



To: Town of Fairfax Planning Commission
From: Ande Flower, AICP, Principal Planner
Cc: David Woltering, Interim Planning and Building Services Director
Date: September 28, 2022

Re: Objective Development and Design Standards (ODDS) for Fairfax

SUMMARY

This memorandum outlines revisions made to the Fairfax ODDS.

ACTION REQUEST

Consider revisions and advise for the final draft Fairfax ODDS.

BACKGROUND

The Marin County Objective Design and Development Standards (ODDS) Toolkit, created by Opticos, is designed to be a catalogue of objective standards used to craft individualized guidelines for each Marin community to use when approving multifamily residential developments. ELS Architecture and Urban Design along with Schemata Workshop and Urban Field Studio has modified the ODDS Toolkit to be reflective of the local urban conditions and needs. Together, they have created streamlined standards that focus on performance in place of reliance on prescriptive styles and typologies rooted in early 20th century construction. The form-based approach prioritizes scale, proportion, relationship to the street and materiality to allow architects and developers to design projects that will add to the distinctive architecture of Fairfax instead of prescribing new development to conform to a limited few architectural style that may not be relevant in Fairfax.

Following is the guidance given at the August 31 Planning Commission meeting:

1. Do the zone designations make sense?
 - **Commissioners did not voice opposition to the proposed approach to zone designations.**

2. Do you agree with the approach of removing specific architectural typologies and styles from ODDS?
 - **The consensus agrees with this approach to remove typologies and styles to instead focus on quality materials and authenticity.**
3. Does moving the signage design guidelines out of the residential ODDS make sense?
 - **The Commission agrees with this approach. Some are open to moving signage to the Town's current zoning chapter in a separate process.**
4. Provisions for open space for agricultural use?
 - **Commissioners are not interested in this approach. Preference for open space to remain a natural landscape, without community gardens.**
5. What incentives do we want to offer to make this option attractive to developers?
 - **incentivizing affordability and open space**
 - **codifying a density bonus schedule**
6. What characteristics of the different zones should apply to the large sites? Should there be style/form requirements?
 - **Commissioners do not favor reductions in parking standards**
 - **Commissioners do not want parking to be unbundled**
7. Additional parking notes:
 - **Commissioners do not favor reductions in parking standards for T3SN and T4SN designations.**

DISCUSSION

The following three requests for further information are addressed specifically in the draft ODDS.

Reference in ODDS	Topic for consideration
Chapter 3, subsection 3 Page 39	Up-slope/ Down-slope: provide lowest density (T3EN) for sites over a certain slope
Chapter 3, subsection 4 Page 40	Explain how the ODDS incorporates side setbacks
Chapter 1: x.01.060 Adjustments to Standards	Include the exceptions section for review

Following are narrative responses to questions, comments, and requests made at the August 31, 2022 Planning Commission meeting:

1. Research General Plan consistency, specifically for clustering to preserve open space, application of creek and ridgeline ordinances and view shed rights.

Response: Creek setbacks and ridgeline ordinances remain in effect and are directly referred to in the ODDS. See below regarding clustering and preservation of open space.

2. Show how a focus on building-material quality can be mandated in the ODDS and how it will not decrease the Town's ability to encourage affordable housing construction.

Response: We've offered a broad pallet of materials to choose from that will allow developers to approach materiality in different ways depending on what type of development they are pursuing. Chapter 5 includes a section on materials describing what is allowed and how it should be used without prescribing style. The presence of buildings has more to do with size, setbacks and relationship to the street which is covered in Chapter 3 and Chapter 5, as well as site screening and features (Chapter 4); the Town will have significant control on those aspects, and through the control of materiality will require a level of quality that will meet the look and feel of Fairfax.

3. If owners bypass ministerial review, explain what options they have for approval.

Response: The route of using SB35 is the clearest path for a developer to move towards approval. However, if a developer is proposing a project outside of what is allowed via the ODDS (as an example, they may want additional height at the back of the lot above the 3 floors permitted with density bonus), they have the right to go through the traditional discretionary review process which likely would involve public input and Planning Commission approval.

4. Explain how do the ODDS handles emergency access issues.

Response: As you will see in Chapter 3, the form-based code has been specifically tailored to Fairfax, reflecting its unique scale and character. Fairfax blocks and existing development are used directly as examples in the document, and existing Fairfax sites are used as test cases showing how the ODDS will work. As presented to the committee, the architectural styles have been removed and replaced them with quality and materiality, allowing Fairfax

to grow within its own vision and not force prescribed traditional architectural styles that are not familiar in Fairfax.

5. Provide some very conceptual examples of clustering on the large sites that enable one to understand how clustering could occur while preserving open space and sensitively work with sloping terrain.

Response: In Chapter 6, several examples of the types of development that works well in clusters are provided – these are taken from the original typologies in the ODDS as designed and are appropriate for Fairfax should a developer be interested in pursuing.

6. Explain in more detail how current objective development standards, e.g., creek setbacks, in the Town's existing Zoning Code would merge with the ODDS.

Response: The ODDS refers back to the existing zoning for the creek setback and ridgeline protections. This can be found in Subsection 4 of each zone in Chapter 3. The ODDS document is focused on multifamily residential and refers other issues outside of development sites, and specific to existing zoning back to the Fairfax existing code.

7. Explain stormwater management in relation to the ODDS.

Response: The Town of Fairfax existing stormwater requirements will be in force. The ODDS do not change the existing code.

8. Important to address the comment that the ODDS seem to address flat sites, whereas the Fairfax large sites are sloped sites.

Response: Chapter 3 has been reworked to create a one-stop shop for each zone, and what is possible. Slopes are discussed in tandem with permissible heights, and early in the chapter giving context to finer details such as setbacks, open space, building massing. The most substantial slopes occur in the T3 and T4 zones. The height limits are defined with slope diagrams, and will require the architecture to conform to the site geometry, also defined is how the slope is measured for the high points of the structure such as the roof ridge. After looking at how many of the existing neighborhoods have dealt with the extreme slopes, special conditions were added for parking access - cars have the most difficulty traversing steep slopes, so options were given to allow parking in the front and side street setbacks (uncovered).

9. How is guest parking going to be addressed?

Response: Per x.04.040 (5)A, one guest space is required for every 4 units. This is theoretically lower than current code, but the current code relies on street parking availability which varies widely.

10. Give examples of how human scale, quality design, high-level craftsmanship, etc. can be translated into object design and development standards.

Response: At the planning level we are requiring small footprints (house scale buildings), requiring fine grained parcel subdivision appropriate for each zone, and requiring a collected 10% common open space.

11. Address concerns about excessive wall lengths.

Response: Through the "Design Site" width limits system we require that a lot must be subdivided at a scale that emulates that small lots of Fairfax. Each design site that is set (which might be multiple in a large parcel) has to abide by setbacks along the imaginary lot lines. This effectively requires gaps in the layout of homes that is similar to what Fairfax has. It also keeps homes from being "packed in there". In T3, any lot greater than 75' in width must be subdivided into two parcels AND that the buildings primary mass is limited to a max dimension of 36'x48' and the wings are limited to a max dimension of 30'x30'. In T4 we allow design sites that are larger, but limit the mass to 68' of width and 48' of depth, with the same dimensional limits to wings. We also require that the wings are a min. of 10' apart - especially important with the town homes. This essentially requires a run of town homes to be 4 homes long. We also required that 10% of the site is dedicated to common area open space. For T4 SMS, the downtown area, we developed a Design Site limit of 120' - this is based on some larger sites needs for parking structures. We allow the parking and site circulation to serve the entire legal site, even though it might reside in just a portion of the parcel. In all of the zones the architectural design is required to change from Design Site to Design Site (even though it might be a single parcel). We also require that any block greater than 360' in length has a paseo or street providing connectivity through the site (keep the scale small and walkable).

12. Address concerns about side setbacks and development component offsets in hillside areas to feature open space and adequate structural separation.

Response: Sites in Fairfax tend to be very irregular and often impacted by the topography and other natural conditions. As such, an applicant can seek an exception for unusual conditions as listed in Chapter 1. For large sites, we are encouraging clustering of housing to help preserve open space. The two largest parcels have such significant topography that they are largely unbuildable for anything other than a few single-family homes.

13. Clarify the ability to mix housing types in the large lot areas.

Response: The revised Town of Fairfax ODDS no longer has building typologies. Clustering is encouraged on large sites per Chapter 6, but there is no prescribed way in which housing typologies should be mixed.

14. Give examples of how open space, etc. can be incentivized.

Response: For the three zones, we are mandating 10% of the site go to meaningful outdoor open space. We also require that an additional minimum of 90 sf outdoor open space is private frontage. Open space is also incentivized by reduction in parking count which favors the higher density close to walkable areas. If you look at the housing types (pgs 4-6 of Chapter 7, the cottages (least dense) has the lowest amount of natural open space and the multiplex (densest) has the greatest amount.

15. Address concern about 2.5 stories, preferring either 2 or 3 stories instead.

Response: The ODDS provide several metrics regarding building height. These use different approaches to regulating height. The ODDS generally favor a ground floor that is elevated off grade, and the ODDS expects many more traditional building forms with pitched roofs. For this reason, the "2.5 floors" is used: if the ground floor is elevated above grade due to design or slope it will act as a "half floor" when considering height, and same with a pitched roof. The requirements also provide maximum measurements for highest eave/parapet and overall height.

16. Please note, the Town does have development standards for Ridgeline Development in Chapter 17.060 Ridgeline Development of the Town's Zoning Code; otherwise, the Town does require story poles be placed for construction of new homes, substantial modifications to existing homes, and second story residential construction as a tool to minimize privacy/view impacts – the story poles assist with possible structural modifications, window placement adjustments, etc., but there is not a specific view protection ordinance in place at this time.

Addressee
Company
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Response: Our opinion of the existing ridgeline scenic corridor code is that it is objective since it's directly connected to Visual Resources Map No. 9. Thus, we are referring to that existing code in reference to those conditions. However, § 17.060.040 AFFECTED SIGNIFICANT VIEW CORRIDORS does not appear sufficiently objective to be allowable in the case of an applicant using SB 35 since it requires the Planning Commission to make a judgement call on determining significant view corridors which are affected by the project.

ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment A: Draft ODDS