



PLANNING COMMISSION REGULAR MEETING AGENDA

September 17, 2026 - 6:00 PM
Community Meeting Chambers,
Los Altos City Hall
1 North San Antonio Road, Los Altos, CA

PARTICIPATION: Members of the public may participate by being present at the Los Altos Community Meeting Chambers at Los Altos City Hall located at 1 N. San Antonio Rd, Los Altos, CA during the meeting. Public comment is accepted in person at the physical meeting location, or via email to PCPublicComment@losaltosca.gov.

REMOTE MEETING OBSERVATION: Members of the public may view the meeting via the link below, but will not be permitted to provide public comment via Zoom or telephone. Public comment will be taken in-person, and members of the public may provide written public comment by following the instructions below.

<https://tinyurl.com/438byaz5>

Telephone: 1-669-900-9128 / Webinar ID: 870 3158 7319 / Passcode: 242017

SUBMIT WRITTEN COMMENTS: Verbal comments can be made in-person at the public hearing or submitted in writing prior to the meeting. Written comments can be mailed or delivered in person to the Development Services Department or emailed to PCPublicComment@losaltosca.gov.

Correspondence must be received by 2:00 p.m. on the day of the meeting to ensure distribution prior to the meeting. Comments provided after 2:00 p.m. will be distributed the following day and included with public comment in the Planning Commission packet.

AGENDA

ESTABLISH QUORUM

PUBLIC COMMENTS ON ITEMS NOT ON THE AGENDA

Members of the audience may bring to the Commission's attention any item that is not on the agenda. Please complete a "Request to Speak" form and submit it to the Staff Liaison. Speakers are generally given two or three minutes, at the discretion of the Chair. Please be advised that, by law, the Commission is unable to discuss or take action on issues presented during the Public Comment Period. According to State Law (also known as "the Brown Act") items must first be noticed on the agenda before any discussion or action.

ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION/ACTION

CONSENT CALENDAR

1. Planning Commission Meeting Minutes

Approval of the DRAFT minutes of the regular meeting of August 6, 2026.

DISCUSSION

- 2. Study Session on the Los Altos Objective Design Standards**
Discuss objective design standards and provide input to staff.

COMMISSIONERS' REPORTS

POTENTIAL FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

ADJOURNMENT

SPECIAL NOTICES TO THE PUBLIC

In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act and California Law, it is the policy of the City of Los Altos to offer its programs, services and meetings in a manner that is readily accessible to everyone, including individuals with disabilities. If you are a person with a disability and require information or materials in an appropriate alternative format; or if you require any other accommodation, please contact department staff. Advance notification within this guideline will enable the City to make reasonable arrangements to ensure accessibility.

Agendas, Staff Reports and some associated documents for the Planning Commission items may be viewed on the Internet at <https://www.losaltosca.gov/calendar>.

Decisions of the Planning Commission are final unless appealed by filing an appeal with the City Clerk within 14 calendar days of the decision. No building permits shall be issued during this 14-day period.



**CITY OF LOS ALTOS
PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING
MINUTES
THURSDAY, AUGUST 6, 2026
6:00 p.m.
1 N. San Antonio Road, Los Altos, CA**

*Mehruss Jon Ahi, Chair
Richard Roche, Vice Chair
Joe Beninato, Commissioner
Susan Mensinger, Commissioner
Eric Steinle, Commissioner
Daphne Ross, Commissioner*

CALL MEETING TO ORDER: Chair Ahi called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

ESTABLISH QUORUM: All commissioners were present at the meeting.

PUBLIC COMMENTS ON ITEMS NOT ON THE AGENDA

No public comments were received.

CONSENT CALENDAR

1. Planning Commission Meeting Minutes

Approval of the DRAFT minutes of the regular meeting of June 18, 2026.

Motion by Commissioner Steinle and second by Commissioner Mensinger to approve the consent calendar. **Motion carried unanimously by roll call vote.**

PUBLIC HEARING

2. D23-0009 and TM23-0002 – Octane First Street, LLC - 349 First Street

Request for Design Review to construct a six-story, multifamily residential development with 19 units pursuant to the Housing Accountability Act's Builder's Remedy and Vesting Tentative Map to create 19 residential condominium units and associated common areas. The project site is located at the northeast corner of First Street and Whitney Street. The project is statutorily exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to Public Resources Code section 21080.66. *Project Planner: Gallegos*

Senior Planner Gallegos presented the item.

Commissioners asked staff questions.

The project applicant, Ryan Gifford of Gifford Miller Group speaking on behalf of Octane First Street, LLC, project architect, Brenna Weaver of BDE Architecture, and land use attorney, Scott Gesundheit of Holland & Knight, presented the project to the Commission.

Commissioners asked the applicant team questions.

Chair Ahi opened the public comment period.

Jim Wing provided public comment.

Chair Ahi closed the public comment period.

The Planning Commission discussed the item.

Motion by Chair Ahi, second by Commissioner Ross, to:

- Adopt a Resolution approving Design Review (Application No. D23-0009) for construction of a six-story, 19-unit multiple-family residential development pursuant to the Housing Accountability Act's Builder's Remedy at 349 First Street, subject to the recommended findings and conditions of approval; and find the project is statutorily exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to Public Resources Code Section 21080.66; and

Motion carried unanimously by roll call vote.

Motion by Chair Ahi, second by Commissioner Ross, to:

- Recommend the City Council adopt a Resolution approving a Vesting Tentative Map for condominium purposes (Application No. TM23-0002) for the creation of 19 condominium units at 349 First Street, subject to the recommended findings and conditions of approval; and find the project is statutorily exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to Public Resources Code Section 21080.66.

Motion carried unanimously by roll call vote.

3. D25-0005 and TM25-0002 – Jia Li on behalf of Urbanscape Development – 966, 988, and 994 Sherwood Avenue; 987, 994, and 1005 Acacia Avenue

Request for Design Review to construct a three-story, 33-unit townhome development utilizing State Density Bonus with one concession and waivers and a Vesting Tentative Map to create thirty-three condominium lots and two common lots. The approximately 1.4-acre project site consists of six non-contiguous lots located between Sherwood Avenue and Acacia Avenue, south of El Camino Real. The project is statutorily exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to Public Resources Code section 21080.66. *Project Planner: Whitehill*

Senior Planner Whitehill presented the item.

Commissioners asked staff questions.

The project applicant, Ruby Huo on behalf of Urbanscape Development and AlphaX, and project architect, Jeff Potts with SDG Architects, presented the project to the Commission.

Commissioners asked the applicant questions.

Chair Ahi opened the public comment period.

Thomas DiRucco, Ginny Lear, Christina Chu, Udom Dwivedi, and Jon Petersmeyer provided public comment.

Chair Ahi closed the public comment period.

The Planning Commission discussed the item.

Motion by Commissioner Steinle, second by Chair Ahi, to:

- Adopt a Resolution approving Design Review (Application No. D25-0005) for the construction of a three-story, 33-unit townhome development utilizing State Density Bonus with waivers and concession at 966, 994, and 988 Sherwood Avenue, and 987, 994, and 1005 Acacia Avenue, per the recommended findings and conditions of approval; and find the project is statutorily exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to Public Resources Code (PRC) Section 21080.66; and

Motion carried unanimously by roll call vote.

Motion by Commissioner Steinle, second by Chair Ahi, to:

- Recommend the City Council adopt a Resolution approving a Vesting Tentative Map for condominium purposes (Application No. TM25-0002) for the creation of thirty-three (33) condominium units at 966, 994, and 988 Sherwood Avenue, and 987, 994, and 1005 Acacia Avenue, per the recommended findings and conditions of approval; and find the project is statutorily exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to Public Resources Code (PRC) Section 21080.66.

Motion carried unanimously by roll call vote.

COMMISSIONERS' REPORTS

None.

POTENTIAL FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

None.

ADJOURNMENT – The meeting adjourned at 8:51 p.m.

Stephanie Williams
Development Services Director

The Planning Commission Meeting recording may be viewed via the following external website: <https://www.youtube.com/@CityofLosAltosCA>. The City of Los Altos does not own or operate YouTube. The video referenced on these minutes were live at the time the minutes were published.



PLANNING COMMISSION STAFF REPORT

Meeting Date September 17, 2026
Subject Study Session on the Los Altos Objective Design Standards
Prepared by: Erick H. Serrano, Planning Manager

Background

Objective Design Standards Overview

The City is updating its Objective Design Standards for new commercial, multifamily, and mixed-use development. These clear, measurable requirements guide the design of these projects and do not apply to single-family homes. The update will make the standards clearer and easier to use, reflect development patterns that have emerged in Los Altos since the current standards were adopted, and ensure consistency with current State housing law and the City's adopted Housing Element.

The existing Objective Design Standards are codified in the Zoning Ordinance within the design control provisions for each applicable multifamily, commercial, and mixed-use zoning district. They are applied as part of the design review process alongside the numerical development standards for the applicable district, such as height, setbacks, lot coverage, etc. The applicable provisions are Sections 14.16.100 (R3-4.5), 14.18.120 (R3-5), 14.20.120 (R3-3), 14.22.100 (R3-1.8), 14.24.110 (R3-1), 14.34.140 (OA), 14.36.140 (OA-1 and OA-4.5), 14.40.150 (CN), 14.44.130 (CD), 14.48.130 (CRS), 14.50.170 (CT), 14.52.110 (CD/R3), and 14.54.130 (CRS/OAD).

Objective Design Standards are measurable requirements that can be verified without personal judgment. They work with each property's zoning development standards to establish clear expectations for building and site design. This gives applicants, City staff, decision-makers, and neighbors a consistent basis for understanding how proposed development will be reviewed and how it will relate to surrounding properties.

Unlike subjective standards, which depend on interpretation and may vary from person to person, objective standards produce predictable and consistently applied results. For example, requiring a

40-square-foot front entry is objective, while requiring a “welcoming front entry” is subjective. State law requires cities to evaluate multifamily housing proposals using only objective standards, whether the application is reviewed by staff or the Planning Commission. These standards therefore make the development review process more transparent and predictable while supporting thoughtful design and compatibility with the surrounding area.

Los Altos adopted its current Objective Design Standards in 2021. Three things have changed since then:

- **State housing law has continued to evolve.** Laws including the Housing Accountability Act, SB 330, SB 9, SB 35, and AB 2011 govern when and how objective standards must be applied. The City’s standards need to keep pace so that they remain legally sound and enforceable.
- **The City has made commitments in the Housing Element.** The adopted 6th Cycle Housing Element committed the City to increasing allowable building heights and intensities in the commercial, multifamily and mixed-use zoning district. The design standards must be updated to support these changes.
- **The City has years of practical experience applying the standards.** Staff, applicants, and residents have now seen how the standards work on real projects. That experience shows where the standards are clear and effective, where they don’t work, and where they overlap or conflict with the zoning code. An update is an opportunity to resolve those issues.

The update will build on the existing standards rather than replace them. Standards that are working well will be retained, while those that are unclear or ineffective will be amended or removed. New standards will also be developed for building types and design issues not currently addressed. The updated standards will be coordinated with the existing requirements of the Zoning Code and the General Plan.

Updates to the standards are intended to achieve the following objectives:

- Provide clear, objective design guidance and expectations for applicants, staff, and decision-makers.
- Support efficient and consistent plan review and project approvals.
- Align with applicable State housing and permitting laws.
- Maintain high-quality architecture and site design that is compatible with existing development patterns, streetscapes, and neighborhoods in Los Altos.
- Use an open and inclusive public process to inform the update of the Objective Design Standards.

Project Team and Timeline

The City has retained Kevin Gardiner & Associates with support from Van Meter Williams Pollack to assist staff with community engagement and revisions of the standards.

The project began in August 2026 and is anticipated to conclude in early 2027. The update includes four major phases:

Phase 1 – Community Outreach and Engagement: Gather input from community members, decision makers, City staff, and local design and development professionals to inform development of the updated standards.

Phase 2 – Existing Conditions and Policy Review: Review the existing Objective Design Standards, zoning regulations, General Plan policies, Housing Element commitments, area plans, and applicable state housing laws to establish the regulatory framework for the update.

Phase 3 – Objective Desing Standards Update: Building on community input and findings from the Existing Conditions and Policy Review Memorandum, the consultant team will prepare updated Objective Design Standards that are clear, measurable, and implementable by applicants.

Phase 4 – Public Review and Adoption: Public review of draft documents and formal hearings before the Planning Commission and City Council leading to the adoption of updated Objective Design Standards.

Community Engagement

Community Engagement is a critical component of any project. Planning has worked closely with the consultant team to develop a comprehensive engagement to support the update.

To make the subject accessible to a broader audience, the project will rely on visuals plain language materials to explain concepts such as building sale, density, site design and other development standards. As part of the messaging for the project, engagement materials will help direct conversations towards updated standards related to building form, scale, and site design while avoiding prescription architectural style requirements.

Outreach methods are intentionally varied and will include a combination of digital engagement, stakeholder interviews, focus groups, surveys, community events, and informational materials. Planned outreach activities include:

- Planning Commission Study Session
- Project webpage with updates, documents, surveys, videos, and event information
- Fact sheet and FAQ to explain the project
- Community pop-up event(s)
- Community Survey
- Desing and development professionals survey
- One-on-one stakeholder interviews with community organization, applicants, and industry representatives
- One-on-one stakeholder interviews with design and development professionals

Input from these efforts will be documented and synthesized into an engagement summary memorandum that will aid in the development of the updated standards.

Discussion

Staff is seeking early input from the Planning Commission to help shape the updated standards. Although the Planning Commission will formally review the draft standards and make a recommendation during the public hearing process, input at this stage will help staff and the consultant team identify key priorities and issues to address as the revised standards are developed.

Staff are requesting Planning Commission input on the following questions:

1. What elements of Los Altos' character and design quality are most important to preserve as development increases?
2. What aspects of the current Objective Design Standards work well, and where do you see the need for improvement?
3. What design challenges do you anticipate that are not adequately addressed in the current standards?
4. What design issues become more important as building increases in height and density?
5. What specific design outcomes should the updated standards achieve to balance housing production, neighborhood compatibility, and design excellence?

Next Steps

Following the study session, staff and the consultant team will incorporate input and direction from the Planning Commission into developing the updated standards. The draft standards are anticipated to return to the Planning Commission for review and recommendation in early 2027, followed by City Council consideration.