



## DESIGN NARRATIVE | 1482 FREEDOM

### Design Review Standards & SB 35

SB 35 requires that design standards used to evaluate a project be considered “objective.” The definition reads:

*“objective zoning standards” and “objective design review standards” mean 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 prior to submittal.”*

[Government Code Section 65913.4.\(a\)\(5\)](#)

Many of the design review standards outlined in WMC 14-12.403 are inconsistent with this definition as they require subjective judgement by the zoning administrator and thus cannot be applied to this project (see next page for more detail).

Notwithstanding these restrictions, the project team endeavors to deliver a high-quality urban infill project to the community. The following Statement of Design Intent outlines how the project respects the context of the neighborhood, is thoughtful about traffic impacts, and embraces sustainability.



| Design Review Standards   WMC 14-12.403   |  |
|---|--|
| (a) The proposed development is consistent with the goals and policies embodied in the adopted General Plan and the general purpose and intent of the applicable district regulations;  | Site is designated General Commercial on the General Plan Land Use Map and is within the Thoroughfare Commercial (CT) Zoning District. Multifamily is allowed in CT districts through a conditional use permit. The project is not required to apply for a conditional use permit under SB 35. |
| (b) The proposed development is compatible with and preserves the character and integrity of adjacent development and neighborhoods and includes improvements or modifications either on-site or with-in the public rights-of-way to mitigate development related adverse impacts such as traffic, noise, odors, visual nuisances, or other similar adverse effects to adjacent development and neighborhoods. These improvements or modifications may include but shall not be limited to the placement or orientation of buildings and entryways, parking areas, buffer yards, and the addition of landscaping, walls, or both;   | Not considered an objective standard under SB 35.  |
| (c) The proposed development will not generate pedestrian or vehicular traffic which will be hazardous or conflict with the existing and anticipated traffic in the neighborhood;   | Not considered an objective standard under SB 35.  |
| (d) The proposed development incorporates roadway improvements, traffic control devices or mechanisms, or access restrictions to control traffic flow or divert traffic as needed to reduce or eliminate development impacts on surrounding neighborhood streets;   | Not considered an objective standard under SB 35.  |
| <p>(e) The proposed development incorporates features to minimize adverse effects including visual impacts of the proposed development on adjacent properties:</p> <p>(1) Harmony and proportion of the overall design and the appropriate use of materials;</p> <p>(2) The suitability of the architectural style for the project; provided, however, it is not the intent of this section to establish any particular architectural style;</p> <p>(3) The sitting of the structure on the property, as compared to the sitting of other structures in the immediate neighborhood;</p> <p>(4) The size, location, design, color, number, and lighting; and</p> <p>(5) The bulk, height, and color of the project structure as compared to the bulk, height, and color of other structures in the immediate neighborhood;</p> | Not considered an objective standard under SB 35.  |
| (f) The proposed development complies with all additional standards imposed on it by the particular provisions of this chapter, any City of Watsonville architectural guidelines, development and public improvement standards, and all other requirements of this title applicable to the proposed development; and  | See "Planning Code Summary" table on page A0.0 of the plan submittal.  |
| (g) The proposed development will not be materially detrimental to the public health, safety, convenience and welfare or result in material damage or prejudice to other property in the vicinity.  | Not considered an objective standard under SB 35.  |



## Statement of Design Intent

The proposed project has taken measures to acknowledge the existing site, neighborhood conditions, and environmental concerns. We have done this by limiting traffic impacts of the neighborhood, following the local zoning codes for height, avoiding placing buildings against neighboring residential homes, orienting the front building to Freedom Boulevard and adding a new bus stop to help activate the street frontage, maximizing on-site rainwater retention, designing an all-electric building with some on-site power generation, and designing with microclimate in mind using some shading devices to block out some late afternoon summer sun.

Parking and traffic flow is regulated by placing most of our off-street parking to the rear of the lot. This accomplishes three things: first we keep cars entering and exiting away from Freedom to avoid creating traffic, second we are able to take advantage of the wider part of the site to get more cars parked on-site rather than neighborhood streets, and most importantly we are able to avoid putting any buildings near our residential neighbors to the east.

Local zoning codes for height are respected, and we have limited the buildings to 3-stories to avoid looking out of scale with the neighborhood.

The front building is oriented to help activate the street frontage on Freedom Boulevard. It faces the street with community spaces on the first floor. These resident amenities include a community center, offices for support services, and a computer lab. The frontage includes a dedication back to the city for a new bus stop and canopy and sufficient space for any future lane widening. This bus stop, in addition to 30 secured on-site bike parking stalls, should encourage residents to walk, bike, or use public transportation. This should further help activate the street frontage.

The shape of the back building helps to create a large yard for residents that faces south to get the most sun exposure. Landscaping is maximized wherever possible, with min 5' buffers between all building and sidewalks, and street trees proposed along Freedom and Atkinson as well as within the communal yard and off the back parking lot. Raised flow-through planters and permeable pavement at parking areas help deal with rainwater on-site in addition to the landscaped areas.

The back parking lot has solar canopies covering some parking spaces; in unison with any panels on the roof we will create some power generation to offset house loads. The building is designed to be all-electric to help facilitate the state's move towards net zero. For those units that do face west and get late sun in the summer we have some vertical shading devices to help lessen the solar heat gain and minimize cooling energy loads.

The two buildings have a variation of colored panels to create some vibrancy to the color palette and we are landscaping wherever possible to create a buffer of plants and trees between the sidewalks and unit windows. We are proposing a mural wall that will give the corner a splash of color and hopefully a sort of signature visual that helps define this corner and this project. We are excited to hear feedback on this piece in particular and get some community input. Flat roofs are employed to create a horizontal element, helping ground the building and mirror the existing neighborhood context.