

# 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.01 INTRODUCTION AND OBJECTIVES

### 1.01.01 INTRODUCTION

With its well-maintained neighborhoods, abundant greenery, attractive streetscapes and varied topography, the City of Piedmont is renowned for its distinct physical and architectural character. Piedmont has the largest per capita supply of pre-World War II single-family housing in the State of California. A diversity of homes and lot sizes can be found between and within its different neighborhoods. This includes modestly sized houses on flat parcels framed by relatively rectangular blocks, multi-story and stepped houses on irregular sized lots facing winding streets that follow the sloping terrain, and large parcels containing magnificent estates. Piedmont's compact civic and commercial district, with its nearby public open spaces, acts as the hub for the city.

As with other San Francisco Bay Area cities, more multi-generational households, increased wealth and property values, the growth of home-based workplaces, and other lifestyle changes have created increased pressure for alterations, expansions, and in some cases replacement of the existing housing stock. In a city where nearly all of the residential parcels have long ago been developed, it is important to consider how Piedmont's physical and historical setting can be maintained, while allowing for the flexibility to address these new housing needs.

State laws such as SB 35 and AB 686 incentivize the production of housing and direct the City of Piedmont to take an active role in the planning for new housing units, including housing affordable to all income levels in the Piedmont community. These Design Standards and Guidelines help streamline the review process for eligible development applications. In many cases this means that the consistency of an eligible development application with the Design Standards and Guidelines will be considered and decided by the Planning & Building Director (referred to as Director hereafter).

## 1.01.02 OBJECTIVES

The Piedmont Design Standards and Guidelines have been developed to be used by homeowners, design professionals, interested neighbors, City Staff and Planning Commissioners. They incorporate the provisions of the 1988 Piedmont Residential Design Review Guidelines and subsequent amendments. They also incorporate planning and land use provisions from the General Plan, and relevant aspects of the City Code, Chapter 17 Planning and Land Use (Zoning Ordinance), henceforth referred to as the Zoning Ordinance. Design standards and guidelines for landscaping and site improvements, multi-family and mixed-use properties, commercial buildings and building signage are also included. Design requirements for wireless communication facilities will be added as a separate package at a later date.

The Design Standards and Guidelines demonstrate, through photos, diagrams, and graphic examples, how to determine appropriate design solutions to address context, architectural character, building form, landscape, site amenities and their relationship to the street and neighboring properties. This allows for a more comprehensive and consistent method for project reviews, while outlining expectations by the City Staff for project applicants and their neighbors.

The Design Standards and Guidelines help implement Housing Element policies and programs to streamline the review of eligible development applications, such as SB 35 development proposals. In 2023, new divisions 6.05 and 6.07 were added to provide objective design standards for multi-family development and mixed-use commercial and residential development. Applicants may voluntarily apply for discretionary design review, if they choose to do so and communicate the request to the Planning & Building Director in writing.

For additional examples of good design, project applicants may ask City Staff to reference projects in Piedmont that have received the City's Annual Design Award. The purpose of the Design Awards program is to promote good design in the City. These projects provide real-world local examples of design excellence.

# 1.02 RELATIONSHIP TO THE GENERAL PLAN AND ZONING ORDINANCE

## 1.02.01 RELATIONSHIP TO THE GENERAL PLAN

The General Plan consists of elements (chapters) that set forth the City of Piedmont’s priority planning policies. These policies govern the Zoning Ordinance and the Design Standards and Guidelines. Among the topics in the General Plan are the preservation of existing terrain and natural vegetation, maintaining the public rights-of-way, protecting public open space, maintaining compatibility among buildings within established neighborhoods, ensuring the preservation of existing structures, maintaining significant view corridors, promoting sustainable development and green building practices, and ensuring reasonable accommodation to those with disabilities.

The pertinent elements within the General Plan that outline these policies and give direction to the Design Standards and Guidelines include the Land Use Element, the Transportation Element, the Natural Resources and Sustainability Element, the Design and Preservation Element, and the Housing Element. Each element stipulates particular design policies and standards that must be met by the Design Standards and Guidelines.

## 1.02.02 RELATIONSHIP TO THE ZONING ORDINANCE

The Zoning Ordinance also governs the Design Standards and Guidelines. It translates the policies of the General Plan into regulatory language. The design standards in the Zoning Ordinance instruct the way in which the Design Standards and Guidelines may be applied. Zoning districts are established to determine allowable land use and occupancies. Specific regulations are included in the Zoning Ordinance and within the Design Standards and Guidelines for building and site development, the administration of development agreements, design review, public hearings, permit approvals, and enforcement.

As a city comprised primarily of well-maintained and established residential districts, a major focus of the Zoning Ordinance is the preservation of the City of Piedmont’s existing architectural and natural setting. Nevertheless, the Zoning Ordinance provides the flexibility for incremental growth within Piedmont’s neighborhoods, allowing for changes to housing and commercial development to reflect more current needs.

## 1.03 HOW TO USE THE DESIGN GUIDELINES

As described in the **Introduction and Objectives** on pages 1-1, 1-2 and the **Relationship to the General Plan** and **Relationship to the Zoning Ordinance** on page 1-3, land use provisions outlined in the General Plan and the Zoning Ordinance are objective design standards. Section 5.03.01 and divisions 6.05 and 7.06 provide objective design standards specific to development types including ADUs, multi-family development, and mixed-use commercial and residential development. These standards ensure safety and design compatibility between adjacent properties within a neighborhood and throughout the City of Piedmont. By referencing these requirements, the Design Standards and Guidelines are rooted in the City Charter, while at the same time prescribing specific design measures to be considered when improvements are to be made to a site or buildings on a property.

### 1.03.01 ORGANIZATION OF THE DESIGN GUIDELINES

The Design Standards and Guidelines begin with an explanation of the Design Review Process. This ensures the general public understands how a particular type of project is reviewed for design approval.

The chapters that follow include topics such as Site Design and General Building Design which are relevant throughout the city. This enables all types of projects found in different zoning districts to be referenced to the same principles found in the general Design Standards and Guidelines.

Subsequent chapters focus on the design standards and guidelines for specific building types. These include Single-family Residential, Accessory Dwelling Units (ADU's), Multi-Family Residential, and Commercial and Mixed-Use Residential. A chapter addressing Wireless Communication Facilities will be added at a later date.

A brief Glossary of Terms is provided at the end of the Design Guidelines, with references to a more comprehensive list of terms that may be accessed.

### 1.03.02 FORMAT OF THE DESIGN STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES

Each design standard and guideline follows the same graphic format. The top of the page begins with Design Objectives. The objectives are then referenced to a provision of the General Plan or the Zoning Ordinance, often with a hyperlink for easy access to the full text. Below the Design Objectives are design standards or guidelines. Accompanying the design guidelines are design comments that further clarify the design guidelines. Adjacent to the design guidelines or design comments are photographs or graphics, with accompanying text, to further explain the guideline or comment. Adjacent to the design standards in divisions 5.03 (ADUs), 6.05 (Multi-

Family), and 7.06 (Mixed-Use) are diagrams to further explain the applicable objective design standards. A mockup of a typical guidelines page is shown below.

## DESIGN OBJECTIVES:

1. First Design Standard  
*Ref: General Plan Policy*
2. Second Design Standard  
*Ref: Zoning Ordinance Policy or other document policy*

## DESIGN GUIDELINES:

1. First Design Guideline

Photograph or Graphic to Further Explain First Design Guideline

Text describing photo or graphic

2. Second Design Guideline

Photograph or Graphic to Further Explain Second Design Guideline

Text describing photo or graphic

## DESIGN COMMENTS:

- A. First Design Comment  
(Related to Second Design Guideline)

Photograph or Graphic to Further Explain First Design Comment

Text describing photo or graphic

- B. Second Design Comment  
(Related to Second Design Guideline)

Photograph or Graphic to Further Explain Second Design Comment

Text describing photo or graphic