, **size, bulk and scale** will be imperative for a multi-unit projects located in or next to traditional neighborhood. If the project is on the same street as the existing single-family homes, it will be important to maintain a similar streetscape that is building fronts facing the street and the building elements in scale to the building elements of those existing dwellings in the vicinity. For townhomes, use of horizontal and vertical setbacks and stepbacks to break the building into smaller discrete masses will be needed. Although townhomes may have a continuous facade, ensure individual units are articulated with different designs, roof forms, building heights, window designs, entryways, and front yard landscaping to create an attractive street appearance that enhances the surrounding neighborhood. Other architectural elements, like eaves, should be substantial in depth, in order to create shadow and architectural relief.

Privacy and solar access: If a multi-unit project is adjacent to a house, then windows on a 2nd or 3rd story of these new structures should not overlook adjacent existing backyards to ensure neighbor privacy. Also, there must be an objective design standard to limit the amount of solar shielding from new landscaping and multi-story structures on adjacent properties to not interfere with solar energy collectors either present or for a future installation on adjacent residences.

Response to Question 4: Biggest challenges regarding multi-unit project designs

Besides neighborhood compatibility, **viewshed protection measures** are imperative. The General Plan has an extensive section on Visual Resource and requirements about viewshed protection. Objective design standards must be developed to minimize the visual intrusiveness by limiting height of structures from viewing points and along designated scenic corridors by placing taller structures at the rear of the property, as an example.

Response to Question 7: Other specific areas of concern with need for objective design standards

Parking and Garages: 1.) No surface parking lots shall be located between main buildings and any primary street, but at rear of buildings; 2) If garages located at front row of townhouses, they should be set back into the building frontage and not be the prominent feature of the frontage. Limit amount of garage frontage in townhouse to less than 50% of combined frontages. Otherwise garages located in front should be perpendicular to the street; 4) For a project adjacent to an existing residential neighborhood, a block wall must separate any drive aisle to rear parking areas from the adjacent residential development to prevent vehicle noise and headlight intrusion; 5) Driveways leading to front garages must be long enough to accommodate any oversized vehicles in the driveway so that parked vehicles on driveway don't hangover or block sidewalks; 6) Parking areas in multi-unit projects to have pavement design and landscaping.

Parking structures: The City has no existing projects where residential parking is placed in a structure, but there is a need for objective design standards for these above ground structures. I believe this standard from Walnut Creek's design standards should be used: "The public-facing elevations of parking structures shall be lined with residential uses on all levels (commercial may be used on the ground floor when allowed by zoning). Structured parking shall be designed such that interior lighting shall be fully shielded and automobile headlamps shall not be visible from adjacent buildings, parcels, streets, public parks, and publicly accessible outdoor space or designated open space areas."

Miscellaneous objective design considerations:

Equipment screening, particularly for backflow prevention equipment. Space for individual trash containers and/or screened trash enclosures so trash cans can't be seen from street.

Façade transparency: Limit the length of blank walls along street facades, sidewalks, pedestrian walkways and public open space: an objective design standard for a certain % of each façade must consist of doors, windows or other openings.

Maximum building lengths not to exceed a certain distance. Cited in others design standards are 200ft, but in Goleta, "human scale" must prevail!

Multi-story unit access/configuration: Exterior entrances to residential units shall be from shared or individual entrances at the ground floor of the building from a frontage not on a primary street. Exterior entrances to individual units on upper floors must be limited to avoid a "motel syle" appearance. A corridor can serve a limited number of units (e.g., 2-4), but it must not be visible from the front of the building or the primary street. (From Walnut Creek's objective design standards).

Public Comment No. 2
Item D.1

August 22, 2021

From: Fermina B. Murray

To: Chair Branch and members of the City of Goleta Design Review Board

Subject: Objective Design Standards fro Multiple-Unit and Mixed-Use Housing Projects

Dear Chair Branch and Members of the Design Review Board:

Thank you for the opportunity to receive public comments on this most important task of creating new objective design guidelines for multiple-unit and mixed-use housing projects as mandated by the State. As a local historian with 35 years in historical consulting, I have been an active volunteer participant in Goleta's "Citywide Historic Context Statement and Historic Preservation Ordinance" that are currently going through the Planning Commission's review process. Although these documents have not been adopted by the City Council, they are pertinent to understanding the development patterns of the City, particularly after World War II (1946-1969) when the former agricultural orchards were converted into tract housing and building of aerospace companies coming into the Goodland.

1. Which project elements do you feel are most important in designing attractive and usable multiple-unit and mixed-use residential projects?

Answer: Neighborhood Compatibility, Context, and Character.

The "Historic Context Statement" identifies three to four Ranch-style models of tract housing that were built in Goleta. Planning techniques included curvilinear streets, cul-de-sacs, concrete curbs and sidewalks, and integrated two-car garages accessed by concrete driveways. Models were characterized by their one-or-two-story height, asymmetrical massing in L-shaped plans; low-pitched hipped or gabled roofs with wide overhanging eaves; a variety of materials for exterior cladding, including plaster and board-and-batten, and divided wood sash windows. Decorative details include scalloped bargeboards and shutters. Subdivisions of this type include El Encanto Heights No. 1 and No.2 (1957-1959), Holiday Park (1957-1958), Lake Los Carneros North (1964), and Fairview Gardens No. 1 and No.2 (1957). Kellogg Park in 1955 was the first subdivision and the only one in Mid-century Modern style residences.

The new multi-unit or mixed-use housing has to relate to its adjacent neighboring houses and natural features and to the whole neighborhood context, in its style, mass, bulk, scale, height, and proportions. The new project should relate to the visual character and scale of the other houses, streetscape, and landscaping, and natural features in the vicinity such as setbacks from the creeks, wildlife corridors, and unobstructed views of the mountains.

2. Are there local multiple-unit and/or mixed-use residential buildings that you feel contain preferred design elements and why.

Goleta, unlike other cities, has only three very successful multi-unit, mixed-use building:
a) Goleta Bakery at 5784 Hollister Avenue in Old Town has been a bakery since its construction in 1934, located on the first floo;r and apartment units on the second floor and the rear.

b) 5788 & 5790 Hollister Avenue with the shop Upholstery Décor in the first floor and residential apartment on the second floor (constructed in 1927).

c) 5822 and 5826 Hollister Avenue: its first floor has the California Watersports storefronts, and apartment units on the second floor (constructed in 1933).

These buildings fit into the scale, proportions, height, and ambience of Old Town Heritage District. As mixed-use buildings dating to the late 1920s and the Great Depression, they have survived because they continue to serve the needs of local ordinary citizens of Goleta. The rent has been affordable for tenants who have kept the buildings occupied for almost 90 years.

3. When new residential development is located adjacent to existing development, what design features do you feel best serve to ensure neighborhood compatibility.

The new residential development must respect and relate to the visual character and scale of the established neighborhood, including the existing architectural style, street and streetscape, street trees, pedestrian accessibility, proximity to open space, topography of the site. In short, how does a new building blend into the existing neighborhood, in the sense of belonging to that community, rather than dominating it with oversized bad architecture. One of the best examples is the new Mosque at the corner of Los Carneros and Calle Real. The architecture, the scale, parking, the way it interacts with the roundabout are exemplary. It is a beautiful building that is very different but blends into the neighborhood and Lake Los Carneros Park quite well.

4. What do you see as the biggest challenges regarding housing projects?

The multi-story buildings that have been built in Isla Vista for UCSB (more to come) are the types of multi-use, mixed-use buildings that Goleta City must avoid. The City has no jurisdiction over building projects that the university erects. The university owned very large amounts of land, much of it athletic fields and student gardens on which it built a variety of housing. The open land allowed for parking spaces and other walkable open space that would not be available to or compatible with existing single family home developments so common in Goleta. Much of the new university

housing is dormitory style for students, not suitable for single families. Later construction was put up for married (graduate) students, and these buildings the university generally limited to two stories and moderate size and scale, recognizing the differences with dormitory-style student housing.

We have some examples of successful garden court two-story apartment buildings in Old Town. Calle Real (between Fairview and Patterson) has a pattern of commercial buildings, two-story apartments behind the business area, one-story professional buildings in garden courts, and one- and two-story senior cottage housing with green open space and layout that takes in the beauty of the mountains, with one- to- two story housing toward the foothills.

With this in mind, it is wise to learn from new ideas such as the "Missing Middle Housing" movement. Missing middle is a range of houses, scaled buildings with multiple units – compatible in scale and form with detached single-family homes located in walkable neighborhoods. There are good examples in Davis and other cities where the new multi-unit buildings have achieved the two important goals of compatibility to the existing neighborhoods as well as meeting the State housing mandate.

5. What are common issues addressed or recommendations you commonly make to improve design?

I look to the salient features of the established neighborhood, its features and elements that bring safety and a sense of community to the street or cul-de-sac. Design features should include architectural compatibility with other nearby neighborhoods, protection of views and open space, safe routes to schools, neighborhood pocket parks, playgrounds, pedestrian scale, walkable and accessible shopping areas, and small scale business parks. I ask how a new development contributes to these important elements that define the character, history, and beauty of the City.

6. Which existing guidelines or policies do you find you commonly refer to when discussing residential site or building design?

I look to the General Plan, DRB Guidelines, the new Zoning Ordinance, and all the documents cited in the Staff Report by Senior Planner, Andy Newkirk.

7. Are there any other specific areas of concern regarding the project or topics you would like to see addressed.

The Historic Context Statement should be required reading for the DRB and all the City Staff. It is the most valuable guiding document to study and understand how Goleta was developed and provides a source that its citizens can turn to in order to appreciate their distinctive history.

And when the Historic, Cultural and Tribal Resources Ordinance is completed and adopted by the City Council, we the citizens would greatly benefit in the way we protect our cultural and historic resources, and use the best of our history to guide the locations and scale of new multi-use and mixed-use developments.

Objective Design Standards should be borne out of detailed knowledge and respect for the diverse character of the existing neighborhoods, and how they fit together with Goleta's commercial zones, aerospace and high tech districts, light industries, trades businesses, shopping areas, office parks, schools, churches, historic Old Town, recreational parks, and open space preserves in the City.

The process by which the City arrived at the design of the Train Depot building reminds us that no process that deals with fundamental elements of our City that make it an attractive and enviable place for our citizenry to live can be completely objective. The design that the DRB finally accepted with commendation was a collaborative work of the DRB, Council Members, City Staff, and members of the public. The LED Lighting project took a similar path, and I anticipate the Objective Design Standards process will also follow robust public engagement as well.

Lastly, I want to add my support to all the points Cecilia Brown raised in her letter to you. Cecilia and I served on the first Goleta City Design Review Board and we appreciate the work you are doing.

Thank you,

Fermina B. Murray
Historian