

Objective Planning and Design Standards for Mixed-Use and Multi-Family Development

The form-based objective planning and design standards apply to all mixed-use and residential development projects. Projects that are eligible for streamlined development review must comply with these standards in their entirety. Projects that are not eligible for streamlined development review will undergo standard design review and must demonstrate compliance with these objective standards.

The Design Standards supplement the requirements of the Benicia General Plan, Benicia Municipal Code, Downtown Mixed Use Master Plan, Downtown Historic Conservation Plan and Arsenal Historic Conservation Plan. Where in conflict, the more restrictive standard shall control. The standards are organized into four primary sections:

1. Definitions.
2. Building Form and Site Standards. These standards allocate plan zones and their corresponding land uses, buildable areas, and required frontage conditions.
3. Architectural Standards. These standards designate allowable building types and provide regulations for design of massing, composition, exterior elements, building grounds, materials and colors.
4. Sign Standards. These standards regulate the type and appearance of signage.

DEFINITIONS

The following definitions shall apply to the standards of this document; terms not defined herein shall be as defined in the Benicia Municipal Code or General Plan. Where additional words are not defined, their meaning shall be as defined in Webster's Dictionary.

Basement is defined as the lowest usable floor of a building that is partially subsurface and does not exceed six feet above existing grade at any point when measured from the exterior of the building.

Building Front means a building facade that adjoins and is parallel to a public street.

Building Type means the physical form of the building prescribed herein, primarily focused on the relation of the building to the front property line.

Façade Transparency refers to clear glass windows and doors.

Floor Area Ratio means the gross floor area of a building or buildings on a lot divided by the lot area or site area.

Half story means a story that contains a maximum of 50% of the total floor area of the story directly underneath.

Historic Resource means a structure designated as a contributing or landmark within a historic district.

Lot Coverage means the percentage of a site covered by roofs, soffits, or overhangs extending more than two and one-half feet from a wall and by decks more than 30 inches in height.

Outdoor living area includes balconies, pools, patios, courtyards, courts, rooftop decks and similar spaces designed for active or passive recreational use accessible to occupants of a building on the same lot. Private outdoor living area means outdoor living area accessible directly from an individual dwelling unit.

Primary frontage refers to that façade of a building which adjoins the front setback or build-to-line.

Site Landscaping means the percentage of a site covered by live plant material and specifically excluding hardscape features (e.g., pavers, concrete, etc).

Zoning standard refers to the established standards of the Benicia Municipal Code (BMC) and/or adopted Downtown Mixed Use Master Plan Form-Based Code, including standards specific to the underlying district in which the property is located.

Table 1: Site Standards

	Downtown Historic District	Arsenal Historic District	Outside of historic districts
Building Placement			
A. Front Build-to-Line / Setback	1. Mixed-Use Districts (TC, NG, TC-O, NG-O Zones): Refer to Downtown Mixed Use Master Plan 2. All Other Districts: A building shall not be set back more than five (5) feet from the minimum front yard line (e.g., if the required front yard is 20', then the building shall be located within 20' to 25' of the front property line).		
B. Side Yard	1. Residential (RS, RM, RH Districts) and Mixed Use Districts: Refer to Downtown Mixed Use Master Plan 2. All Other Districts: Minimum 10'; Maximum 15'.		
C. Corner Side Yard	1. Residential and Mixed Use Districts: Refer to Zoning Standard or Downtown Mixed Use Master Plan 2. All Other Districts: Minimum 10'; Maximum 15'.		
D. Rear Yard	1. Residential and Mixed Use Districts: Refer to Zoning Standard or Downtown Mixed Use Master Plan 2. All Other Districts: Minimum 15'.		

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E. Portion of Front BTL or Front Yard to be defined by a building	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Mixed Use Districts: Refer to Downtown Mixed Use Master Plan All Other Districts: 80% minimum. 	Not required	Not required
F. Portion of Corner Side Yard to be defined by a building	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Mixed Use Districts: Refer to Downtown Mixed Use Master Plan All Other Districts: 60% minimum. 	Not required	Not required
Site Development			
A. Density	Residential housing development shall be provided at the density identified within the adopted Housing Element.		
B. Lot Coverage	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Residential and Mixed Use Districts: Refer to Zoning Standard or Downtown Mixed Use Master Plan All Other Districts: 50% maximum 		
C. Floor Area Ratio (FAR)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Residential and Mixed Use Districts: Refer to Zoning Standard or Downtown Mixed Use Master Plan All Other Districts: 2.0 maximum 		
D. Inclusionary housing	Inclusionary units provided pursuant to BMC Section 17.70.320 shall be reasonably dispersed within the development and shall be comparable to the design of market rate units in terms of numbers of bedrooms, appearance, materials, and finished quality, as defined and specified in BMC Section 17.70.320.		
E. Outdoor Living Area	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> When a private outdoor living area is provided for a unit it shall have the following minimum dimensions: Minimum Width: 10' Minimum Depth: 6' Outdoor living areas shall be provided in addition to any required yard or setback. 		

CITY MISSION

"SERVING AND ENHANCING OUR COMMUNITY WITH CARE, COMMITMENT AND PRIDE."

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	N/A	On a site having three or more dwelling units, at least 200 square feet of private outdoor living area shall be provided for each dwelling unit.	
Landscaping and Grading			
A. Site Landscaping	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Residential and Mixed Use Districts: Refer to Zoning Standard or Downtown Mixed Use Master Plan 2. All Other Districts: 30% minimum 		
B. Grading	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Residential Districts: Cuts and/or fills shall not exceed four (4) feet. 2. Mixed Use Districts: Grading thresholds identified in BMC Chapter 17.100.020 for commercial zoned property shall also apply to Mixed Use Districts 3. All Other Districts: Refer to thresholds Specified in BMC Chapter 17.100.020. 4. Exemption: The thresholds in this section may be exceeded for excavations (cuts) below finished grade for the purposes of basements and crawl spaces, below grade parking, retaining walls and building footings and piers. 		

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C. Archaeological and Paleontological Resources	<p>1. Archaeological Resources. In the event archaeological resources are uncovered during grading or construction activities, all work within 50 feet of the discovery shall be halted until a qualified archaeologist can be contacted to evaluate the situation and determine if the deposit qualifies as an archaeological resource. If the deposit does not qualify as an archaeological resource, then no further protection or study is necessary. If the deposit does qualify as an archaeological resource the archaeologist shall complete and prepare an assessment report documenting the methods, findings and recommendations. The report shall be submitted to the City, the applicant and the Northwest Information Center (NWIC). The archaeologist shall be selected by the City and the applicant shall pay for all required work by the archaeologist.</p> <p>2. Paleontological Resources. In the event paleontological resources are encountered during grading or construction, excavations within 50 feet of the find shall be halted or diverted until the discovery is examined by a qualified paleontologist (per Society of Vertebrate Paleontology standards [SVP 1995, 1996]). The qualified paleontologist shall notify the appropriate agencies to determine procedures that would be followed before construction is allowed to resume at the location of the find.</p>		
D. Fences and Walls	<p>1. Fences shall not exceed six (6) feet in height along any side or rear property line; nor shall they exceed three (3) feet in height within 15 feet of the front property line. Fences shall comply with the driveway visibility requirements of BMC Section 17.74.150.</p> <p>2. Approved fence materials are solid wood and masonry.</p> <p>3. Retaining walls shall be constructed of masonry material such as brick, concrete or paver block.</p>		
Parking			
A. Required parking spaces	<p>1. Minimum parking standard of 1 space per dwelling unit unless exempt by State statute.</p> <p>2. Parking dimensions shall conform to Zoning Standard or Downtown Mixed-Use Master Plan with exception that no loading berth shall be required.</p> <p>3. Non-residential uses shall provide additional off-street parking per Zoning Standards or Downtown Mixed-Use Master Plan</p>		

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B. Parking Lot Access	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. On a corner lot, the main parking lot access shall be from a secondary roadway. 2. Except in the Town Core Zone, the main parking lot access shall be provided from a public street when the property adjoins single-family residential homes along an alley. 3. A parking lot driveway shall be located at least six (6) feet from an alley and shall maintain a minimum twenty (20) foot distance from all curb returns. 4. Parking lots shall provide adequate space for vehicle backing movement and shall not require backing across a street property line. 		
C. Covered Parking	Covered parking or garages that are attached to the structure shall be recessed a minimum of eighteen (18) inches from the wall plane.		
D. Parking Lot Lighting	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. All exterior lights shall use cut-off shields and be downward directed. Sag, convex and drop lenses are prohibited. 2. Wall-mounted lights shall be provided for security purposes. Lights shall be directed down and shielded to avoid glare impacts. 		
E. Parking Lot Landscaping	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Mixed Use Districts: Refer to Downtown Mixed Use Master Plan 2. All Other Districts: In addition to the requirements of BMC 17.70.190, parking lots shall be screened on all sides by a minimum 3'6" evergreen hedge, planter box, wall or wood privacy fence (not more than 30% transparent) to avoid headlight impacts to adjoining properties. 3. All parking lots shall provide a minimum landscape buffer of two feet between the required parking screening and parking spaces. 		
Utility and Service Areas			
A. Refuse	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Refuse management shall be provided, and site development plans shall indicate the manner and location of refuse storage. Individual refuse collection is permitted for individual units where bins will be stored within a garage or enclosure; all other development types shall provide an on-site shared refuse facility. 2. Refuse and service areas shall be located to the rear or side of the property and shall not abut the property line of an adjacent single-family residence. 3. Refuse containers shall be located in a building or screened by a solid masonry enclosure 		

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B. Mechanical Screening	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Mechanical equipment, including vents and stacks, shall be fully screened by an architectural feature, such as a parapet wall, in addition to the requirements of BMC 17.70.210. 2. Ground-mounted mechanical equipment shall be placed at a rear or secondary façade and at least ten (10) feet from a side or rear property line. 3. No mechanical equipment shall be permitted in the front or corner side yard. 4. Backflow prevention devices may be located within the front half of the lot, when located between the side building plane extending to the front property line and the side yard property line. Backflow prevention devices shall not be placed directly in front of the building but may be located in a side location of the front yard. This equipment shall be screened to its full height by a combination of fencing and perennial landscaping to 70% opacity. 		
C. Mail	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Group or cluster mailboxes may be located within a required front or corner side yard 2. Such mailboxes shall be screened on three sides by a wall or trellis feature and shall be situated in a landscape bed with at least two (2) feet of planting area on three sides of the mailbox. Approved plant materials include annual and perennial flowers, low growing groundcover, and shrubs not exceeding three (3) feet in height at time of maturity. 		
D. Utilities	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. On and off-site utilities shall be placed underground as provided in BMC 17.70.230. 2. Utility meters shall not be placed on a front or corner side façade. 		
Public Improvements			
	Public improvements (alley, sidewalk, curb and/or gutters) shall be required for the portions of right-of-way directly abutting the development site.		

Table 2: Building Form and Architectural Standards

	Downtown Historic District	Arsenal Historic District	Outside of historic districts
Building Form			
A. Roof	Pitched roof forms (e.g., hip, gable, etc) shall have a minimum 4:12 pitch. Roof pitches concealed from the public right-of-way by parapet shall not be subject to a minimum roof pitch.		Not specified
B. Balconies	1. Mixed Use Districts: Refer to Downtown Mixed Use Master Plan 2. All Other Districts: a. 6' min. clear depth b. 10' min. clear width		
Historic Resources			
	Development involving a historic resource shall meet the following standards: 1. Development shall not alter a façade public street-side façade. "Alter" shall include: removal of materials; relocating, closure and/or covering of existing openings. 2. Development shall not increase the height of the existing building, including an upper story addition, increased foundation height, or new rooftop projection. 3. All exterior corners of the historic structure shall be preserved. A "corner" shall include a minimum of three (3) linear feet outward from where the exterior walls meet. 4. The exterior walls of an addition shall be recessed inward 18 inches from the walls of a historic structure.		

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Façade Composition & Elements			
A. Base, Middle, Cap	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The building shall have a base, middle, and cap; these elements shall be distinguished as prescribed herein: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. <i>Base</i>: Use stone, concrete masonry materials along the base of the building to “ground” the structure. b. <i>Middle</i>: This element establishes the vertical proportion and will be constructed of the primary building material. c. <i>Cap</i>: This is the roof or parapet of the building. Cornice or fascia trim shall be incorporated along the roofline. 		Not specified
B. Entrances	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Building entrances must be provided on the primary frontage. A pedestrian walkway, minimum five (5) foot width, shall provide a connection between the public street and building entrance. 2. Low-voltage, shielded pedestrian walkway lights shall be provided from the sidewalk to the front entrance(s). 		
C. Alignment of Features	Windows, cornices, copings and moldings shall be aligned horizontally on the building front.	Not specified	
D. Wall Modulation	A minimum eighteen (18) inches building face offset is required for any wall plane that exceeds thirty (30) feet in length.		
E. Façade Transparency	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Retail/Commercial portion of mixed use: Minimum 50% façade transparency 2. Residential: Minimum 35% façade transparency 		
F. Control Joints	Stucco control joints shall not be spaced more than 30 feet apart.		

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G. Storefronts	<p>For mixed use development, a storefront on the building front shall be provided that meets the following standards:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A bulkhead with minimum ground floor height of 30 inches shall be provided. 2. The height of a storefront shall be a minimum of 9 feet and a maximum of 11.5 feet, including any clerestory. 	<p>For mixed use development, the height of a storefront shall be a minimum of 9 feet and a maximum of 11.5 feet, including any clerestory.</p>	
Building Materials and Colors			
A. Primary materials	<p>Permitted materials:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Painted horizontal siding (wood or smooth fiber cement i.e., "Hardi board"), • Painted stucco (smooth or lightly textured) 	<p>Permitted materials:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Painted horizontal siding (wood or smooth fiber cement i.e., "Hardi board"), • Smooth concrete • Brick • Stucco 	Not specified

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	<p>Disallowed materials:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Faux stone (e.g., “painted concrete applications that simulate the appearance of stone), • Heavy timbers, • Rough hewn wood beams, • Stucco textured foam, synthetic stucco (EIFS or DryVit), vinyl or vinyl clad materials • Aluminum siding • Formliner or painted concrete applications that simulate the appearance of brick. <p>Modular construction or tilt up concrete panels and seams:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Historic districts: Allowed when all exterior surfaces are covered by permitted primary/secondary materials. 2. Outside of historic districts: Allowed when all exterior surfaces are covered by an exterior façade or cladding. 		
B. Secondary and accent materials	<p>Permitted materials:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All permitted primary exterior wall materials • Smooth or split face concrete block • Natural stone • Cast stone • Tile that is not reflective, iridescent, or metallic. • Brick • Terra cotta. • Vertical Siding 	Not specified	
	Disallowed materials: All disallowed primary materials are also disallowed as secondary and accent materials.		
C. Roofing	<p>Permitted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Architectural composition shingles • Slate 	<p>Permitted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Architectural composition shingles, • Clay tile • Slate • Non-reflective standing seam metal roofs in shades of brown or black 	<p>Permitted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Architectural composition shingles, • Clay tile • Slate • Non-reflective standing seam metal

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parapet façade shall match primary wall material. Roofing on a low-slope or flat roof, where fully concealed by a parapet, is not subject to design standards. 		
D. Gutters and downspouts	Prohibited: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plastic PVC Unfinished galvanized steel 		
E. Windows and Doors	Windows and door frames shall be composed of painted wood or fiber cement (i.e., hardi-board) or non-reflective metal with a factory applied finish.		Not specified
	Permitted materials: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wood Composite Pre-finished, metal (e.g., anodized aluminum) with a non-reflective finish. Material selection and style shall be consistent on all sides of the building.		Material selection and style shall be consistent on all sides of the building.
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Where pane divisions are provided on a window, they shall be true or simulated divided lites (muntins applied to both the interior and exterior of the glass). Snap in grilles or grilles between glass panes are not permitted. Flush door styles are not permitted for front entrances. 		Not specified
F. Railings	Railings shall be constructed of stone, wood, wrought iron, non-reflective metal or fiber cement/ composite material.	Railings shall be constructed of wood, wrought iron, non-reflective metal or fiber cement/composite material.	Not specified
G. Colors	Not more than four colors shall be applied to the building façade: 1 primary color and 2-3 trim or accent colors.		Not specified

Table 3: Signage

	Downtown Historic District	Arsenal Historic District	Outside of historic districts
A. Monument Signs	Not permitted.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. One monument sign permitted with maximum height of four (4) feet and maximum sign area of 20 square feet, unless otherwise restricted by the Sign Ordinance (BMC Title 18). 2. Sign shall be constructed of wood or stucco on a masonry base. 3. Internally illuminated vinyl signs are not permitted. 4. Sign lettering and logos shall be individual channel or pin-mounted characters. 	
B. Wall Signs	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Wall signs are permitted for buildings with a mixed-use commercial component. Sign area shall conform to the requirements of the Sign Ordinance (BMC Title 18) and applicable guidelines but shall not exceed 45 square feet on any frontage. 2. Box/cabinet signs are not permitted nor any form of internally illuminated vinyl signage. 3. Sign lettering and logos shall be individual channel or pin-mounted characters. 		
C. Other Signs	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Mixed Use District: The objective standards of the Downtown Historic Conservation Plan are adopted by reference and shall be applied to any commercial signage proposed on a mixed-use building. 2. All Other Districts: Not permitted. 		