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## Chapter 18.05 MIXED-USE DISTRICTS

Sections:

**18.05.010 Purpose.**

**18.05.020 Land use regulations.**

**18.05.030 Development standards.**

**18.05.040 Supplemental regulations.**

**18.05.010 Purpose.**

The specific purposes of the mixed-use districts are to:

- A. Provide for the orderly, well planned, and balanced development of mixed-use districts.
- B. Encourage a mix of uses that promotes convenience, economic vitality, fiscal stability, and a pleasant quality of life.
- C. Promote pedestrian- and transit-oriented, mixed-use commercial centers at appropriate locations.
- D. Establish design standards that improve the visual quality of development and create a unified, distinctive, and attractive character along mixed-use streets.
- E. Provide appropriate buffers and transition standards between commercial and residential uses to preserve both commercial and mixed-use feasibility and residential quality.

Additional purposes of each mixed-use district that follow, implement General Plan classifications of "Mixed Use, 30-40 du/ac," "Mixed Use, 38-50 du/ac," "Mixed Use, 75-100 du/ac," "Mixed Use, 90-120 du/ac," and "Neighborhood Retail/Mixed Use, 75-120."

F. MU-DC-100 Mixed-Use Downtown Core. This district is intended to maintain the pedestrian-oriented environment in the heart of San Carlos's downtown, with a focus on ground-level active storefronts and pedestrian- and transit-oriented development that encourages pedestrian activity and supports multimodal transportation. Physical form is regulated to reflect the urban character of the downtown core. Allowable uses include retail, commercial, and office uses, as well as residential development of up to one hundred (100) units per net acre.

G. MU-D-100 Mixed-Use Downtown. This district is intended to maintain the pedestrian-oriented environment around the downtown core and connect surrounding districts. Physical form is regulated to provide storefront buildings that frame the street and support pedestrian- and transit-oriented development that encourages pedestrian activity and supports multimodal transportation. Allowable uses include retail, commercial, and office uses, as well as residential development of up to one hundred (100) units per net acre.

H. MU-D-120 Mixed-Use Downtown. This district is intended to maintain the pedestrian-oriented environment around the downtown core and connect surrounding districts. Physical form is regulated to provide storefront buildings that frame the street and support pedestrian- and transit-oriented development that encourages pedestrian activity and supports multi-modal transportation. Allowable uses include retail, commercial, and office uses, as well as residential development of up to one hundred twenty (120) units per net acre.

I. MU-SA-50 Mixed-Use Station Area. This district is intended to provide for transit-oriented development to support vitality around transit centers and the historic San Carlos Train Depot and provide linkages to the downtown core and neighborhoods adjacent to Old County Road. Allowable uses include retail, commercial, and office uses, as well as residential development of up to fifty (50) units per net acre.

J. MU-SC-120 Mixed-Use San Carlos Avenue. This district is intended to allow one (1) or more of a variety of residential and nonresidential uses to encourage a greater mix and intensity of uses in a pedestrian- scaled environment at a scale and form that is appropriate to its neighborhood context and adjacent residential uses and forms. This district is also intended to provide transit-oriented development that supports multimodal transportation. Allowable uses include commercial and office uses, as well as residential development up to one hundred twenty (120) units per net acre.

K. MU-NB-120 Mixed-Use North Boulevard. This district is intended to facilitate the transformation of the northern portion of El Camino Real into a multimodal, mixed-use corridor. The physical form varies to reflect the urban character of the El Camino Real corridor and to transition to surrounding, lower-density districts. This district allows a mix of residential development of up to one hundred twenty (120) units per net acre and retail and commercial uses, as well as hotels and other commercial uses oriented toward a regional market.

L. MU-SB-100 Mixed-Use South Boulevard. This district is intended to facilitate the transformation of the southeastern portion of Laurel Street into a mixed-use corridor. The physical form varies to transition from MU-N-40 west of Laurel Street to MU-SB-120 on El Camino Real. This district allows a mix of residential development of up to one hundred (100) units per net acre and retail and commercial uses.

M. MU-SB-120 Mixed-Use South Boulevard. This district is intended to facilitate the transformation of the southern portion of El Camino Real into a multimodal, mixed-use corridor. The physical form varies to reflect the urban character of the El Camino Real corridor. This district allows a mix of residential development of up to one hundred twenty (120) units per net acre and retail and commercial uses, as well as hotels and other commercial uses oriented toward a regional market.

N. MU-N-40 Neighborhood Mixed-Use. This district is intended to provide an appropriate transition from mixed-use areas into the residential neighborhoods. This district allows a mix of residential and commercial development appropriately scaled to ensure a residential physical form to relate to adjacent single-family residential neighborhoods. Allowable uses include retail, commercial, and office uses, as well as residential development of up to forty (40) units per net acre.

O. MU-N-50 Neighborhood Mixed-Use. This district is intended to provide an appropriate transition from mixed-use areas into the residential neighborhoods. This district allows a mix of residential and commercial development appropriately scaled to ensure a residential physical form to relate to adjacent single-family residential neighborhoods. Allowable uses include retail, commercial, and office uses, as well as residential development of up to fifty (50) units per net acre.

P. MU-N-120 Neighborhood Mixed-Use. This district is intended to reflect the form of El Camino Real while providing a transition from MU-NB-120 to MU-N-50 and RM-100 zoning districts. This district allows a mix of residential and commercial development appropriately scaled to ensure a residential physical form to relate to adjacent single-family residential neighborhoods. Allowable uses include retail, commercial, and office uses, as well as residential development of up to one hundred twenty (120) units per net acre. (Ord. 1596 § 6 (Exh. A), 2023; Ord. 1438 § 4 (Exh. A (part)), 2011)

#### **18.05.020 Land use regulations.**

Table 18.05.020 prescribes the land use regulations for mixed-use districts. The regulations for each district are established by letter designations as follows:

“P” designates permitted uses.

“M” designates use classifications that are permitted after review and approval of a minor use permit by the Zoning Administrator.

“C” designates use classifications that are permitted after review and approval of a conditional use permit by the Planning and Transportation Commission.

“(#)” numbers in parentheses refer to specific limitations listed at the end of the table.

“-” designates uses that are not permitted.

Use classifications are defined in Chapter [18.40](#), Use Classifications. In cases where a specific land use or activity is not defined, the Director shall assign the land use or activity to a classification that is substantially similar in character. Use classifications and sub classifications not listed in the table or not found to be substantially similar to the uses below are prohibited. The table also notes additional use regulations that apply to various uses. Section numbers in the right-hand column refer to other sections of this title.

**TABLE 18.05.020: LAND USE REGULATIONS—MIXED-USE DISTRICTS**

Use Classifications	MU-DC-100	MU-D-100	MU-D-120	MU-SC-120	MU-NB-120	MU-SB-100	MU-SB-120	MU-N-40	MU-N-50	MU-N-120	Additional Regulations
Residential Uses											

Use Classifications	MU-DC-100	MU-D-100	MU-D-120	MU-SC-120	MU-NB-120	MU-SB-100	MU-SB-120	MU-N-40	MU-N-50	MU-N-120	Additional Regulations
Residential Housing Types	See subclassifications below										
Multi-Unit Residential	P(1)	P(1)	P(2)	P	P(2)	P	P(2)	P(3)	P(2)	P(2)	
Accessory Dwelling Unit	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	Only if it includes a proposed or existing dwelling
Junior Accessory Dwelling Unit	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Elderly and Long-Term Care	-	-	-	C	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Family Child Care	See subclassifications below										
Small	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	
Large	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	See Section <a href="#">18.23.090</a> , Day care centers and large family child care homes
Residential Care Facilities	See subclassifications below										
General	-	M(1)	M(1)	M	-	-	-	-	-	-	See Section <a href="#">18.23.200</a> , Residential care facilities
Limited	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	
Senior	-	M(1)	M(1)	M	-	-	-	-	-	-	See Section <a href="#">18.23.200</a> , Residential care facilities

Use Classifications	MU-DC-100	MU-D-100	MU-D-120	MU-SC-120	MU-NB-120	MU-SB-100	MU-SB-120	MU-N-40	MU-N-50	MU-N-120	Additional Regulations
Single Room Occupancy	C(1)	C(1)	C(1)	C	C(1)	C(1)	C(1)	C(3,14)	C	C	See Section <a href="#">18.23.220</a> , Single room occupancy hotels
Transitional Housing	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	See Section <a href="#">18.23.250</a> , Transitional and supportive housing
Supportive Housing	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	See Section <a href="#">18.23.250</a> , Transitional and supportive housing

## Public and Semi-Public Uses

Colleges and Trade Schools, Public or Private	-	-	-	-	P	P	P	-	-	-	
Community Assembly, Less Than 3,500 Square Feet	-	P	P	P	P	P	P	M	M	M	See Section <a href="#">18.23.080</a> , Community assembly facilities
Community Assembly, 3,500 Square Feet or More	-	C	C	C	M	M	M	-	-	-	
Community Garden	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	
Cultural Institutions	C(4)	P	P	C	M	M	M	M	M	M	
Day Care Centers	-	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	See Section <a href="#">18.23.090</a> , Day care

Use Classifications	MU-DC-100	MU-D-100	MU-D-120	MU-SC-120	MU-NB-120	MU-SB-100	MU-SB-120	MU-N-40	MU-N-50	MU-N-120	Additional Regulations
Emergency Shelter	-	-	-	-	P	P	P	-	-	-	See Section <a href="#">18.23.110</a> , Emergency shelters
Government Offices	-	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	
Hospitals and Clinics	-	P	P	-	P	P	P	-	-	-	
Instructional Services	M	P	P	-	P	P	P	P	P	P	See Section <a href="#">18.23.260</a> , Formula business uses
Park and Recreation Facilities, Public	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	
Public Safety Facilities	-	C	C	-	C	C	C	C	C	C	
Schools, Public or Private	-	-	-	-	C	C	C	C	C	C	
Social Service Facilities	-	-	-	-	C	C	C	C	C	C	
Commercial Uses											
Animal Care, Sales and Services	See subclassifications below										
Grooming and Pet Stores	-	P	P	-	P	P	P	P(5)	P(5)	P(5)	
Veterinary Services	-	C(5)	C(5)	C(5)	C(5)	C(5)	C(5)	C(5)	C(5)	C(5)	
Artists' Studios	M	P	P	-	P	P	P	P(5)	P(5)	P(5)	

Use Classifications	MU-DC-100	MU-D-100	MU-D-120	MU-SC-120	MU-NB-120	MU-SB-100	MU-SB-120	MU-N-40	MU-N-50	MU-N-120	Additional Regulations
Automobile/Vehicle Sales and Services	See subclassifications below										
Automobile Rentals	-	-	-	-	C(6)	C(6)	C(6)	-	-	-	See Section <a href="#">18.23.050</a> , Automobile/vehicle sales and services, and Section <a href="#">18.23.260</a> , Formula business uses
Automobile/Vehicle Sales and Leasing	P(6,7)	P(6,7)	P(6, 7)	P(6,7)	P(6,7)	P(6,7)	P(6, 7)	-	-	-	
Automobile/Vehicle Washing	-	-	-	-	C(6)	C(6)	C(6)	-	-	-	
Service Station	-	-	-	-	C(6)	C(6)	C(6)	-	-	-	
Banks and Financial Institutions	P(8)	P	P	M	P	P	P	M(9)	M(9)	M(9)	See Section <a href="#">18.23.260</a> , Formula business uses
Business Services	-	P(9)	P(9)	P(9)	P(9)	P(9)	P(9)	P(9)	P(9)	P(9)	
Commercial Entertainment and Recreation	See subclassifications below										
Cinema/Theaters	C(17)	C(17)	C(17)	-	C(17)	C(17)	C(17)	-	-	-	See Section <a href="#">18.23.260</a> , Formula business uses
Small-Scale	-	C(17)	C(17)	-	C(17)	C(17)	C(17)	-	-	-	
Large-Scale	-	C(17)	C(17)	-	C(19)	-	-	-	-	-	
Eating and Drinking Establishments	See subclassifications below										
Bars/Night Clubs/Lounges	C(17)	C(17)	C(17)	-	C(17)	C(17)	C(17)	-	-	-	See Section <a href="#">18.23.140</a> , Outdoor dining,

Use Classifications	MU-DC-100	MU-D-100	MU-D-120	MU-SC-120	MU-NB-120	MU-SB-100	MU-SB-120	MU-N-40	MU-N-50	MU-N-120	Additional Regulations
Full Service	P(17)	P(17)	P(17)	P	P(17)	P(17)	P(17)	C(10, 17)	C(10, 17)	C(10, 17)	and Section <a href="#">18.23.260</a> , Formula business uses
Convenience	P(18)	P(18)	P(18)	P	P(18)	P(18)	P(18)	C(10)	C(10)	C(10)	See Section <a href="#">18.23.260</a> , Formula business uses
Food Preparation	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	See Section <a href="#">18.23.260</a> , Formula business uses
Funeral Parlors and Mortuaries	-	C	C	C	C	C	C	-	-	-	
Lodging	See subclassifications below										
Bed and Breakfast	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	See Section <a href="#">18.23.070</a> , Bed and breakfast lodging, and Section <a href="#">18.23.260</a> , Formula business uses
Hotels and Motels	P(11, 17)	P(17)	P(17)	M	P(17)	P(17)	P(17)	M(14, 17)	M(17)	M(17)	See Section <a href="#">18.23.260</a> , Formula business uses
Nurseries and Garden Centers	P(9, 20)	P(9, 20)	P(9, 20)	-	P(9, 20)	See Section <a href="#">18.23.260</a> , Formula business uses					
Offices	See subclassifications below										

Use Classifications	MU-DC-100	MU-D-100	MU-D-120	MU-SC-120	MU-NB-120	MU-SB-100	MU-SB-120	MU-N-40	MU-N-50	MU-N-120	Additional Regulations
Business and Professional	P(12)	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	See Section <a href="#">18.23.260</a> , Formula business uses
Medical and Dental	P(12)	P	P	P	P	P	P	P(9)	P(9)	P(9)	See Section <a href="#">18.23.260</a> , Formula business uses
Walk-In Clientele	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	See Section <a href="#">18.23.260</a> , Formula business uses
Personal Services	See subclassifications below										
General Personal Services	(13)	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	See Section <a href="#">18.23.170</a> , Personal services, and Section <a href="#">18.23.260</a> , Formula business uses
Tattoo or Body Modification Parlor	-	-	-	-	M	M	M	-	-	-	
Retail Sales	See subclassifications below										
Cannabis Dispensary	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Convenience Markets	P(18)	P(18)	P(18)	P	P(18)	P	P	P(15)	P	P	See Section <a href="#">18.23.260</a> , Formula business uses
Food and Beverage Sales	P(18)	P(18)	P(18)	P	P(18)	P	P	P(16)	P(16)	P(16)	See Section <a href="#">18.23.260</a> , Formula business uses

Use Classifications	MU-DC-100	MU-D-100	MU-D-120	MU-SC-120	MU-NB-120	MU-SB-100	MU-SB-120	MU-N-40	MU-N-50	MU-N-120	Additional Regulations
General Retail	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	See Section <a href="#">18.23.260</a> , Formula business uses
Price Point Retail	-	-	-	-	M	M	M	-	-	-	
Second-Hand Store	-	-	-	-	P	P	P	P	P	P	
Retail Establishments Selling Ammunition or Firearms	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Industrial Uses											
Recycling Facility, Reverse Vending Machine	-	-	-	P	P	P	P	P	-	-	See Section <a href="#">18.23.190</a> , Recycling facilities
Transportation, Communication, and Utilities Uses											
Communication Facilities	See sub classifications below										
Antenna and Transmission Towers	See Chapter <a href="#">18.24</a> , Wireless Telecommunications Facilities										
Facilities within Buildings	-	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	
Transportation Passenger Terminals	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Utilities, Minor	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	
Other Applicable Types											

Use Classifications	MU-DC-100	MU-D-100	MU-D-120	MU-SC-120	MU-NB-120	MU-SB-100	MU-SB-120	MU-N-40	MU-N-50	MU-N-120	Additional Regulations
Accessory Uses and Structures	See Section <a href="#">18.23.030</a> , Accessory uses, and Section <a href="#">18.15.020</a> , Accessory buildings and structures										
Home Occupations	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	See Section <a href="#">18.23.120</a> , Home occupations
Drive-In and Drive-Through Facilities	Prohibited in MU districts; see Section <a href="#">18.23.100</a> , Drive-in and drive-through facilities										
Nonconforming Use	Chapter <a href="#">18.19</a> , Nonconforming Uses, Structures, and Lots										
Temporary Use	Chapter <a href="#">18.31</a> , Temporary Use Permits										

## Specific Limitations:

1. Not allowed on the ground floor along Laurel Street and San Carlos Avenue frontages.
2. Conditional use permit approval required to allow residential uses on the ground floor along El Camino Real frontage.
3. Not allowed on the ground floor along Old County Road.
4. Not allowed on Laurel Street or San Carlos Avenue.
5. Provided that such use shall be completely enclosed in a building of soundproof construction.
6. For properties without frontage along El Camino Real, only retail sales consistent with the definition of "general retail" and five thousand (5,000) square feet or less.
7. Must be within an enclosed structure.
8. Limited to establishments with a gross floor area of two thousand five hundred (2,500) square feet or less. Limited to the ground floor of a building located on an interior lot a minimum of five hundred (500) feet from any other financial institution.
9. Limited to establishments with a gross floor area of five thousand (5,000) square feet or less.
10. Permitted after review and approval of a minor use permit by the Zoning Administrator if less than twelve (12) chairs.
11. Limited to upper stories unless at least fifty percent (50%) of ground floor street frontage is occupied by food service use.
12. Limited to upper stories.
13. Permitted if existing. Additions to existing facilities and establishment of new facilities are subject to Section [18.23.170](#), Personal services.

14. Not allowed along East San Carlos Avenue.
15. Limited to neighborhood groceries with less than one thousand five hundred (1,500) square feet of sales area when located along East San Carlos Avenue.
16. The sale of alcoholic beverages is prohibited.
17. Not permitted on sites where the storefront of such nonresidential use faces onto R zoning districts.
18. Minor use permit required for sites adjacent to R districts.
19. On the east side of El Camino Real only; in all other areas this use is not permitted.
20. Uses that require a commercial cannabis business permit are not permitted.

(Ord. 1612 § 1 (Exh. A), 2024; Ord. 1596 § 6 (Exh. A), 2023; Ord. 1568 § 1 (Exh. A), 2021; Ord. 1566 (Exh. B (part)), 2020; Ord. 1540 (Exh. A), 2019; Ord. 1525 § 2(1) (Exh. A (part)), 2017; Ord. 1518 § 3 (Exh. A), 2017; Ord. 1480 (Exh. B (part)), 2015; Ord. 1438 § 4 (Exh. A (part)), 2011)

#### **18.05.030 Development standards.**

Tables 18.05.030-1 through 18.050.030-6 prescribe the development standards for mixed-use districts. Additional regulations are denoted in a right-hand column. Section numbers in this column refer to other sections of this title, while individual letters refer to subsections that directly follow the table. The numbers in each illustration in this section refer to corresponding regulations in the “#” column in the associated table.

**TABLE 18.05.030-1: LOT, DENSITY, AND FAR STANDARDS—MIXED-USE DISTRICTS**

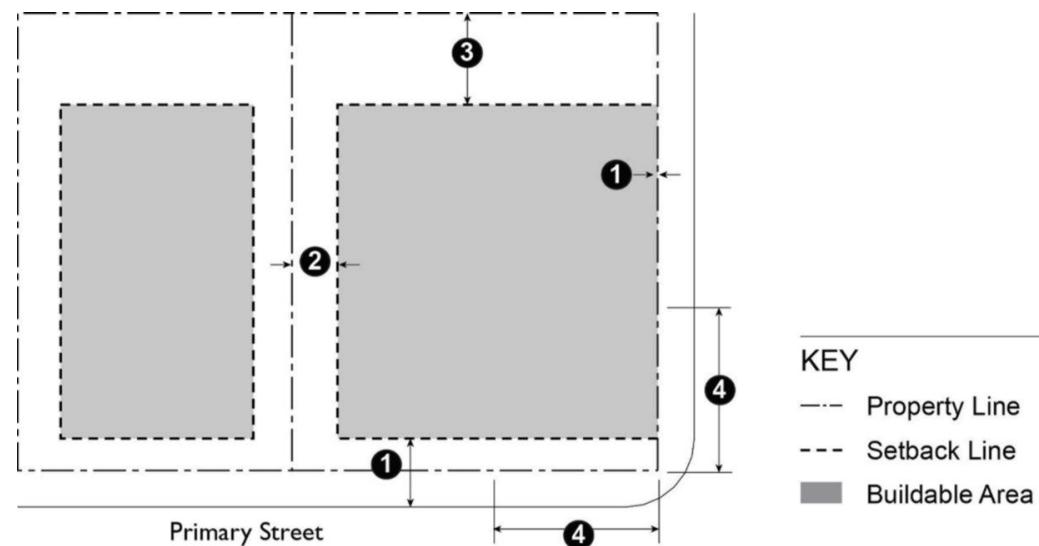
District	MU-DC-100	MU-D-100	MU-D-120	MU-SC-120	MU-NB-120	MU-SB-100	MU-SB-120	MU-N-40	MU-N-50	MU-N-120	Additional Regulations	#
Maximum Density (units/net acre)	100	100	120	120	120	100	120	40	50	120		
Minimum Density <sup>1</sup> (units/net acre)	75	75	90	90	90	75	90	30	38	90		
Minimum Lot Size (sq. ft.)	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000		
Minimum Lot Width	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50		

District	MU-DC-100	MU-D-100	MU-D-120	MU-SC-120	MU-NB-120	MU-SB-100	MU-SB-120	MU-N-40	MU-N-50	MU-N-120	Additional Regulations	#
(ft.)												
Maximum Floor Area Ratio (FAR)	2.5(A)	3.0(A)	3.0(A)	3.0(A)	3.0(A)	3.0(A)	3.0(A)	3.00(A)	2.5(A)	3.0(A)		

(1) Minimum densities apply to new development and construction of new projects, or when adding residential to an existing commercial use. For wholesale conversion of commercial uses to residential, minimum densities shall apply, but for small conversion of an existing single-space commercial use to residential, minimum densities shall not apply.

A. Increased FAR for Mixed-Use Buildings. The maximum allowable FAR may be increased by up to ten percent (10%) for buildings that contain a mix of residential and nonresidential uses through the provision of one (1) or more of the following elements beyond what is otherwise required, subject to conditional use permit approval:

1. Provision of off-site improvements. This may include off-site amenities and/or infrastructure (other than standard requirements and improvements) such as right-of-way or streetscape improvements or funding for parks, public safety facilities, libraries, senior centers, community meeting rooms, child care or recreation or other community benefit. The Director may require a fiscal and economic impact report, or equivalent, as part of the conditional use permit application.



**TABLE 18.05.030-2: BUILDING PLACEMENT STANDARDS—  
MIXED-USE DISTRICTS**

District	MU-DC-100	MU-D-100	MU-D-120	MU-SC-120	MU-NB-120	MU-SB-100	MU-SB-120	MU-N-40	MU-N-50	MU-N-120	Additional Regulations #
Street Frontage Setbacks, Commercial and Mixed-Use Development (ft)											
Laurel Street	Property line or 15 ft from curb (the greater) for all MU districts										(B) 1
El Camino Real	Property line or 20 ft from curb (the greater) shall apply to all Mixed Use Zones along El Camino Real										(B) 1
San Carlos Avenue	Property line or 15 ft from curb (the greater)	n/a	n/a	Property line or 15 ft from curb (the greater)	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	(B) 1
Elm Street	0 min, 10 max	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	1
All Other Streets	5 min, 15 max*	5 min, 15 max	5 min, 15 max	5 min, 15 max	5 min, 15 max	0 min, 5 max	0 min, 5 max	5 min, 15 max	5 min, 15 max	5 min, 15 max	1
Interior Side (ft)	0 min; 10 min adjacent to RS district for all MU districts										(C) 2
Rear (ft)	0 min; 30 min adjacent to RS district for all MU districts										(C) 3
Corner Build Area (ft)	30; buildings must be located in accordance with the required setbacks within 30 feet of every corner. Public plazas may be at the street corner provided buildings are built to the edge of the public plaza.										4

\* Applicable to 700 and 800 blocks of Walnut Street only.

B. Build-To Line. Buildings shall be constructed at the required setback for eighty percent (80%) of linear street frontage. The area between the building and property line shall be paved so that it functions as a wider public sidewalk. This requirement may be modified or waived by the review authority upon finding that:

1. Substantial landscaping is located between the build-to line and ground floor residential units to soften visual impact of buildings;
2. Entry courtyards, plazas, entries, or outdoor eating and display areas are located between the build-to line and building; provided, that the buildings are built to the edge of the courtyard, plaza, or dining area; or
3. The building incorporates an alternative entrance design that creates a welcoming entry feature facing the street.

**TABLE 18.05.030-3: HEIGHT STANDARDS—MIXED-USE DISTRICTS**

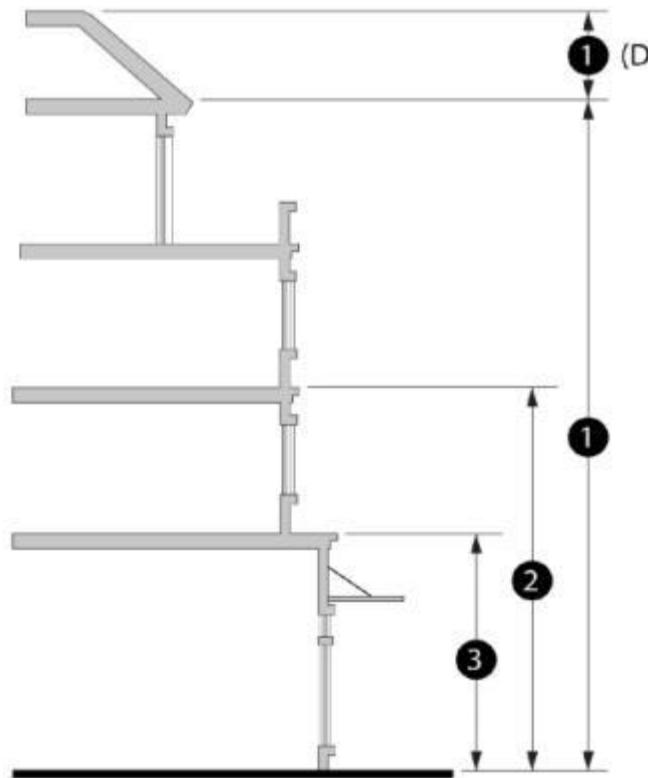
District	MU-DC-100	MU-D-100	MU-D-120	MU-SC-120	MU-NB-120	MU-SB-100	MU-SB-120	MU-N-40	MU-N-50	MU-N-120	Additional Regulations	#
Building Maximum (ft.)	50	60	75	75	75	60	75	50; 35 along East San Carlos Avenue in MU-N-40 District	75	(D); See Section <a href="#">18.15.060</a> , Height and height exceptions		1
Building Maximum Adjacent to RS District	30 ft. within 40 ft. of an RS district; 40 ft. within 50 ft. of an RS district											
Building Minimum (ft.)	n/a	25; Applicable only along Laurel Street and El Camino Real frontages	n/a									2
Maximum Stories	4(1)	5	6	6	6	5	6	4; 3 along E. San Carlos	4	6		

District	MU-DC-100	MU-D-100	MU-D-120	MU-SC-120	MU-NB-120	MU-SB-100	MU-SB-120	MU-N-40	MU-N-50	MU-N-120	Additional Regulations	#
								Ave. in MU-N-40 district				

## Ground Floor Minimum Height

Ground Floor Uses (ft.)	12	12	12	12	12	12	12	12	12	12		3
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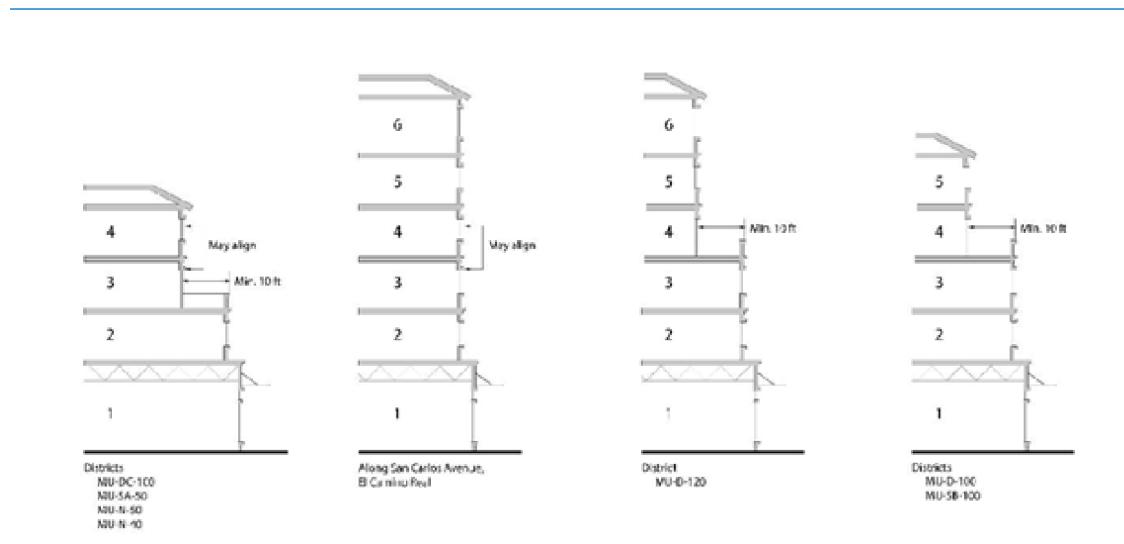
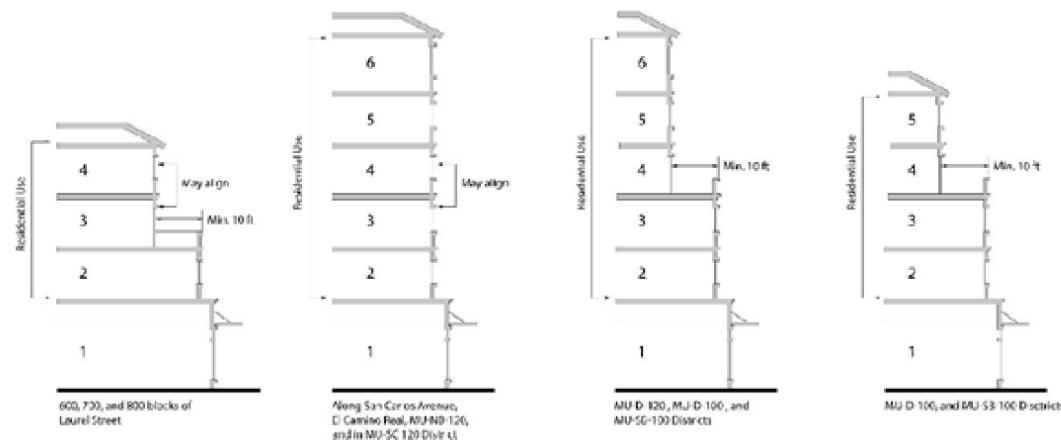
1. A use permit is required for the fourth story for parcels with street frontage onto Laurel Street in the 600, 700, and 800 blocks.



## D. Height Limitations and Exceptions.

1. Projections. Except along East San Carlos Avenue, a parapet wall, cornice or sloping roof may project up to four (4) feet above the height limit.
  2. Towers. If the project site is greater than fifteen thousand (15,000) square feet and not located along East San Carlos Avenue, a tower or other projecting architectural elements may extend up to ten (10) feet above the top of a pitched roof; provided, that the square footage of the element(s) does not total more than ten percent (10%) of the building footprint. The area above the uppermost permitted floor of the element(s) shall not be habitable space.
    - a. The composition of the tower element shall be balanced, where the width of the tower has a proportional relationship to the height of the tower.
    - b. The tower element shall be proportional to the rest of the building.
  - c. The roof shall be sloped and include architectural detailing, such as a cornice or eave.
3. Upper Story Stepbacks.
    - a. Third Story—Laurel Street. The third story along the 600, 700, and 800 blocks of Laurel Street shall be set back a minimum of ten (10) feet from the story below.
    - b. Fourth, Fifth, and Sixth Stories. The fourth, fifth, and sixth stories of all buildings shall be stepped back a minimum of ten (10) feet from the third story below, except as provided in this section.
    - c. Laurel Street. The fourth story along the 600, 700, and 800 blocks of Laurel Street may align with the story below.
    - d. San Carlos Avenue and El Camino Real. The fourth-, fifth-, and sixth-story front facades may align with the third story below along San Carlos Avenue in the MU-SC District and along El Camino Real (exception: this provision does not apply to the 1100 and 1200 blocks of San Carlos Avenue).

**FIGURE 18.05.030-E(2): UPPER STORY STEPBACKS**



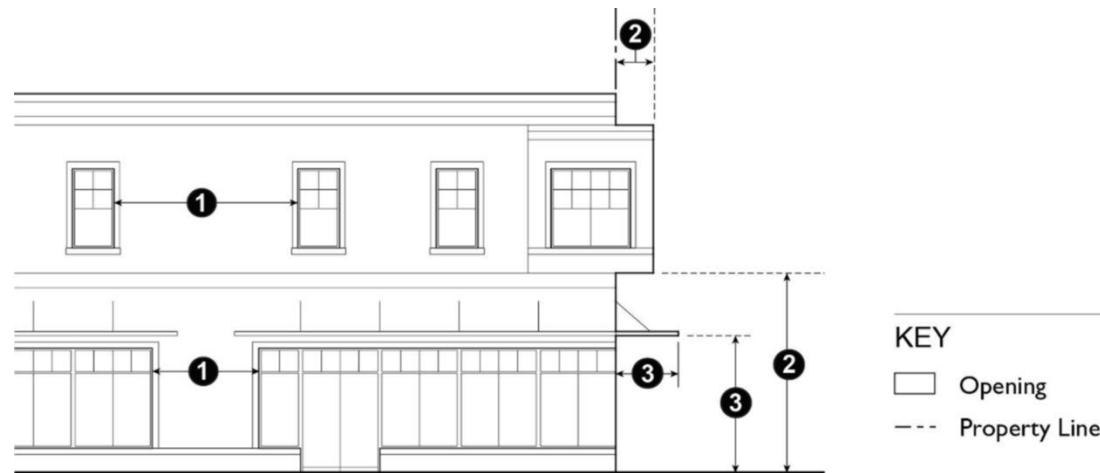


TABLE 18.05.030-4: BUILDING FORM STANDARDS—MIXED-USE DISTRICTS

District	MU-DC-100	MU-D-100	MU-D-120	MU-SC-120	MU-NB-120	MU-SB-100	MU-SB-120	MU-N-40	MU-N-50	MU-N-120	Additional Regulations #
Maximum Length of Blank Wall (ft.)	Ground floor: 10 Upper floors: 25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	1
Maximum Building Projections (ft.)	3; minimum 12 feet above sidewalk grade.									(F)	2
Awnings and Overhangs (ft.)	4; minimum 8 feet above sidewalk grade.										3

F. Building Projections. The maximum width of any single projection is ten (10) feet and the total width of all projections along a building face shall not be more than twenty-five percent (25%) of the building frontage.

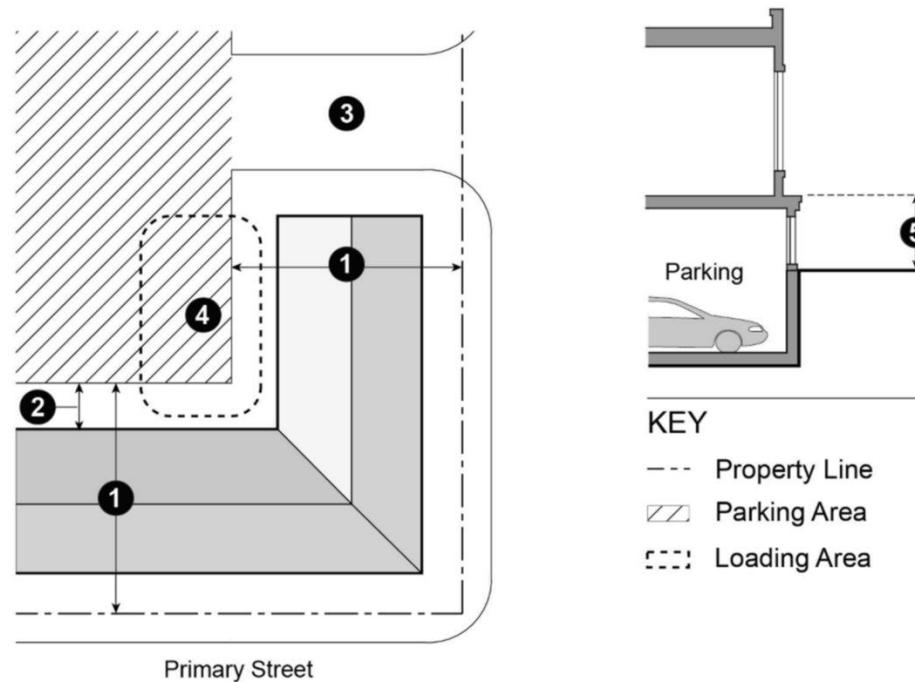


TABLE 18.05.030-5: PARKING AND LOADING STANDARDS—MIXED-USE DISTRICTS

District	MU-DC-100	MU-D-100	MU-D-120	MU-SC-120	MU-NB-120	MU-SB-100	MU-SB-120	MU-N-40	MU-N-50	MU-N-120	Additional Regulations #
Setback from Street Property Line (ft.)	40; buildings shall be placed as close to the street as possible, with parking underground, behind a building, or on the interior side or rear of the site.										(G) 1
Setback from Buildings and Public Plazas (ft.)	8 ft: 5 ft walkway plus 3 ft landscaping; applicable only to above-ground parking.										2
Access Location	Side street or alley wherever possible.										3
Curb Cuts	Prohibited on Laurel	Minimized and in area least likely to impede pedestrian circulation.									

District	MU-DC-100	MU-D-100	MU-D-120	MU-SC-120	MU-NB-120	MU-SB-100	MU-SB-120	MU-N-40	MU-N-50	MU-N-120	Additional Regulations	#
Loading/Service Area	Side or rear of lot; must be screened from public ROW.											4
Parking Podium	Maximum height of a parking podium visible from the street is 5 feet from finished grade.											5

G. Limitations on Location of Parking. Parking may be located within forty (40) feet of the street-facing property line, subject to the following requirements.

1. Underground and Partially Submerged Parking. Parking completely or partially underground may match the setbacks of the main structure. The maximum height of a parking podium visible from a street is five (5) feet from finished grade.
2. Surface Parking. Above-ground surface parking may be located within forty (40) feet of a street-facing property line when the decision making authority can make all of the following findings:
  - a. Buildings are built close to the public sidewalk to the maximum extent feasible;
  - b. The parking area is screened along the public right-of-way with a wall, hedge, trellis, and/or landscaping; and
  - c. The site is small and constrained such that underground, partially submerged, or surface parking located more than forty (40) feet from the street frontage is not feasible.

**TABLE 18.05.030-6: LANDSCAPING AND OPEN SPACE STANDARDS—MIXED-USE DISTRICTS**

District	MU-DC-100	MU-D-100	MU-D-120	MU-SC-120	MU-NB-120	MU-SB-100	MU-SB-120	MU-N-40	MU-N-50	MU-N-120	Additional Regulations
Minimum Public and/or Private Open Space (% of site)	10; applicable only to mixed-use and nonresidential development on lots greater than 15,000 square feet and to developments that are 100% residential.										
Minimum Dimensions (ft.)	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	

District	MU-DC-100	MU-D-100	MU-D-120	MU-SC-120	MU-NB-120	MU-SB-100	MU-SB-120	MU-N-40	MU-N-50	MU-N-120	Additional Regulations
Minimum Amount of Landscaping (% of site)	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	

H. Landscaping and Residential Open Space. Landscaping and residential open space shall be provided as required by Table 18.05.030-6. Residential open space may be common or private or a combination thereof. Private areas typically consist of balconies, decks, patios, fenced yards, and other similar areas outside the residence. Common areas typically consist of landscaped areas, walks, patios, swimming pools, barbecue areas, playgrounds, turf, or other such improvements as are appropriate to enhance the outdoor environment of the development. Landscaped courtyard entries that are oriented towards a public street are considered common areas. All areas not improved with buildings, parking, vehicular accessways, trash enclosures, and similar items shall be developed as common areas.

1. Usability. A surface shall be provided that allows convenient use for outdoor living and/or recreation. Such surface may be any practicable combination of lawn, garden, flagstone, wood planking, concrete, or other serviceable, dust-free surfacing. The maximum slope shall not exceed ten percent (10%).
2. Accessibility.
  - a. Private Open Space. The space shall be accessible to only one (1) living unit by a doorway to a habitable room or hallway.
  - b. Common Open Space. The space shall be accessible to the living units on the lot. It shall be served by any stairway or other accessway qualifying as an egress facility from a habitable room. (Ord. 1596 § 6 (Exh. A), 2023; Ord. 1485 (Exh. A), 2015; Ord. 1480 (Exh. B (part)), 2015; Ord. 1438 § 4 (Exh. A (part)), 2011)

#### **18.05.040 Supplemental regulations.**

- A. Maximum Block Length. Five hundred (500) feet; block length of up to six hundred (600) feet is allowed when a mid-block pedestrian connection is provided.
- B. Street Preservation. Existing public right-of-way shall be preserved. Public right-of-way shall not be eliminated or abandoned unless substantial public benefits are provided, such as a new park, as determined by the review authority.
- C. Street Frontage Improvements. New development shall provide street frontage improvements in accordance with the following:
  1. Between the Property Line and Curb.

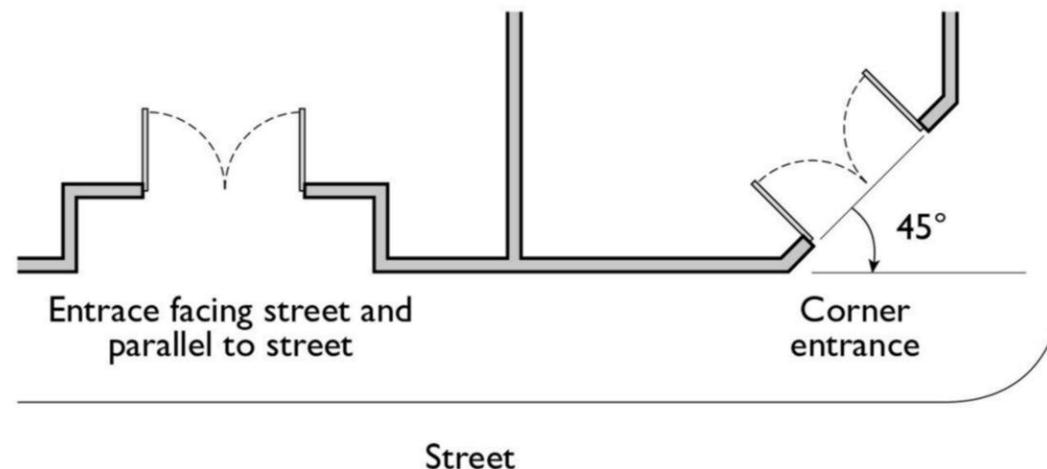
- a. Sidewalks. Sidewalks shall be provided if none already exist or if the existing sidewalks are in poor condition as determined by the Public Works Director.
- b. Street Furniture. Trash receptacles, benches, bike racks, and other street furniture from a list maintained by the Director shall be provided.
- c. Street Lights. Pedestrian-scaled street lights, including attachments from which banners may be hung, from a list maintained by the Director shall be provided.
- d. Street Trees. Shade trees shall be planted at least thirty (30) feet on center. Tree guards shall be provided. Trees shall be a minimum of fifteen (15) gallons in size, and at least ten percent (10%) of the required trees shall be twenty-four (24) inch box size or larger.

2. Interior from Property Line. Except where occupied by a building or necessary for parking access, the street frontage, for a depth of ten (10) feet from the property line, shall be utilized for active outdoor uses, including but not limited to outdoor dining; paved for public uses so that it functions as part of a wider public sidewalk; or improved with landscaping, public art, and/or pedestrian amenities such as outdoor seating.

D. Building Orientation and Entrances.

1. Buildings shall be oriented to face public streets.
2. Building frontages shall be generally parallel to streets, and the primary building entrances shall be located on a public street.
3. Building entrances shall be emphasized with special architectural and landscape treatments.
4. Entrances located at corners shall generally be located at a forty-five (45) degree angle to the corner and shall have a distinct architectural treatment to animate the intersection and facilitate pedestrian flow around the corner. Different treatments may include angled or rounded corners, arches, and other architectural elements. All building and dwelling units located in the interior of a site shall have entrances from the sidewalk that are designed as an extension of the public sidewalk and connect to a public sidewalk.
5. Entrances to residential units shall be physically separated from the entrance to the permitted commercial uses and clearly marked with a physical feature incorporated into the building or an appropriately scaled element applied to the facade.

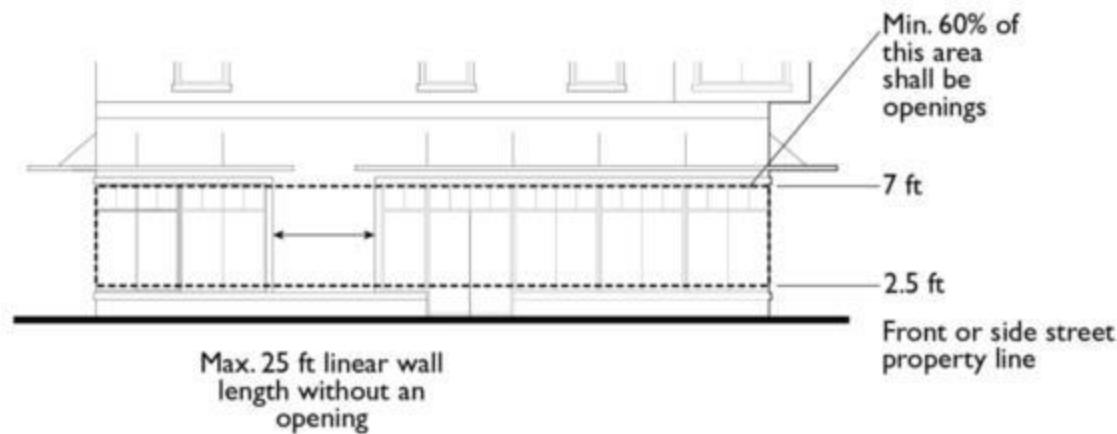
**FIGURE 18.05.040-D: BUILDING ORIENTATION AND ENTRANCES**



Street

- E. Building Transparency—Required Openings for Nonresidential Uses. Exterior walls facing and within twenty (20) feet of a front or street side property line shall include windows, doors, or other openings for at least sixty percent (60%) of the building wall area located between two and one-half (2 1/2) and seven (7) feet above the level of the sidewalk. No wall may run in a continuous horizontal plane for more than twenty-five (25) feet without an opening.

FIGURE 18.05.040-E: BUILDING TRANSPARENCY—MU DISTRICTS



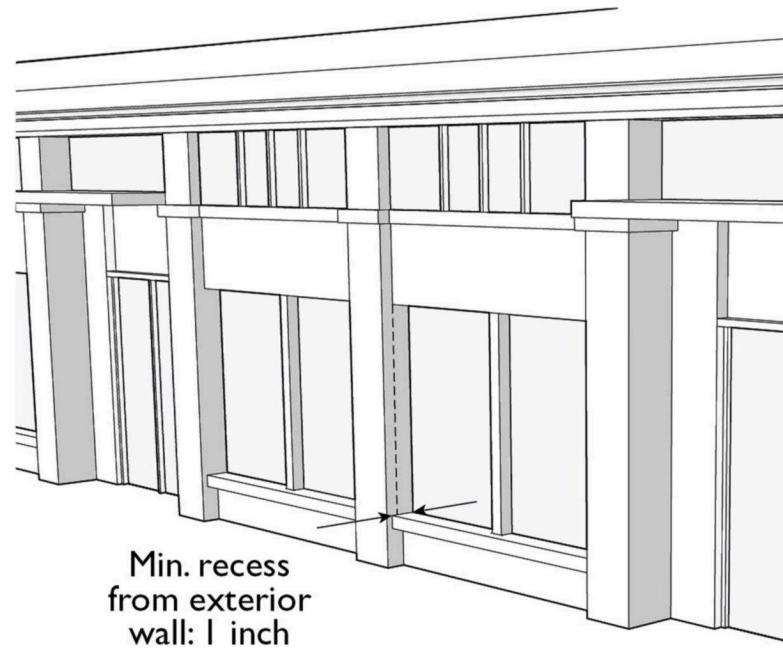
1. Design of Required Openings. Openings fulfilling this requirement shall have transparent glazing and provide views into work areas, display areas, sales areas, lobbies, or similar active spaces, or into window displays that are at least three (3) feet deep.

2. Exceptions for Parking Garages. Multilevel garages are not required to meet the building transparency requirement of this subsection. Instead, they must be screened and treated, consistent with the requirements of Chapter [18.20](#), Parking and Loading.
3. Alternatives Through Design Review. Alternatives to the building transparency requirement may be approved if the Planning and Transportation Commission finds that:
  - a. The proposed use has unique operational characteristics with which providing the required windows and openings is incompatible, such as in the case of a cinema or theater; and
  - b. Street-facing building walls will exhibit architectural relief and detail, and will be enhanced with landscaping in such a way as to create visual interest at the pedestrian level.

F. Building Design and Articulation. Buildings shall provide adequate architectural articulation and detail to avoid a bulky and “box-like” appearance. Building design shall reflect and complement the architectural style of significant buildings within the community. This may be accomplished through the incorporation of architectural style, colors, and materials of significant buildings within the community. The following standards apply to commercial and mixed-use development in the MU districts. Residential-only development is subject to the building design standards for the RM districts in Section [18.04.060\(B\)](#), Building Design.

1. Massing. Building massing shall align with the street grid of adjacent blocks.
2. Relation to Existing Buildings. Buildings shall be designed to appear integrated with existing buildings in the district.
3. Wide Buildings. Any building over fifty (50) feet wide shall be broken down to read as a series of buildings no wider than fifty (50) feet each or thirty (30) feet in the MU-DC District or within one hundred (100) feet of the train depot.
4. Vertical Relationship. Buildings shall be designed to have a distinctive base (ground floor level), middle (intermediate upper floor levels), and top (either top floor or roof level). Cornices, balconies, roof terraces, and other architectural elements should be used, as appropriate, to terminate roof lines and accentuate setbacks between stories.
5. Windows.
  - a. Trim at least one (1) inch in depth must be provided around all windows, or window must be recessed at least two (2) inches from the plane of the surrounding exterior wall.

**FIGURE 18.05.040-F(5)(a): WINDOW TRIM OR RECESS—MU DISTRICTS**



- b. Snap-in vinyl mullions between double pane glass is prohibited. If a divided light appearance is desired, mullions must be made of dimensional material projecting in front of the panes on both the inside and outside of the window.
  - c. Exceptions may be granted through the design review process to accommodate alternative window design complementary to the architectural style of the structure.
6. Exterior Building Materials and Colors.
- a. A unified palette of quality materials shall be used on all sides of buildings.
  - b. Exterior building materials shall be stone, brick, stucco, concrete block, painted wood clapboard, painted metal clapboard or other quality, durable materials approved by the City as part of the project review.
  - c. A wainscoting of quality materials on the bottom eighteen (18) to thirty-six (36) inches of the ground floor facade is required. Exceptions may be granted through the design review process to accommodate alternative design complementary to the architectural style of the structure.
  - d. Colors shall be used to help delineate windows and other architectural features to increase architectural interest.
7. Building Details. Buildings shall provide adequate architectural articulation and detail to avoid a bulky and "box-like" appearance.

- a. Building facades shall include building projections or recesses, doorway and window trim, and other details that provide architectural articulation and design interest.
- b. All applied surface ornamentation or decorative detailing shall be consistent with the architectural style of the building.
- c. All balconies that do not meet the minimum size required for private open space, such as Juliet balconies, shall have a minimum horizontal dimension of two (2) feet.
- d. Each side of the building that is visible from a public right-of-way shall be designed with a complementary level of detailing.

G. Pedestrian Access. On-site pedestrian circulation and access must be provided according to the following standards:

1. Internal Connections. A system of pedestrian walkways shall connect all buildings on a site to each other, to on-site automobile and bicycle parking areas, and to any on-site open space areas or pedestrian amenities.
2. To Circulation Network. Regular connections between on-site walkways and the public sidewalk and other existing or planned pedestrian routes, such as safe routes to school, shall be provided. An on-site walkway shall connect the primary building entry or entries to a public sidewalk on each street frontage.
3. To Neighbors. Direct and convenient access shall be provided from commercial and mixed-use projects to adjoining residential and commercial areas to the maximum extent feasible while still providing for safety and security.
4. To Transit. Safe and convenient pedestrian connections shall be provided from transit stops to building entrances.
5. Across Rail Corridor. Safe and convenient pedestrian connections shall be provided across the rail corridor. If an aerial viaduct or trench is used for rail alignment, the following standards shall apply to the extent feasible given engineering requirements.
  - a. Extend the street grid below the aerial viaduct or above the trench to provide new street and pedestrian connections across the corridor.
  - b. Locate active commercial uses or public park and recreation space below the aerial viaduct to enhance connectivity and create safe, attractive connections across the rail corridor.
  - c. Enhance connections below the viaduct with lighting and public art.
6. Interior Pedestrian Walkway Design.
  - a. Walkways shall have a minimum clear unobstructed width of five (5) feet, shall be hard-surfaced, and paved with concrete, stone, tile, brick, or comparable material.

- b. Where a required walkway crosses driveways, parking areas, or loading areas, it must be clearly identifiable through the use of a raised crosswalk, a different paving material, or similar method.
- c. Where a required walkway is parallel and adjacent to an auto travel lane, it must be raised or separated from the auto travel lane by a raised curb at least four (4) inches high, bollards, or other physical barrier.

H. Residential Notification. Residents of mixed-use development shall be informed of potential noise from refuse collection and other activities typically associated with commercial activity.

I. Rail Station.

1. Rail stations shall be designed to have physical presence and visibility on both sides of the rail corridor, including key architectural features that are visible from major roadways and connections, as well as pedestrian-level entries and vehicle drop-off areas.
2. Rain-protected east-west pedestrian connections shall be provided at the ground level of the station to enhance pedestrian connectivity along the rail corridor. These connections should be extensions of the existing street grid and pedestrian network with a minimum clear width of eight (8) feet. (Ord. 1612 § 1 (Exh. A), 2024; Ord. 1596 § 6 (Exh. A), 2023; Ord. 1480 (Exh. B (part)), 2015; Ord. 1438 § 4 (Exh. A (part)), 2011)

The San Carlos Municipal Code is current through Ordinance 1625, passed August 25, 2025.

Disclaimer: The City Clerk's Office has the official version of the San Carlos Municipal Code. Users should contact the City Clerk's Office for ordinances passed subsequent to the ordinance cited above.

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