

San Rafael City Council
1400 Fifth Avenue, Room 203
San Rafael, CA 94901

March 16, 2024

Re: For Public Comment on Objective Design Standards

Honorable Mayor and City Council Members,

At the February 27, 2024, Planning Commission meeting the commissioners voted to approve the staff recommendation on New San Rafael Objective Design Standards (ODS) with the caveat to review in six months. These standards are for residential developments that qualify for ministerial or by-right process which means no Design Review Board (DRB), Planning Commission (PC), California Environmental Quality Act or public input. Thus, it's a critical policy for the future of San Rafael and the community.

BACKGROUND

- In September 2022 the DRB provided Jeff Ballentine substantial input on the proposed Objective Design Standards, but City staff never went back to the DRB with any revisions or further input.
- In reviewing the DRB meetings since then, the DRB never approved minutes from the September 2022 meeting. Nor can I find that the information that the DRB provided in that meeting was ever sent to the Planning Commissioners in preparation for the September 27, 2024, meeting.
- Now, 17 months later, the Planning Commissioners and the public are made aware that a \$30,000 grant was provided to the City on the condition that ODS be approved by the end of March 2024 otherwise, the City must repay the grant funds.

This begs the question, why in 17 months City staff didn't find time to follow the City's process: DRB minutes approved by DRB ► minutes sent to PC ► PC meeting held.

In the September 2022 DRB meeting Stewart Summers commented that for a City as geographically diverse as San Rafael, and he mentioned several of the 30+ different neighborhoods in San Rafael, he didn't see how one objective design standard document could work for all neighborhoods. Sara Rege and Michael Alexin concurred as did many of the public. I strongly recommend that you take their expert advice and approve the staff recommendation and have staff bring back the OBS to the Planning Commission in six months for further review and public comment.

I also take this opportunity to request that when boards and commissions make motions that stipulate certain policies or procedures be implemented but come back for review within a certain timeframe that City staff be vigilant and abide by that motion. For example, City Council voted to reduce the minimum inclusionary rate for affordable housing from 15% to 10%, that motion was predicated to come back after one year for review. Unless I missed it, that has not come back for review.

I appreciate your consideration of this important item and thank you for your service.

Sincerely,
Grace Geraghty
36-year resident of Terra Linda