

DIVISION 3: - MULTIFAMILY RESIDENTIAL DESIGN STANDARDS

Section 4.4.3.1 - Purpose and Applicability

The standards and criteria contained within this Article are applicable to any multifamily residential development in the following zoning districts: MF-12, MF-18, MF-24, MU, or VMU. In addition, 2 (b), Building Materials, shall be applicable to multifamily development in the T5 transect of the SmartCode. The standards in this Article are supplemental to any other applicable standards in this Code or the SmartCode and such other standards will continue to apply except to the extent of a conflict with these standards, in which event, these standards will govern.

- (1) The provisions of this chapter shall apply to all development meeting one (1) or more of the following thresholds:
 - a. All new construction requiring building permits; and/or
 - b. Major Redevelopment, including:
 - i. Additions to a building.
 - ii. Alterations of more than 50% of the exterior elevation of any building within a three year period.
 - iii. Any building being expanded or altered as described above shall comply with Division 1, mechanical equipment screening, pedestrian connectivity and residential compatibility and Division 2, Building Design.
- (2) In order to provide flexibility and creativity of project designs, departures from these design standards may be approved by the Director of Development Services, subject to the limitations in Section 1.2.2.2(c) upon a determination by the Director that:
 - a. The strict interpretation or application of these Design Standards would be inconsistent with related provisions of the Land Development Code; or
 - b. The departure creates a project design that better meets the overall purpose and intent of the design standards.

If the Director of Development Services denies a request for a departure from these design standards, the applicant requesting the departure may file a variance petition in accordance with Article 10, Division 2 of Chapter 1. This subsection shall not, otherwise, be construed to prevent an owner of property from seeking a variance from these standards by filing a variance petition in accordance with Article 10, Division 2 of Chapter 1.

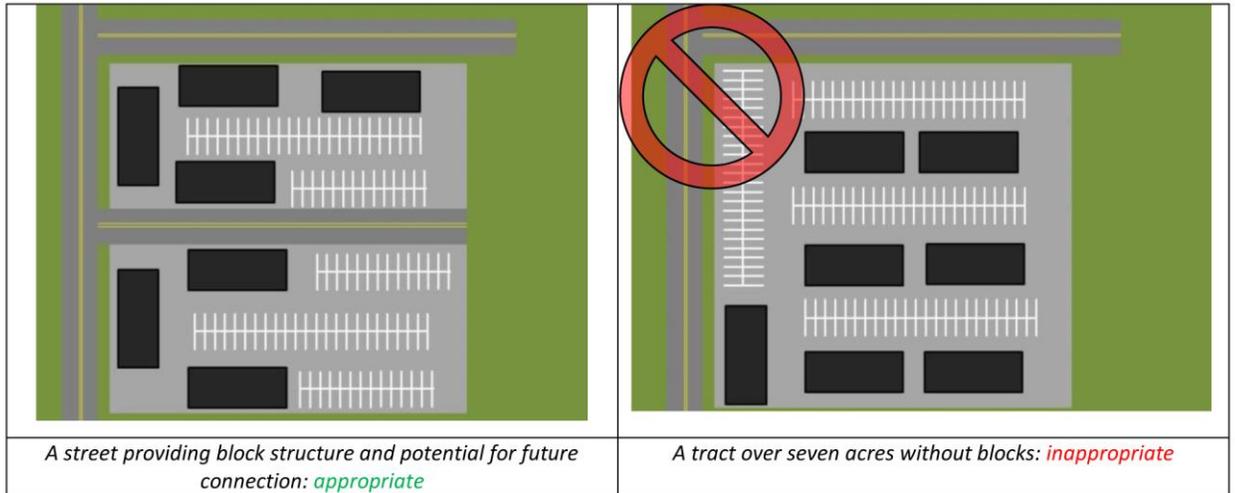
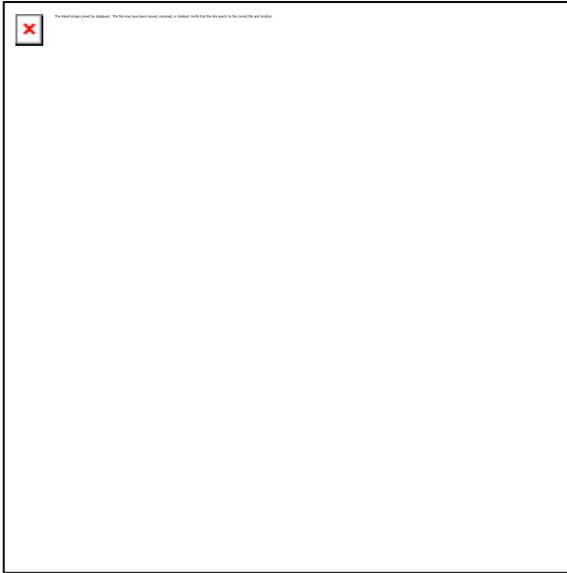
([Ord. No. 2014-35, § 1\(Exh. A\), 7-1-14](#))

Section 4.4.3.2 - Site and Building Design Criteria.

(1) *Site Design.*

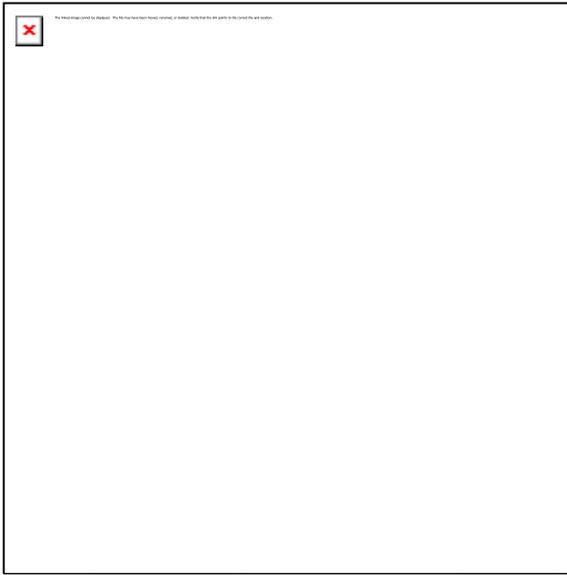
- (a) *Block Requirements.* The intent is to ensure that multifamily development is built to a scale that is compatible with surrounding areas and provides options for all modes of transportation.
 - i) All developments shall comply with the applicable standards set forth below, unless the decision maker determines that there is an established pattern of blocks less than seven acres in size in the surrounding area and no further street connections are necessary or that compliance with a specific element of the standard is infeasible due to unusual topographic features, existing development, safety factors or a natural area or feature. In such case, the block size must still conform to Section 6.7.1.1.

- ii) **Block Structure** - Each multi-family project shall be developed as a series of complete blocks bounded by streets or street-like private drives (See Figures below). Public streets shall be used to meet this requirement except where there are no possible connections to other public streets. All references to streets in this Article shall refer to both streets and street-like private drives. Natural areas, irrigation ditches, high-voltage power lines, operating railroad tracks and other similar substantial physical features may form up to two (2) sides of a block.
- iii) **Block Size** - All blocks shall be limited to a maximum size of seven (7) acres
- iv) **Connectivity to Adjacent Sites** - All streets and pedestrian entrances shall connect to adjacent properties, except for pedestrian connections adjacent to single family sites.



- (b) **Building location** - The intent is to create an external orientation to the streetscape, and an internal orientation to the residential environment with unifying open space and pedestrian pathways. The pedestrian shall be given design consideration equal to the automobile through strategies including the placement of parking in less prominent locations.
 - i) **Minimum Building Frontage** -At least fifty (50) percent of the frontage along streets shall consist of principal buildings, publicly accessible plazas, transit stops, or other functional open space focused on the corners of the block.
 - ii) The facades of all structures fronting on a street are encouraged to parallel the street.

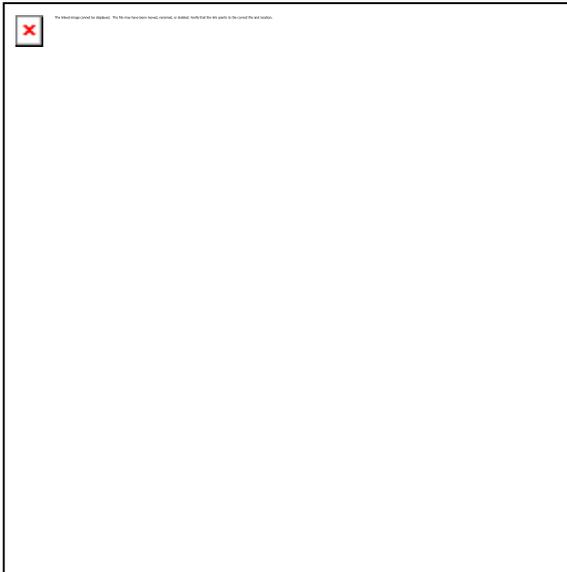
iii) On corner lots, both street-facing facades are encouraged to parallel the intersecting streets.



<p><i>Building is Parallel to and Oriented toward the street with more than 50% of the frontage consisting of buildings: appropriate</i></p>	<p><i>Building is setback from the street with parking along the frontage: inappropriate</i></p>

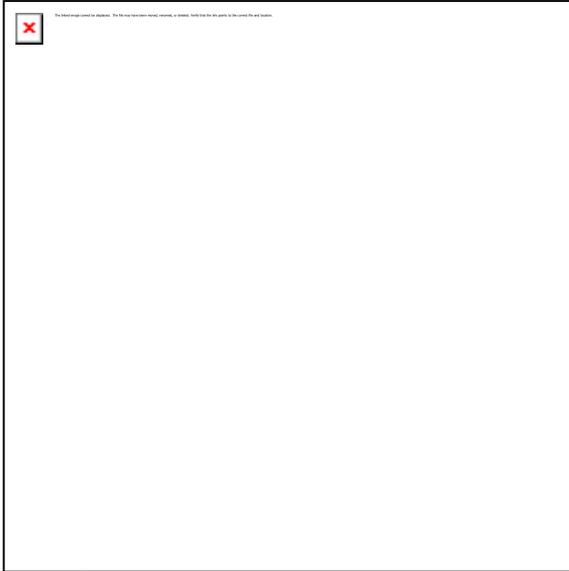
- (c) **Parking** - The intent is to integrate accessible and convenient vehicular and bicycle parking into the development while ensuring that parking does not dominate the streetscape and site design.
- i) A reduction in required parking through a variance, waiver, Planned Development District or other mechanism shall require approval of a parking management plan, in accordance with the technical manual, by the Director of Development Services.
 - ii) Parking lots shall be located in the center and rear of the property rather than between buildings and streets. See the block size exhibit above.
 - iii) Curb stops shall be provided where parking spaces (not including parallel) are located directly adjacent to buildings or sidewalks (interior or exterior)
 - iv) A minimum of one sheltered bicycle parking space shall be provided for each ten dwelling units.
 - v) Bicycle parking shall be located within 150 feet of the entrance to each ground floor unit, measured from the front entrance of the unit and along approved pedestrian paths. The Director may allow alternate bicycle parking configurations, provided that they are determined to have met the intent of this section.

- vi) Carports and covered bicycle parking shall compliment the primary buildings design theme.
- vii) The 5% visitor parking required under 6.2.1.1 shall be signed as "Visitor Parking" and should be located near the amenity center.

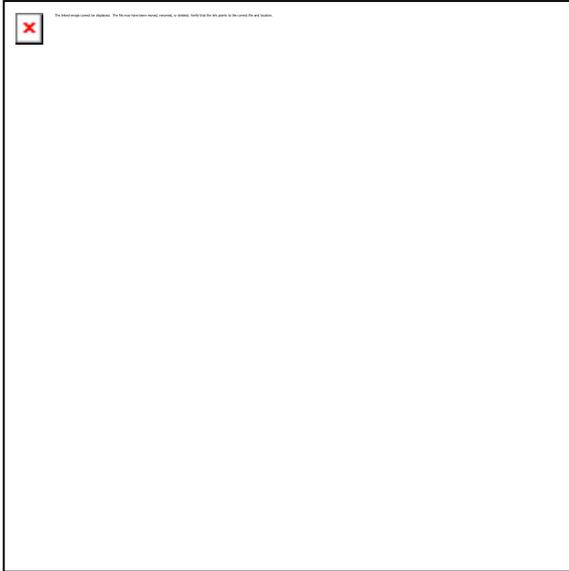


<p><i>Carports complement the building in terms of materials and trim: appropriate</i></p>	<p><i>Curb stops for parking spaces directly adjacent to sidewalks: appropriate</i></p>

- (d) *Mailbox location and design* - The intent is to provide a safe and sheltered area for cluster mailbox service accommodating multiple residents.
 - i) A weather-protected shelter/facility shall be built to allow for the pickup and drop-off of mail that is safe and provides sufficient light.
 - ii) Pedestrian access to the mailbox location shall be provided and clearly identified as a safe and clear passage for pedestrians.
 - iii) The shelter material and design shall be consistent with the primary building.
 - iv) The shelter shall be well lit and free of blind spots or hiding places.
 - v) The shelter shall incorporate secured trash and recycling bins.



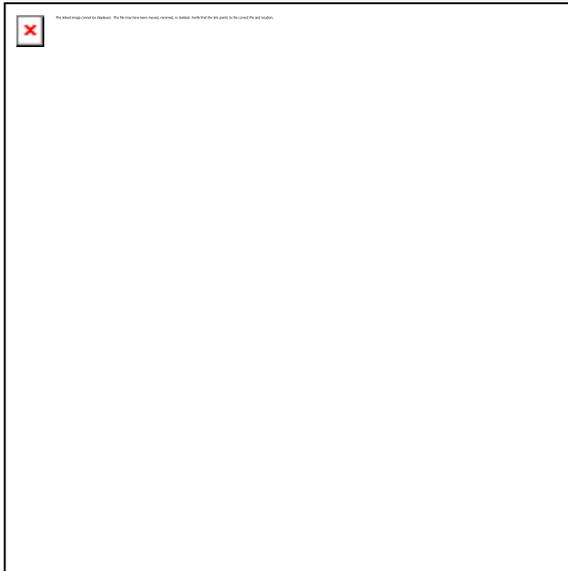
- e) *Lighting* - The intent is to enhance day and night time appearances, establish a safe environment for residents and minimize light pollution, while minimizing glare and light trespass onto adjacent properties.
- i) The lighting of all parking areas, pedestrian walkways, entrances, and exterior portions of the site shall be designed for its specific task and shall comply with the provisions of Chapter 6, Article 5. Lighting shall be: vandal-proof; compatible with building architecture; and, scaled (dimension and intensity) to complement its location context.
 - ii) Lighting shall not be obscured by landscaping.



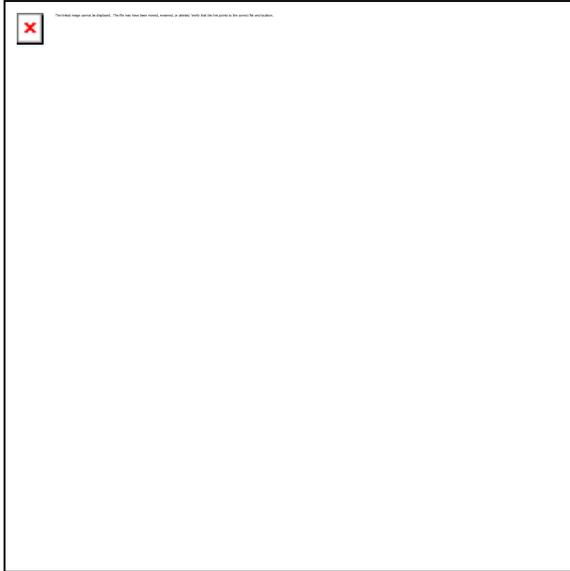
<p><i>Pedestrian scale lighting along an internal sidewalk: appropriate</i></p>	<p><i>Architecturally incompatible and out of scale automobile oriented lighting: inappropriate</i></p>	<p><i>Automobile scaled lighting within the parking area: appropriate</i></p>

- f) *Mechanical equipment screening* - The intent is to place equipment in less visible locations and obscure them from view while maintaining a safe environment.
- i) Rooftop mechanical equipment shall be hidden or screened with architecturally integral elements at least as high as the equipment to be screened. This height may be reduced if the developer demonstrates that the equipment will be screened from public view such as through a site line study.
 - ii) Ground mounted mechanical equipment shall be hidden or screened with architecturally integral wing walls and/or landscaping.
 - iii) Wall mounted equipment shall be screened with compatible materials and/or painted to match the structure.
 - iv) Mechanical equipment shall be located where their acoustics will not be disruptive to residents.
 - v) All utilities shall be screened from streets and passageways.
 - vi) Screening of all electric utilities shall meet the minimum requirements of San Marcos Electric Utility or applicable electric provider's guidelines for granting safe access to equipment for operation and maintenance and for ventilation and cooling.

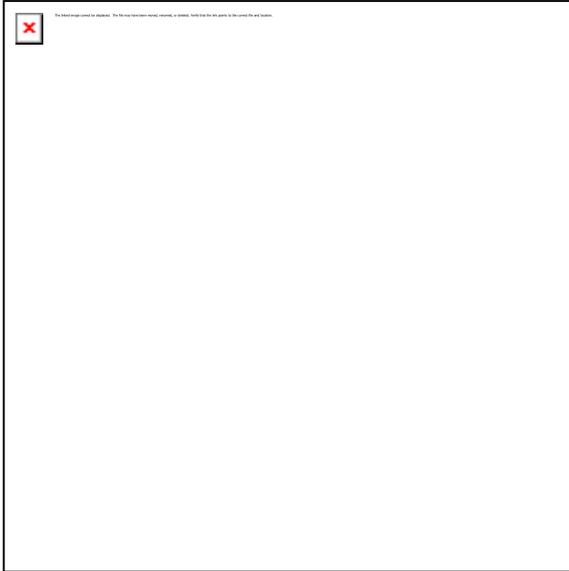
- vii) Large utilities that will be difficult to screen should be carefully placed in areas that will help to conceal them, such as landscape beds, wall cut outs, etc. while allowing for maintenance access and service.



- (g) *Detention location and design* - Multifamily developments shall be held to the highest standard of the Stormwater Technical Manual, Appendix N - Aesthetically Enhanced Detention and Water Quality Basins.



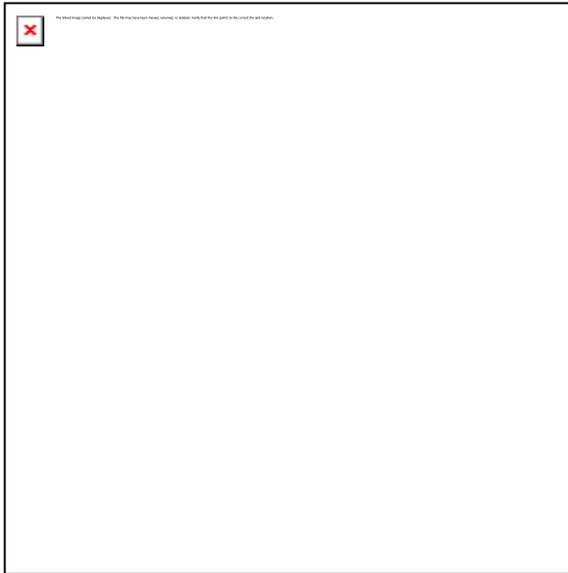
- (h) *Fencing and Screening* - The intent is to coordinate the design and location of fences to maximize interrelationship of buildings, public streets and open space while avoiding long, unarticulated fences that hinder connectivity.
- i) Perimeter fences around multifamily developments, if used, shall be at least 50 percent transparent. The location and height of fencing shall be subject to Section 6.1.3.3.
 - ii) Fences or gates shall not cross public streets or street-like private drives.
 - iii) Wrought iron-style fences shall be articulated at a maximum of every 25 feet with the following.
 - (1) A combination of shrubs matching the height of the fence and a 4" caliper tree, or
 - (2) Masonry columns.
 - iv) Where solid walls are proposed in lieu of perimeter fencing, they may be no taller than 4 feet along the street frontage, and must be constructed of brick, stone or other masonry material.



<p><i>Unarticulated perimeter fence:</i> <i>inappropriate</i></p>	<p><i>Perimeter fence which is more than 50% transparent with masonry columns and pedestrian access: appropriate</i></p>	<p><i>Solid perimeter fence: inappropriate</i></p>

- (i) *Pedestrian Access and Circulation* - The intent is to enhance pedestrian safety and convenience by providing an integrated pedestrian circulation system throughout the development. Contact points between pedestrians and vehicular paths should be minimized; where necessary they should be designed to alert drivers to crossing pedestrians.
- i) One pedestrian entrance shall be provided connecting the multifamily site to the street for block faces up to 500 feet. Two pedestrian entrances shall be provided for block faces longer than 500 feet. Pedestrian entrances shall connect sidewalks to the internal walkway network and shall be open and not gated. Driveways without separate pedestrian facilities shall not be used to meet this requirement.
 - ii) Pedestrian walkways shall be provided between buildings, and along streets, driveways, community spaces, and off-street parking.
 - iii) Walkways shall transect common open space to enhance visual access while minimizing conflicts between vehicles, bicycles, and pedestrians.
 - iv) Crosswalks shall be distinguished from driving surfaces via painted striping or materials such as pavers, bricks, stamped concrete, etc.
 - v) Pedestrian walkways shall use lighting scaled to the pedestrian.
 - vi) If walkways are sheltered, structures shall reflect a design and finish similar to the principal building(s).

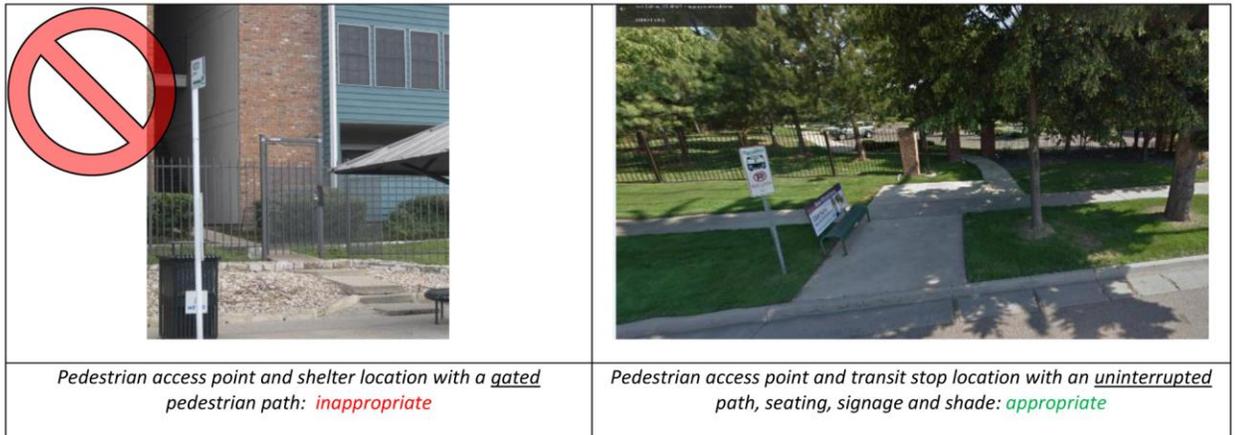
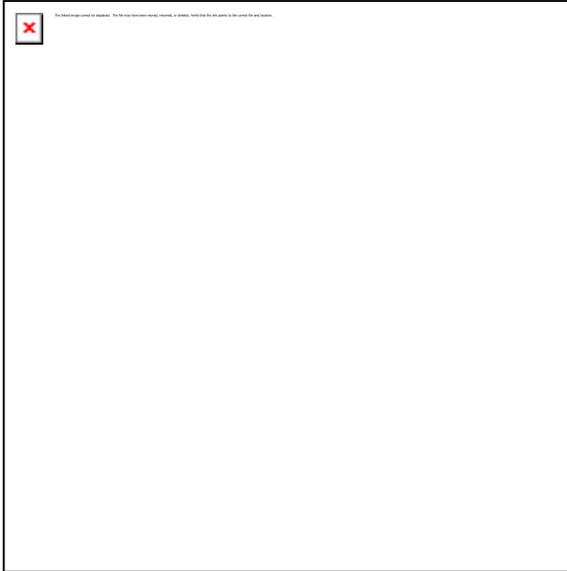
vii) Sudden changes of grade or sharp turns resulting in "blind spots" are discouraged.



<p><i>Pedestrian crosswalk distinguished from the driving surface via painted striping:</i> <i>appropriate</i></p>	<p><i>Walkways not provided to transect common open space: inappropriate</i></p>	<p><i>Lighting scaled to the pedestrian:</i> <i>appropriate</i></p>

- (j) *Vehicular and Bicycle Access and Circulation* - The intent is to provide adequate access and capacity while reducing curb cuts and providing for pedestrian safety.
- i) Access to multi-family developments shall be from a major or minor arterial wherever possible.
 - ii) Dead end streets shall be permitted only where there is no possible connection with an adjacent street.
 - iii) Clear bicycle access from the right-of-way to designated bicycle parking shall be provided.
 - iv) The following measures may be required on neighborhood streets near a new development if appropriate to control traffic, providing any access restrictions are approved by the City of San Marcos Fire Department as not adversely impacting fire and life safety access:
 - (1) Crosswalks marked with a change in paving and pedestrian crossing lights;
 - (2) Chicanes (mid-block narrowing of the street to slow traffic);
 - (3) Traffic circles;
 - (4) A bicycle path adjacent to and in addition to other required street frontage improvements;

- (5) For any development within 200 feet of a neighborhood participating in the Residential Parking Permit (RPP) program, the development shall pay a fee for signage, striping, enforcement, or other items related to the RPP program. The fee shall be proportionate to the development's impact based on the number of units and amenity center size and shall be required prior to the issuance of a Certificate of Occupancy.
- (k) *Public Transit Facilities* - The intent is to promote public transportation access as an amenity in multi-family developments and ensure that site design considers convenience and comfort factors for residents accessing the facilities.
 - i) Access points and shelter locations for current and future public transit facilities must be included in developments that could generate high volumes of transit use or that are along existing or proposed transit routes.
 - ii) Developments shall be oriented to transit stops whenever possible.
 - iii) Uninterrupted pedestrian paths, composed of an all-weather surface, or similar innovative material, shall be provided to connect transit stops with all adjacent sidewalks or pedestrian paths.
 - iv) Lighting shall be provided along pedestrian walkway connections and adjacent to transit stop facilities.
 - v) Seating for multiple people, signage and shade (structured or landscaping) shall be provided at all transit stops.



(l) *Landscaping* - The intent is to promote quality landscape design as an integral part of the overall site plan with the purpose of enhancing building design, public views and spaces while providing buffers, transitions and screening. Landscaping can be used, and is often preferred, to satisfy utility and parking screening requirements.

i) *Trees*

(1) *Street Trees*

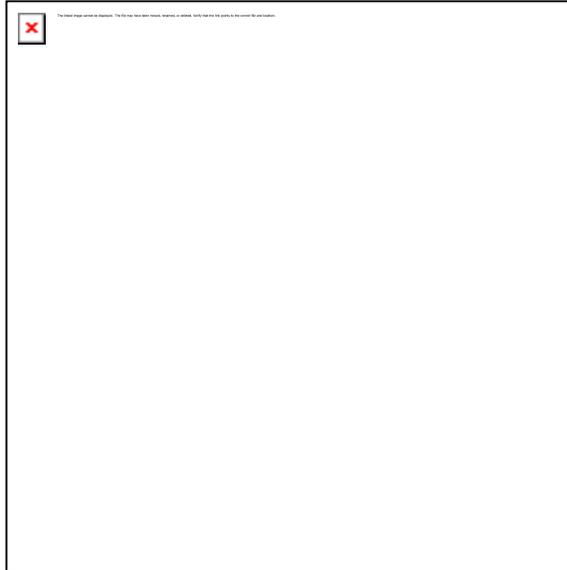
(a) One shade tree shall be provided per 30 feet of street frontage and must be located within 10 feet of the outside edge of the sidewalk. Where existing utilities prevent installation, alternative tree selection must be approved by the Development Services Director in consultation with the utility provider. Small ornamental trees such as Crape Myrtles will not be considered to satisfy this section.

(2) *Specimen Trees*

(a) When there are existing Specimen Trees (24 caliper inch or greater) development should be planned around, and not disturb such trees. A consultation with staff is required prior to an application that would result in the removal of such trees.

(3) *Parking Area Trees*

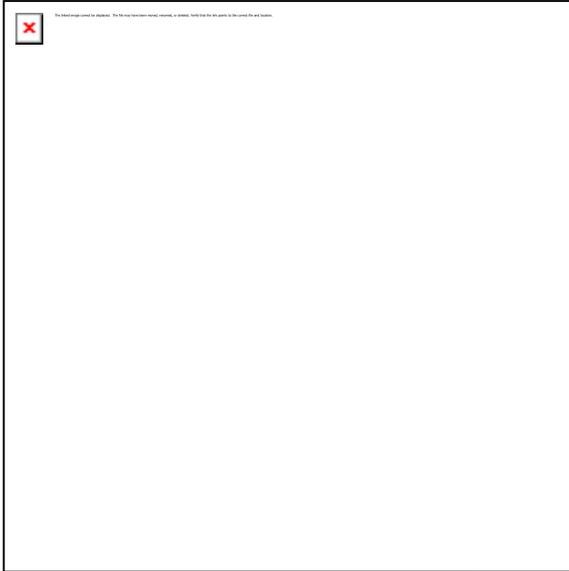
- (a) Landscaping used to meet the requirements of 6.1.1.4 (e) shall include a tree. Small ornamental trees such as Crape Myrtles will not be considered to satisfy this section.
- (b) Reduced tree requirements for covered parking may be approved by the Director if they are determined to have met the intent of this section.



Small Ornamental Tree: inappropriate

Shade trees planted less than 30 feet apart along the street frontage appropriate

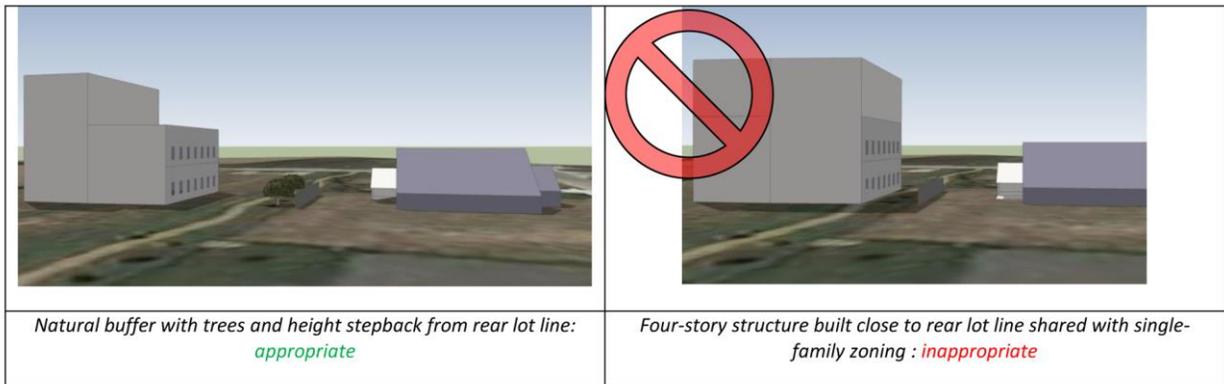
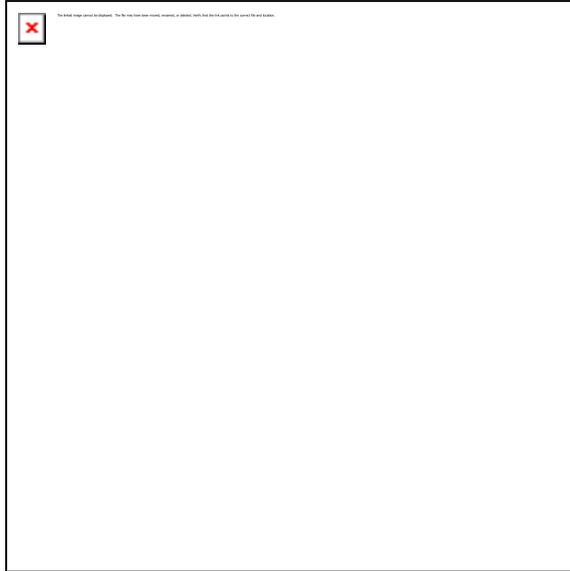
- (m) **Refuse and Recycling Dumpsters** - The intent is to provide convenient access to dumpsters for residents to reduce littering and outside storage of trash.
 - i) **Equal Amenities** - Equal amenities shall be provided for trash and recycling.
 - ii) **Location** - All multifamily developments shall provide both trash and recycling dumpsters located next to each other. Both shall be located within 500 feet of the entrance to each ground floor unit measured from the front entrance of the unit and along improved pedestrian paths. The Director may allow alternate facilities, such as chutes, provided that the request is determined to have met the intent of this Section.
 - iii) **Screening** - Screening shall be designed to reduce the escape of trash and in accordance with Section 6.1.2.4(a)(2). Material and design shall be consistent with the primary building.
 - iv) **Signage** - Dumpsters and recycle bins shall each be clearly marked



<p>Dumpster screening consistent with the primary building: <i>appropriate</i></p>	<p>Dumpsters screened with materials inconsistent with the primary building: <i>inappropriate</i></p>	<p>Recycle bins provided instead of recycle dumpsters with no screening: <i>inappropriate</i></p>

- (n) *Signage* - The intent is to create attractive signage that is visible from the right of way and compatible with the residential nature of multifamily projects.
- i) No free standing sign type other than monument and directional signage is allowed. Flag poles greater than 25 feet in height shall be considered a free standing sign, and will not be permitted.
 - ii) Monument signs
 - (1) No portion of a multifamily sign shall exceed 7 feet in height. The sign face shall not exceed 80 square feet.
 - (2) Monument signage material and design shall be consistent with the primary building.
 - (3) Monument signage shall not be located within 10 feet of any property line
 - (4) All monument signs shall be lit from the exterior.
 - iii) Directional signs
 - (1) No directional sign shall exceed 12 square feet
 - (2) Directional signage shall not be internally illuminated.
 - (3) Directional signage should be located within the project to indicate the building number flow at each drive isle intersection

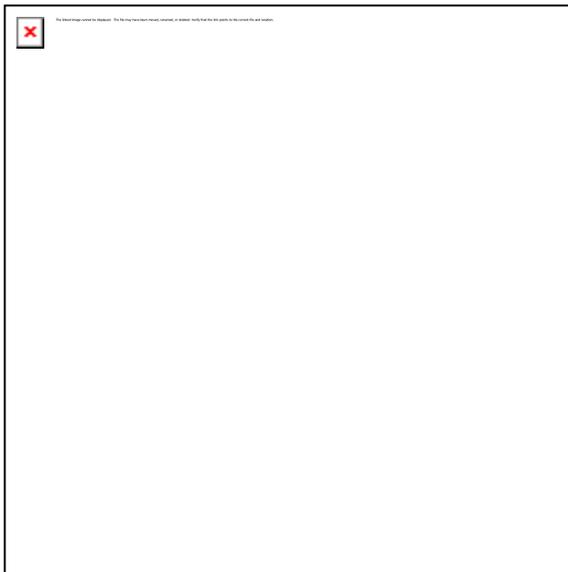
- (4) Directional signage should be used to indicate exit/enter only drive isles
- (o) *Residential Compatibility* - The intent is to achieve a compatible transition between zones of differing height and scale requirements. Consideration should be given to the scale and design of surrounding buildings to promote compatibility and complement or enhance the character of existing neighborhoods.
 - i) Where adjacent to single family zoning, all multifamily development shall incorporate:
 - (1) Height stepback - A maximum building height of thirty (30) feet shall apply to portions of a structure within eighty (80) feet of a single family zoning designation.
 - (2) One of the buffer options below:
 - (a) A thirty-five foot (35') wide densely vegetated landscape buffer. Minimum quantity of landscaping shall be determined by the following requirements:
 - (i) The buffer area remains in its natural state if it contains sufficient trees and shrubs.
 - (ii) Along the shared property line of the single-family and multifamily tracts, one tree per 50 linear feet with a minimum caliper of four inches, selected from the list of approved evergreen tree species in the Preferred Plant List; or
 - (iii) Along the shared property line of the single-family and multifamily tracts, one tree per 25 linear feet with a minimum caliper of two inches, selected from the list of approved evergreen tree species in the Preferred Plant List.
 - (b) A street-like private drive so long as any on-street parking is oriented away from the adjacent single-family zoning and the drive is at least thirty-five feet (35') in width. Sidewalks shall not be required on the side of the drive adjacent to the single-family lot, and
 - (3) A minimum six foot tall masonry wall along the shared property line of the single-family and multifamily tract. A wrought iron fence may be used instead of masonry along with the buffer option in (2)(a) above.
 - ii) Where across a public street from single family zoning, all multifamily development shall incorporate:
 - (1) Height stepback - A maximum building height of thirty (30) feet shall apply to portions of a structure within seventy (70) feet of a single family zoning designation (measured from the centerline of the street).



(2) *Building Design.*

- (a) *Façades*- The intent is to create visual interest through architectural form, massing, and detailing. All façades open to view by the public, whether viewed from a public right-of-way or private property, shall have architectural treatments.
- i) Articulation refers to the giving of emphasis to architectural elements (such as windows, balconies, entries, etc.) that create a complementary pattern or rhythm, dividing large buildings into smaller identifiable pieces. An interval is the measure of articulation - the distance before architectural elements repeat. Modulation is a measured and proportioned inflexion or setback in a building's face. Together, articulation, modulation and their interval create a sense of scale important to residential buildings.
 - ii) Four-sided design is required. All building elevations shall reflect consistent design, textures, colors, and features. All walls shall be articulated and modulated to enhance architectural complexity.
 - iii) Building façades shall be articulated with architectural elements that break up long blank walls, add visual interest, and enhance the character of the neighborhood. Vertical articulation shall occur at intervals of no more than forty (40) feet.
 - iv) Three (3) or more of the following methods of articulation shall be used such that the combination of features project a residential character:
 - (1) Providing a balcony, bay window, porch, patio, deck, or clearly defined entry for each interval.

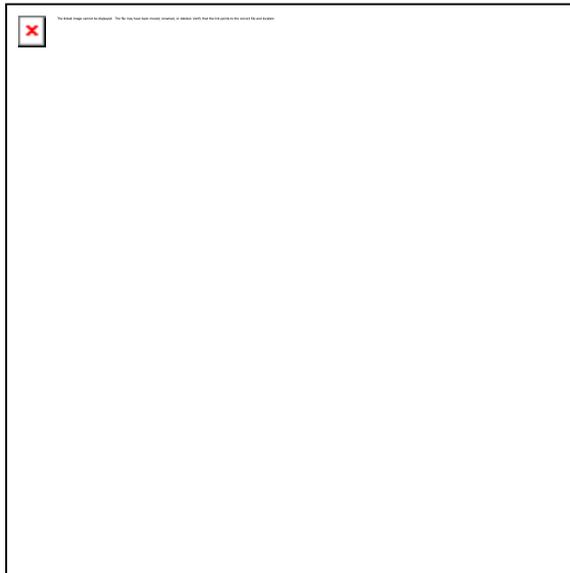
- (2) Providing a decorative lighting fixture, trellis, prominent ornamental tree or other landscape feature within each interval.
- (3) Providing architectural features such as setbacks, indentations, overhangs, projections, cornices, bays, canopies, or awnings. Building modulations shall be a minimum of two (2) feet in depth and two (2) feet in width. The sum of the modulation depth and modulation width shall be no less than eight (8) feet.
- (4) Use of material variations such as contrasting colors, brick or metal banding, or textural changes.
- (5) Artwork or building ornamentation.
- v) A variety of modulations and articulations shall be employed. No more than four (4) consecutive uniform modulations shall be used.
- vi) Front façades incorporating a variation in building setback shall include within the setback such architectural elements as covered or recessed building entries, plazas or courtyards, or seating and planting areas.



<p><i>Bay Windows, Indentations, Use of Materials (3 items): appropriate</i></p>	<p><i>Use of Materials (only 1 item): inappropriate</i></p>	<p><i>Balconies, Indentations, Use of Materials (3 items): appropriate</i></p>

- (b) **Materials** - The intent is to promote quality design and create visual interest through texture, color and detailing. Materials should be durable so that the development will continue to be an attractive part of the community over time.

- i) The following materials are allowed for multifamily residential design: brick, stone, stucco, architectural metal beams and glazing.
- ii) The use of more than one material on individual buildings is encouraged; however, heavier materials such as brick or stone should be placed on the bottom of the structure, with lighter materials such as stucco above.
- iii) At the time of submittal of building plans, elevations must be provided with a chart stating the material composition percent for each elevation of a building.
- iv) Cement fiber board and similar products may be used only in the following locations:
 - (1) Covered balconies, porches, and patios.
 - (2) Fascia and soffits.
 - (3) Interior portions of covered stairways and covered stair towers.
 - (4) Breezeways, hallways, corridors and walkways which have a roof covering.
 - (5) Bay windows and box windows that protrude from an exterior wall past the edge of the foundation that do not have a brick ledge.



Use of stone and stucco *appropriate*

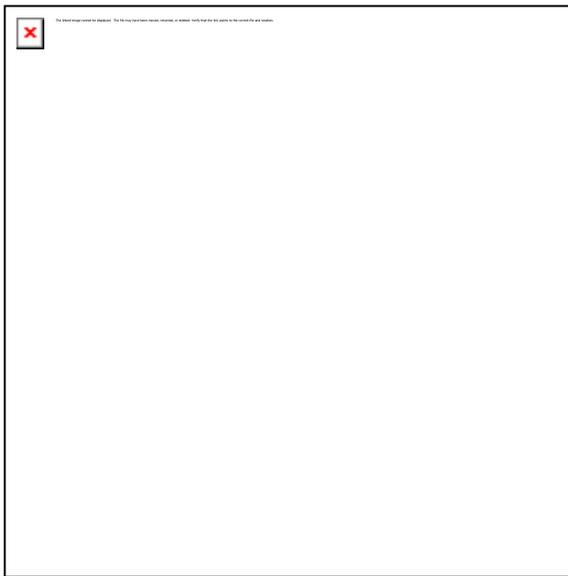


Use of cement fiber board: *inappropriate*

- (c) *Building variation* - The intent is to create visual interest and balanced massing while avoiding repetition and the monotonous appearance of similar building types. Buildings shall be considered similar unless they vary significantly in footprint size and shape, architectural elevations and

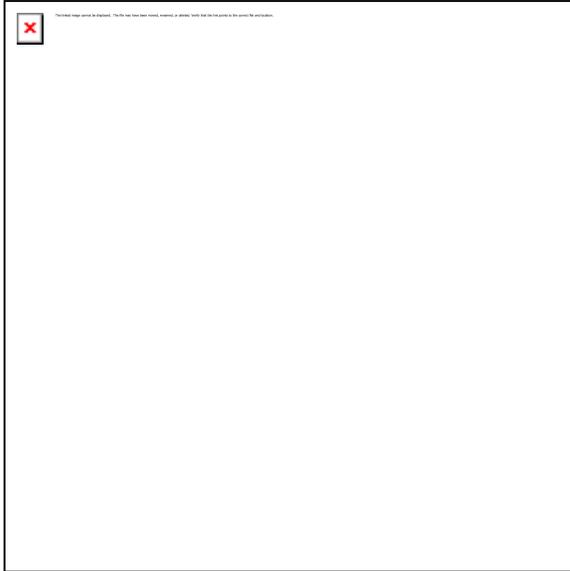
entrance features, within a coordinated overall theme of roof forms, massing proportions and other characteristics. To meet this standard, such variation shall not consist solely of different combinations of the same building features.

- i) For any street frontage containing at least three (3) and not more than five (5) buildings (excluding clubhouses/leasing offices), there shall be at least two (2) distinctly different building designs.
- ii) For any such street frontage containing more than five (5) buildings (excluding clubhouses/leasing offices), there shall be at least three (3) distinctly different building designs.
- iii) For all street frontages, there shall be no more than two (2) similar buildings placed next to each other along a street.



<p><i>Multiple buildings of the same design:</i> <i>inappropriate</i></p>	<p><i>Multiple buildings with different building designs:</i> <i>appropriate</i></p>	<p><i>Multiple buildings without distinctly different building designs:</i> <i>inappropriate</i></p>

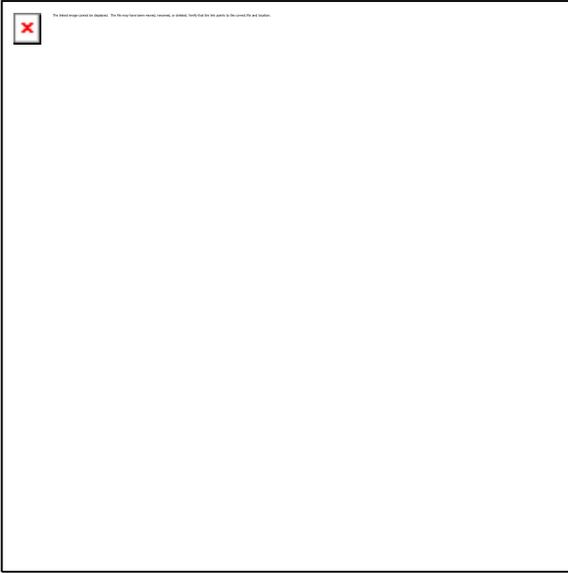
- (d) *Balconies and stairwells* - All stairwells, porches, balconies, and elevator shafts shall be contained within the footprint of the building and shall be incorporated into the design of the façade using consistent and compatible materials and design. Porches located on galleries in VMU or MU zoning districts are exempt from this provision.



<p><i>Balconies not contained within the footprint of the building and of a different material and design:</i> <i>inappropriate</i></p>	<p><i>Balconies integrated into the facade:</i> <i>appropriate</i></p>	<p><i>Balconies and stairways contained within the footprint of the building and incorporated into the design of the façade:</i> <i>appropriate</i></p>

- (e) **Quality Building Amenities** - The intent is to ensure that taller buildings are of the highest quality. The following shall apply to buildings over three (3) stories.
 - i) Elevators shall be required.
 - ii) Stairways and corridors shall be located in an enclosed space.
- (f) **Building entries** - The intent is to provide human-scaled entries that are prominent and highly visible from other buildings and public areas with safe alignment of sidewalks and paths.
 - i) At least 50% of all ground-level, street-facing units shall have a street-oriented front entrance.
 - ii) Building entries next to a street or parking area must be pedestrian scaled in relation to building size and covered via canopies or overhangs.
 - iii) Doors, windows, entranceways, and other features such as corners, setbacks, and offsets can be used to create pedestrian scale. Doors shall be fully articulated with the use of such elements as pilasters, columns, fanlights and transoms.
 - iv) Primary entries shall be fully visible and easily accessible.
 - v) No garages shall be allowed on facades fronting streets.

- (g) *Glazing and transparency* - The intent is to provide relief, detail and variation on façades through the use of window architectural styling that lends human scale to the building type and increases safety by providing eyes on the street. All exterior walls and elevations on all floors of multiple household buildings must contain operable windows except when necessary for health or safety such as fire separation.
- i) Street-facing facades shall have a minimum glazed area of 20 percent. All other building facades shall have a minimum glazed area of 10 percent.
 - ii) In order to provide relief and variation, a minimum of two (2) of the following requirements for windows shall be met:
 - (1) Windows shall be accented with a drip cap, sill, and trim. The drip cap shall be a minimum of three (3) inches in height and one (1) inch in depth; sills shall be a minimum of three (3) inches in width. Trim shall be a minimum of two (2) inches in width and one (1) inch in depth;
 - (2) Windows shall be accented through use of multiple panes;
 - (3) Windows shall be vertically oriented with a height one and one-half (1½) to two (2) times the width;
 - (4) Windows shall be accented through the use of contrasting trim color and other detailing.
 - iii) Windows should be located to maximize the possibility of occupant surveillance of entryways and common areas.



		
<p>Horizontally oriented windows with trim (one element): <i>inappropriate</i></p>	<p>Vertically oriented with contrasting trim color: <i>appropriate</i></p>	<p>Exterior walls with no windows on any floor: <i>inappropriate</i></p>

([Ord. No. 2014-35, § 1\(Exh. A\), 7-1-14.](#))