

LOS GATOS OBJECTIVE STANDARDS

SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING #3

November 17, 2021

FOCUS TOPICS

This document organizes the issues identified in the “Objective Standards Subcommittee Meeting 3 Focus Topics” file. Those issues stem from Town planning documents and are organized below by sub-topic for discussion at the third subcommittee meeting, November 17, 2021. The 131 issues that provide background for the discussion are provided below and organized according to each of the three sub-topics. Within those sub-topics, M-Group has grouped the issues into similar, finer grained categories to facilitate consideration by subcommittee members. There are 12 issues that come from the GPAC Chair/Vice Chair Referral that have been identified next to each issue.

1. LANDSCAPING AND SCREENING (100 Issues in COMMITTEE REVIEW tab)

a. Street Trees and Streetscape Landscaping

General

1. All projects shall be well landscaped.
2. Provide substantial site landscaping.
3. Preserve mature landscaping whenever possible.
4. Save mature trees and landscaping whenever possible.
5. Flowering plants are strongly encouraged.
6. Smaller landscaping (e.g., planter pots, window boxes) are used often within the Town to provide smaller scale elements close to the pedestrian, and should be included within commercial projects whenever possible.
7. Incorporate substantial landscaping in the building design using planter pots or boxes attached to the building, climbing vines in columns or lattices, or similar devices.
8. Special accent landscaping should be provided at entries to include flowering plants.
9. Trees should be 24-inch box size.
10. Pedestrian amenities are required in front setback areas.
11. A strong commitment to landscaping.

Street Trees

1. Maintain street trees, plant additional street trees, and encourage preservation and planting of trees on public and private parking. **GPAC Chair/Vice Chair Referral**
2. Maintain a high-quality streetscape appearance.
3. Require new development to provide visual continuity through tree planting, consistent use of low shrubs, and ground cover. **GPAC Chair/Vice Chair Referral**
4. Landscaping should relate to existing landscape treatments along the adjacent street fronts.
5. Reinforce the street's lush, landscaped character.
6. Encourage the strategic selection of street tree species to enhance neighborhood character and identity and to maximize shade coverage when mature. **GPAC Chair/Vice Chair Referral**
7. Where appropriate, larger tree species should be provided and grouped near the front property line in informal groupings.
8. Parking lot edges at adjacent streets should be defined positively with three feet walls and/or box hedges.

Streetscape Landscaping

1. Provide substantial landscaping along the North Santa Cruz Avenue and other commercial street frontages.
2. Avoid large amounts of paving between structures and the street sidewalk. Unless the front setback is used for a functional use, such as outdoor dining, over fifty percent of the front setback should be devoted to green landscaping.
3. Provide landscaping along the Industrial Way and secondary street frontages.
4. Front setback areas should contain some elements of landscaping. These may be in-ground plantings, plants in containers or plants within window boxes attached to the ground floor facade of the structures.
5. Open space, in excess of any front setback, shall be devoted to functional use or landscaped areas.
6. Los Gatos Boulevard setbacks should be substantially landscaped.
7. A minimum landscaped setback of 15 feet shall be maintained from fronting sidewalks. (Note: Current zoning code requires only a 10 foot setback but larger setbacks along the Boulevard are common)
8. The inner edge of front setbacks (i.e., away from the street edge) should be treated as a positive edge with one or more of the following:

- Low wall
- Hedge
- Trellis structure
- Buildings

9. Front setback edge treatments should be three feet in height to screen the view of automobile grilles in the parking lot from street view.
10. Front setback landscaping shall include large species trees.
11. Landscaping adjacent to street rights-of-way, driveway entrances, or trails should be avoided when it might restrict sight distance or interfere with already established native plants.
12. Automobile entries to projects and individual buildings shall be given special treatment with paving and landscaping.
13. Define major vehicular entries with edge landscaping.

b. Screening

Screening from Adjacent Properties

1. Encourage the use of landscaping such as trees, shrubs, and trellised vines to mitigate the effects of building mass, lower noise, and reduce heat generation.

GPAC Chair/Vice Chair Referral

2. Landscaping may be used to mitigate privacy concerns so long as the landscaping does not deny solar access to living spaces and actively used yard areas of neighboring homes.
3. Shrubs used to promote privacy should be fifteen gallon in size and six feet minimum height at planting.
4. In many cases, the use of a lattice work with dense, flowering vines may be used. In those cases, a lesser building material (e.g., concrete block) may be used if the lattice work will provide a strong texture while the landscaping is growing to maturity, and if it can be demonstrated that the landscaping selected will provide a green screening of the walls within two years of installation.
5. As a general rule, privacy landscaping should be placed with a cone-of-vision defined by a thirty degree angle from the side window jambs of second story windows.
6. Provide greater landscape buffering adjacent to residential parcels.
7. Use trees to buffer views between C-1 uses and LM uses across Industrial Way.
8. Provide landscaping between commercial structures and neighboring residents to screen, break up and soften views of the structures. See diagram to the right for view cones in which buffering landscaping should be provided.
9. Incorporate screening measures (e.g., solid railing walls, lattice work, or planters) to obscure lines of sight to neighboring properties.

10. Use landscaping to screen views to your neighbor's living areas most sensitive to privacy. Use evergreen trees and shrubs to provide year-round privacy.
11. Existing vegetation that protects privacy should not be removed.
12. Provide landscaping to buffer views from residential parcels to the commercial structures.

Utility and Private Area Screening

1. Encourage landscaping plans to maximize the use of trees for energy efficiency, climate control, screening, shading (especially of parking lots), and aesthetics.

GPAC Chair/Vice Chair Referral

2. All roof equipment must be screened to minimize its visual impact on views from public rights-of-way.
3. Locate equipment in recessed roof wells or hide equipment behind parapet walls so that it cannot be seen are the preferred solutions.
4. Utilize landscaping and/or walls to screen transformers and other utility elements if they must be located in close proximity to the public right-of-way.
5. Roof screens should be constructed from materials as similar to the building walls as possible, and should be designed to appear as an architecturally integrated part of the building rather than an added-on element.
6. Screen all roof top mechanical equipment.
7. Visually screen all trash and outdoor storage areas from view.
8. Screen and control noise sources such as parking, outdoor activities, and mechanical equipment (e.g., air conditioning and pool equipment).
9. Where continuity of design is difficult to achieve, substantial landscaping should be provided to screen the area.
10. Landscaping should have form and substance to define edges and paths, to provide visual focal points, and to buffer less desirable views (e.g., less finished facades facing public ways or residences).

Parking Area Screening and Landscaping

1. Provide low walls and landscaping at parking lot edges adjacent to public streets.
2. Use low hedges and walls to screen views of parking lots.
3. Trees shall be a major design feature in all parking lots.
4. Parking lots shall be heavily landscaped.
5. Break up large parking lots with groupings of trees and shrubs.
6. Parking lot edges at property or setback lines should include landscape islands with large species trees and low plants to visually break up long lines of parked vehicles.

7. Landscaping should be used to address specific conditions on the site (e.g., controlling erosion, screening buildings, providing privacy, creating shade and maintaining solar access).
8. Minimize the visual impact of parking lot landscaping.

c. Fencing and Retaining Walls

Fencing

1. Require solid fencing over three feet high to be designed so that it does not isolate the structures from the street, or it shall be set back and landscaped.

GPAC Chair/Vice Chair Referral

2. Avoid fences over three feet tall along public street frontages.
3. Relate any street visible fences and gates to the house facades.
4. The use of fences and walls shall be minimized and located so that natural landforms appear to flow together and are not disconnected. The primary emphasis shall be on maintaining open views, protecting wildlife corridors, and maintaining the rural, open, and natural character of the hillsides.
5. Solid fencing materials shall not be used unless needed for privacy and an exception is granted pursuant to Section 29.40.0315 of the Town Code.
6. Fences shall not be allowed in areas that would impede the movement of wildlife as determined by the decision making body.
7. Temporary construction fencing shall be limited to the building envelope or shall be elevated to allow for movement of small animals.
8. Wood rail-type fences and gates are preferred.
9. Chain link fences are strongly discouraged.
10. Chain link fencing should be coated with green, brown, or black vinyl or finish and shall be supported by a wood frame. Dark, painted metal poles may be required if deemed appropriate by the decision making body.
11. Fences should follow the topography.
12. Entryway gates and fencing should be of an open design.
13. Entry gates that are monumental are strongly discouraged.

Retaining Walls

1. Retaining walls shall not be used to create large, flat yard areas. The limited use of retaining walls may be allowed when it can be demonstrated that their use will substantially reduce the amount of grading.
2. Retaining walls that are visible from a public street shall have a veneer of natural stone, stained concrete, or textured surface to help blend the wall with the natural hillside environment and to promote a rural character.

3. Retaining walls should not be higher than five feet. Where an additional retained portion is necessary due to unusual or extreme conditions (e.g., lot configuration, steep slope, or road design), the use of multiple-terraced, lower retaining structures is preferred.
4. Terraced retaining walls should be separated by at least three feet and include appropriate landscaping.
5. Retaining and planter walls should be provided with a landscaped setback or buffer of at least five feet adjacent to the street.
6. Retaining walls should blend with the natural topography, follow existing contours, and be curvilinear to the greatest extent possible. Retaining walls should not run in a straight continuous direction for more than 50 feet without a break, offset, or planting pocket to break up the long flat horizontal surface.
7. Landscaping should be provided adjacent to retaining walls and should include a combination of native trees and shrubs to screen the wall.
8. Retaining walls should be constructed of permanent materials (stone, concrete, masonry block/brick) rather than wood.

d. Landscaping Related to Building Design, Fire Safety, and Paving

Landscaping Related to Building Design

1. Visually treat any exposed walls visible from fronting streets.
2. Provide attractive solid walls of concrete block or stucco to separate commercial uses from adjacent residential parcels.
3. Design wall edges and landscaping to be compatible with the building design.

Fire Safety

1. The landscape plan shall create defensible space around the home, and if there is a fire ladder on the property it shall be eliminated in an environmentally sensitive manner.
2. The fuel load within a defensible space should be minimized by use of selective pruning, thinning and clearing as follows:
 - Removal of flammable species and debris
 - Removal of dead, dying or hazardous trees
 - Mow dead grasses
 - Removal of dead wood from trees and shrubs
 - Thin tree crowns (maximum of 25%)
3. Discontinuous fuel sources should be created and maintained within a defensible space through use of the following techniques (see illustrations on page 27 (of Hillside Development Standards and Guidelines)):
 - Thin vegetation to form discontinuous groupings of trees or shrubs

- Limb trees up from the ground
- Establish a separation between the lowest branches of a tree and any understory shrubs.

4. Landscaping within a defensible space should be designed with fire safety in mind. Landscaping in defensible space should be:
 - Fire resistant and drought tolerant
 - Predominantly low growing shrubs and groundcovers (limit shrubs to 30% coverage)
 - Limited near foundations (height and density)
5. Design for fire safety. Landscape design shall incorporate fire safety design strategies such as defensible space.
6. Trees and highly flammable vegetation should be planted 30 feet away from the home.

Paving

1. Enhance front sidewalk and plaza paving.
2. The use of brick banding along with concrete is encouraged for the commercial street sidewalks.
3. A change of pattern and/or material for paved areas within front setback sidewalks and plazas is strongly encouraged to set them apart from the sidewalks. The use of concrete that would just seem to be a large extension of the sidewalk will be strongly discouraged.
4. Where paved plaza areas are located adjacent to sidewalks, provide a positive separation between the two with landscaping and/or raised planters.
5. Paving within the setback areas should be distinctively different from the adjacent public sidewalk (e.g., brick pavers.)
6. Pave vestibule floors with tile, brick, stone, or a similar high quality hard surface to set the vestibule apart from the sidewalk.

Other (General)

1. Open space should be located at the rear of the parcel or at the sides of the parcel away from the front facade. This open space will allow for rear dining courtyards for restaurants, outdoor display areas for businesses, enhanced entries to courtyards for small retail and personal service uses with an orientation to the fronting street.
2. Landscaping materials should be arranged in random, informal groupings to blend with the character of the surrounding natural hillsides and adjacent properties. Create a simple rather than elaborate landscape solution and integrate existing vegetation into the landscape design.

2. OPEN SPACE (30 Issues in COMMITTEE REVIEW tab)

a. General

Common Open Spaces

1. Encourage new developments to include common open space areas in the form of public gathering spaces (i.e., plazas, squares, pocket parks) that are designed to stimulate pedestrian activity and complement the appearance and form of adjoining buildings. **GPAC Chair/Vice Chair Referral**
2. Encourage that all multi-family developments include a minimum of 40 square feet of private open space in the form of a covered or uncovered patio to allow for light, air, and a private space. **GPAC Chair/Vice Chair Referral**
3. Provide public open space which can be used for play, recreation, social or cultural activates.
4. Defined outdoor spaces should be incorporated into the overall building and project design
5. Shade trees that provide relief from the sun should be incorporated within common outdoor spaces.
6. An exception to the location of open space fronting on front sidewalks may be considered for outdoor dining plazas along the length of pass-throughs.
7. Encourage the layout of streets, blocks, and pedestrian corridors in new development to provide views of hillsides. **GPAC Chair/Vice Chair Referral**

General

1. Coordinate with Caltrans to maintain and beautify overpasses, and create and maintain distinct entrances in to Los Gatos from SR 17 offramps, especially at Lark Avenue and SR 9, including themed landscaped areas, use of natural terrain and elements, and public art. **GPAC Chair/Vice Chair Referral**
2. Encourage applicants to consider the Mediterranean climate in Los Gatos and plan for sustainable site design to address adequate solar access, water conservation and retention, and wind conditions. **GPAC Chair/Vice Chair Referral**
3. Minimize impervious area to the maximum extent practical.

b. Hillside Development Guidelines

Grading

1. Unless specifically approved by the Town, strip grading for the purpose of clearing land of native vegetation is prohibited except for small areas adjacent to buildings, access drives, and parking areas.

2. Graded areas shall not be larger than the area of the footprint of the house, plus that area necessary to accommodate access, guest parking, and turnaround areas.
3. After placing development the site shall be restored as closely as possible to its original topography.
4. Contour grading techniques shall be used to provide a variety of both slope percentage and slope direction in a three-dimensional undulating pattern similar to existing, adjacent terrain.
5. Hard edges left by cut and fill operations shall be given a rounded appearance that closely resembles the natural contours of the land.
6. Manufactured slopes adjacent to driveways and roadways shall be modulated by berming, regrading, and landscaping to create visually interesting and natural appearing streetscapes. However, preservation of trees and elimination of retaining walls is a priority.
7. Where cut and fill conditions are created, slopes shall be varied rather than left at a constant angle, which creates an unnatural, engineered appearance.
8. The angle of any graded slope shall be gradually transitioned to the angle of the natural terrain. Creation of new grades slopes, significantly steeper than local natural slopes should be minimized.

Drainage

1. Natural drainage courses shall be preserved with any native vegetation intact and shall be enhanced to the extent possible, and shall be incorporated as an integral part of the site design in order to preserve the natural character of the area.
2. Manmade drainage channels shall receive a naturalizing treatment such as rock and landscaping so that the structure appears as a natural part of the environment.
3. Manmade drainage channels should be placed in the least visible locations possible.
4. Lining of natural drainage courses is discouraged.

Outdoor Activity Areas and Impervious Surface

1. Locate outdoor activity areas adjacent to neighbor's outdoor activity areas rather than in close proximity to their quiet areas (bedrooms).
2. Due to topographic constraints, not every lot will be able to accommodate a pool or sport court. Swimming pools and sport courts are prohibited on slopes greater than 30 percent.

3. Impervious surfaces should be minimized. Parking areas, walkways, patios, and similar areas should be constructed with pervious surfaces, such as pavers set in sand, natural stone, decomposed granite, gravel, and similar materials. At-grade decks constructed of sustainable decking materials can also be used in place of impervious patio materials.
4. Run off from impervious surfaces should not be directed toward areas of native trees and shrubs.
5. The natural appearance of the hillsides shall be maintained.
6. The use of impervious surfaces should be minimal. Walkways may be constructed of decomposed granite, pavers set in sand, or similar techniques.
7. Location of open space. Private open space and community recreation space may be located in required yards provided the location is approved by the deciding body, and provided an equivalent land area is designated as community recreation space elsewhere on the property.
8. Provide landscaped Town gateways that create visual connection between the importance of the natural hillsides and open space areas to the community of Los Gatos. **GPAC Chair/Vice Chair Referral**

3. VIEWSHEDS (1 Issue in COMMITTEE REVIEW tab)

1. Maintenance of a sense of place with views of surrounding hills preserved.