

Los Angeles Objective Design Standards for Infill Housing in Historic Preservation Overlay Zones – DRAFT

June 22, 2026

INTRODUCTION

Purpose

The purpose of the Objective Design Standards for Infill Housing in Historic Preservation Overlay Zones (“ODS for HPOZs”) is to provide clear, objective, and measurable standards for new residential and mixed-use infill development within the City’s locally designated historic districts that comply with State and local housing laws.

Overview

Objective design standards ensure that applicants know which requirements apply to a proposed project before submitting for City review, providing a clear, predictable process for new housing developments, while keeping new projects sensitive and compatible with existing historic neighborhoods.

The ODS for HPOZs are aligned with the principles of the existing HPOZ Preservation Plans and the standards in the Los Angeles Zoning Code (Los Angeles Municipal Code, Chapter 1A). The ODS for HPOZs will also advance the City’s goals and policies related to the creation of streamlined review, greater housing opportunities, and affordability across Los Angeles as outlined in the 2021-2029 Housing Element of the General Plan (the Plan to House Los Angeles).

The Housing Accountability Act (HAA) (Gov. Code § 65589.5) limits the City’s ability to deny or reduce the density of housing projects if the project meets objective general plan, zoning, and adopted design standards, and the 2019 Housing Crisis Act (HCA), among other things, establishes the types of housing development projects that are subject to streamlined review processes. These and other State laws require that eligible housing projects only be reviewed using objective design standards. The ODS for HPOZs will allow eligible housing projects to be reviewed with objective design standards consistent with State laws and the Los Angeles Housing Element.

Applicability

The ODS for HPOZs apply to eligible residential infill development projects on Contributing and Non-Contributing parcels, with the following exceptions:

- Any work related to demolishing or relocating existing primary Contributing buildings, which will still be subject to review under Los Angeles Municipal Code (LAMC) Section 13B.8 of Chapter 1A (HPOZ Ordinance) and the applicable HPOZ Preservation Plan guidelines.
- Any work related to altering or adding onto existing primary Contributing buildings (excluding the addition of an ADU or JADU), which will still be subject to review under LAMC Section 13B.8 of Chapter 1A (HPOZ Ordinance) and the applicable HPOZ Preservation Plan guidelines.

Additionally, the ODS for HPOZs do not apply to California Register and National Register-listed historic districts.

Accessory Dwelling Units

Under California Government Code Section 65852.2, Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) and Junior ADUs are exempt from discretionary design review. ADUs and Junior ADUs undergo ministerial review as part of the building permit process without any public notice or public hearing. They may also be subject to the development and design regulations of LAMC Section 12.22A.33 (Los Angeles ADU Ordinance, adopted in 2019).

Small Lot Subdivisions

Small lot subdivision projects are currently subject to the City's Small Lot Subdivision Ordinance (No. 176354, adopted in 2005) and Small Lot Subdivision Design Standards (adopted in 2018).

Non-Compliant Designs

If a project is not consistent with the objective design standards, the project must be revised to comply with the standards. Alternatively, a project applicant can opt-in to having their residential infill project processed through the review processes outlined in LAMC Sec. 13.B.8.4 of Chapter 1A (HPOZ Ordinance) and the applicable HPOZ Preservation Plan.

Relationship to the Los Angeles Municipal Code

Nothing in the ODS for HPOZs is intended to override any regulations in the Los Angeles Municipal Code (LAMC). In the case of any conflicts between the ODS for HPOZs and the LAMC, the LAMC shall take precedence.

Relationship to Other Objective Design Standards

When in conflict with the provisions of the Zoning Code, the ODS for HPOZs shall apply, unless otherwise specified by the Zoning Code (Chapter 1). In addition to the provisions included in the ODS for HPOZs, the provisions of an adopted design standards document, Supplemental District, or Specific Plans shall apply. Where the provisions of the ODS for HPOZs conflict with the provisions of an adopted design standards document, Supplemental District, or Specific Plan, the ODS for HPOZs shall prevail.

Relationship to HPOZ Preservation Plans

The ODS for HPOZs adapt and build upon existing, relevant HPOZ Preservation Plan guidelines to ensure the streamlined review of new housing units, while preserving the intent of the HPOZ program. Like the HPOZ Preservation Plan guidelines, the ODS for HPOZs are grounded in the principles of the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties as related to compatibility and maintaining a community's distinctive historic and architectural features.

The HPOZ Preservation Plans will continue to be used for all other projects not triggering ODS review, per LAMC Section 13B.8 of Chapter 1A.

GENERAL

The following general standards apply to both new residential and new mixed-use infill projects on **Contributing** parcels in HPOZs, per the above applicability requirements. If a project does not meet the following standards, the project shall be subject to the relevant discretionary review processes outlined in LAMC Section 13B.8 of Chapter 1A.

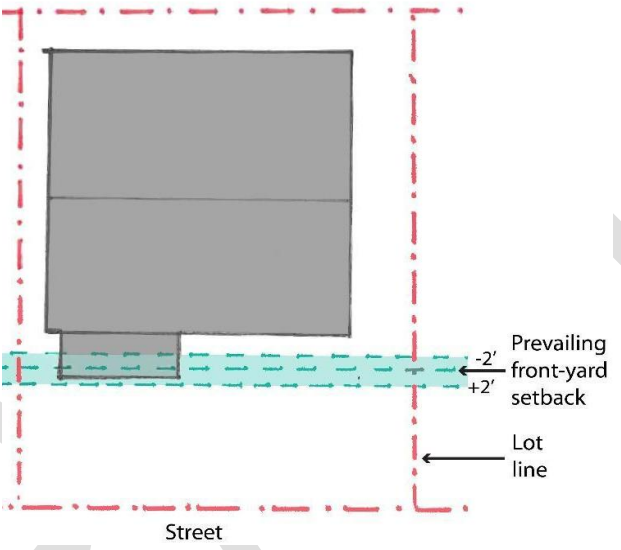
Objective Standard	Compliance
1. A primary Contributing building shall not be demolished.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A
2. A primary Contributing building shall not be relocated.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A
3. New infill projects on Contributing parcels shall be located behind the rear wall of the Contributing primary structure.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A

RESIDENTIAL INFILL

The following standards apply to eligible residential projects on **Contributing** and **Non-Contributing** parcels within HPOZs, per the above applicability requirements.

1. SETTING, LOCATION & SITE DESIGN

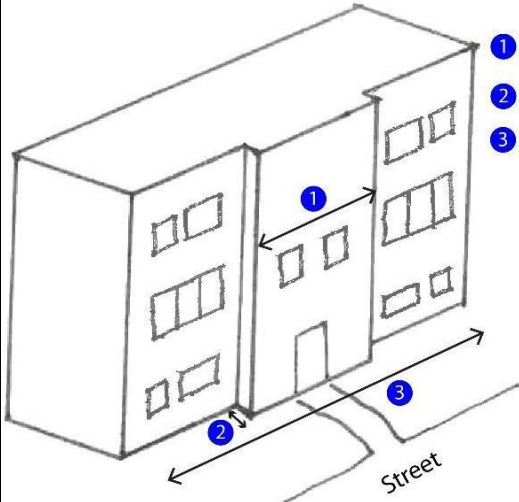
Intent: The spacing and location of historic buildings within a historic district often establishes a rhythm that is essential to the character of the neighborhood. The purpose of the following standards is to ensure that new residential infill is compatible with the existing historic streetscape.

Objective Standard	Illustration	Compliance
1. The primary façade of any new residential structure shall match the prevailing front-yard setback of Contributing properties on the same block face, within ± 2 feet. If there are no Contributing properties on the same block face, including when the new structure comprises the entire block face, the primary façade setback only needs to meet existing underlying zoning requirements.	 The diagram shows a grey building footprint on a lot. A red dashed line indicates the lot line. A green dashed line indicates the prevailing front-yard setback. The setback is shown as a range from -2' to +2' relative to the lot line. The street is labeled at the bottom.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A
2. To maintain a progression of public to private space from the street to the residence, the street-facing building entrance(s) must include at least one of the following: • Porch • Raised entry (stoop) • Recessed entry • Covered flush entry • Courtyard entry Either a carport or an entrance atrium is permitted in lieu of the above entrance types in the Balboa Highlands and Gregory Ain Mar Vista Tract HPOZs. Porches shall have a minimum depth of 4.5 feet and a minimum width of 50% of the primary façade or 8 feet, whichever is less.		☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A

Objective Standard	Illustration	Compliance
Raised entries shall have a minimum depth of 3 feet and a minimum width of 4 feet, or minimum dimensions required by building code for accessibility.		
3. The existing site grade shall not be altered by more than ± 2 feet except where required for code compliance and subterranean parking.		☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A
4. Parking shall be located behind the rear wall of the new primary structure, beneath the primary structure, or fully screened from street view.		☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A
5. A minimum of 60% of the front yard shall consist of vegetated surfaces. Paving in front yards shall be limited to walkways not exceeding 4 feet in width.		☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A
6. Front-yard fences shall not exceed 42 inches in height and shall be at least 50% visually permeable. Solid walls taller than 2 feet are prohibited in front yards. Chain-link fences are prohibited in front yards.		☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A
7. Ground-mounted mechanical equipment that is located in the front yard or side yard and is not behind a fence shall be screened with a material that matches the color and finish of the building façade.		☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A

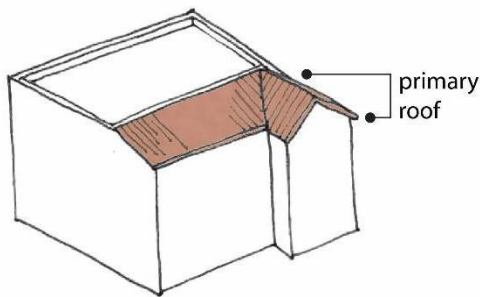
2. MASSING & ORIENTATION

Intent: The purpose of the following standards is to ensure that the scale, massing, and orientation of new residential infill are compatible with the existing context of historic buildings within the area, to the extent feasible and allowable by State law.

Objective Standard	Illustration	Compliance
1. For street-facing facades over 30 feet in length, no more than 75% of the façade shall share the same continuous plane. A minimum 2-foot offset is required for any wall plane that exceeds 30 feet in length.	 1 Max 30' on same plane 2 2' min offset 3 Over 30' in length	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A
2. New residential structures shall present their front door to the street (excluding alleys) or towards a courtyard, and not to the side or rear yard.		☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A

3. ROOF FORMS

Intent: Historic buildings within a historic district often share similar architectural features, including roof type, pitch, and material. The purpose of the following standards is to encourage contextually compatible roof forms and materials on residential infill, as applicable, in order to help maintain a common character for the area.

Objective Standard	Illustration	Compliance
1. New residential structures that are 2.5 stories or less shall utilize the primary roof type (flat, gable, hipped, etc.) present on over 50% of Contributing properties on the same block face and facing block. New residential structures that are 2.5 stories or less shall utilize the primary roof pitch (flat, low, medium, steep) present on over 50% of Contributing properties on the same block face and facing block.		☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A

Objective Standard	Illustration	Compliance
If no majority roof type or pitch exists on the block face and facing block, the roof type and pitch shall utilize the roof type and pitch of any single Contributing property present on the same block face or facing block. If there are no Contributing properties on the same block face or facing block, the roof type and pitch shall utilize a roof type and pitch of any single Contributing property in the historic district. New residential structures that are 3 stories or taller may have a flat roof with a parapet or overhang.	Low pitch  Slope: 2:12 to 4:12 Medium pitch  Slope: 4:12 to 8:12 Steep pitch  Slope: 8:12 to 18:12	
2. If the new residential structure utilizes a pitched roof, the following materials are allowed: • Composition/asphalt shingles • Wood or engineered wood shingles • Slate • Clay tile, except as follows: If over 50% of Contributing properties on the same block face and facing block have clay tile roofing (on a pitched roof or parapet coping), any new residential structure that is 2.5 stories or less shall have clay tile roofing (on a pitched roof or parapet coping). Clay tile roofing is prohibited in historic districts where no Contributing properties have clay tile roofing. Standing seam metal, concrete tile, and synthetic tile roofing are prohibited.		☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A

Objective Standard	Illustration	Compliance
3. A single roof dormer shall not be more than 20% of the applicable roof plane. Multiple roof dormers shall not cumulatively be more than 40% of the applicable roof plane. The street-facing roof plane shall not have more than three dormers total.	≤20% of applicable roof plane ≤40% of applicable roof plane	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A
4. Roof-mounted mechanical equipment shall be screened if located on a pitched roof or taller than the height of the rooftop parapet. The screening shall be a material that matches the color and finish of the building façade or roof.		☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A

4. OPENINGS

Intent: The pattern, materials, and profile of windows, doors, and other openings on the façades of a historic building define its design character. Repetition of these features throughout a historic district helps to define the distinctive character of the area. The purpose of the following standards is to ensure the fenestration of new residential infill is compatible with the overall pattern, materials, profile, and design of fenestration within the district.

Objective Standard	Illustration	Compliance
1. Street-facing façades shall maintain a window-to-wall ratio between 20% and 40% (except in the Balboa Highlands and Gregory Ain Mar Vista Tract HPOZs).		☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A
2. Vertically oriented window units shall have a height-to-width ratio of 1.5:1 to 2.5:1 (except in the Balboa Highlands and Gregory Ain Mar Vista Tract HPOZs). Curtain walls and full-height glazing are prohibited (except in the Balboa Highlands and Gregory Ain Mar Vista Tract HPOZs). Windows shall be inset a minimum of 2 inches from the façade plane.	1.5:1 2.5:1	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A

Objective Standard	Illustration	Compliance
3. Simulated divided light windows are allowed. However: • Roll-on or tape muntins are prohibited. • Muntins located between two panes of glass, but not on the exterior or interior of the window, are prohibited. Vinyl windows are prohibited.		☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A

5. MATERIALS & DETAILS

Intent: The purpose of the following standards is to ensure that new residential infill within a historic district reflects the character of the area through the use of compatible materials.

Objective Standard	Illustration	Compliance
1. The following building façade cladding materials are prohibited: • Vinyl • Metal • Mirror glass or reflective materials • Exposed concrete • Concrete masonry units (except in Balboa Highlands HPOZ) • T1-11 wood siding (except in Balboa Highlands and Mar Vista HPOZs) In the Balboa Highlands and Mar Vista HPOZs the following cladding materials are additionally prohibited: • Wood shingles • Wood clapboard or shiplap • Brick, stone, or imitation stone If over 75% of Contributing properties on the same block face and facing block do not have stucco as the primary wall coating material, the new residential structure shall not utilize stucco as the primary wall coating.		☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A

6. BUNGALOW COURTS & COURTYARD APARTMENTS

In addition to the above standards, the following standards apply to new bungalow court and courtyard apartment residential infill projects in HPOZs.

Objective Standard	Illustration	Compliance
1. All new residential structures within a bungalow court or courtyard apartment shall be designed in a single architectural style.		☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A
2. The central courtyard of a bungalow court or courtyard apartment shall be oriented perpendicular to the street, with a central axial path extending from the public sidewalk through the courtyard. The central courtyard shall not be fenced or otherwise sectioned off into private open space.		☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A
3. No more than 40% of a central courtyard shall be paved (unless required to meet accessibility or safety codes). Water features are permitted, but shall not exceed 10% of the courtyard area.		☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A
4. Entryways within the court must include at least one of the following: • Porch • Raised entry (stoop) • Recessed entry • Covered flush entry		☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A
5. Common balconies on street-facing façades that span more than two units are prohibited.		☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A

7. INFILL ON CONTRIBUTING PROPERTIES

In addition to the above standards, the following standards apply to new residential infill projects on **Contributing** properties.

Objective Standard	Illustration	Compliance
1. New residential infill on a Contributing property shall be detached from the primary structure and located behind the rear wall of the primary structure. A minimum separation of 15 feet between the new infill building and the primary structure is required.		☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A

Objective Standard	Illustration	Compliance
2. The height of the new residential infill, measured from grade to the highest roof ridge, shall not be taller than one story greater in height than that of the primary residence.		☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A
3. New residential infill structures that are 2.5 stories or less shall utilize the primary shape (gable, hipped, flat, etc.) and pitch (steep, medium, low, flat) that matches the Contributing primary residence. New residential structures that are 3 stories or taller may have a flat roof with a parapet or overhang. If the Contributing primary residence has a parapet, the infill building shall also have a parapet.	Low pitch  Slope: 2:12 to 4:12 Medium pitch  Slope: 4:12 to 8:12 Steep pitch  Slope: 8:12 to 18:12	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A
4. If the infill building has a pitched roof, the roof cladding shall be the same material as the roof cladding on the Contributing primary building. If the Contributing primary building has clay tile coping at the parapet, the new infill building shall also have clay tile coping.		☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A
5. Wall cladding shall match the cladding of the Contributing primary residence in terms of material and orientation (i.e. horizontal or vertical), with the following exceptions: • Fiber cement or wood composite cladding is allowed in lieu of wood cladding if the primary residence is clad in wood. • Vinyl cladding is prohibited.		☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A

MIXED-USE RESIDENTIAL INFILL

The following standards apply to new mixed-use residential infill projects (residential infill projects with ground-floor commercial uses) on commercially zoned parcels within HPOZs.

1. SETTING, LOCATION & SITE DESIGN

Intent: Historically, buildings in commercial areas were typically characterized by a consistent setback usually aligned against the sidewalk. In most cases, a rhythm of building widths was established along the commercial street front. The purpose of the following standards is to ensure that new mixed-use residential infill maintains the historic street wall on commercial corridors within historic districts.

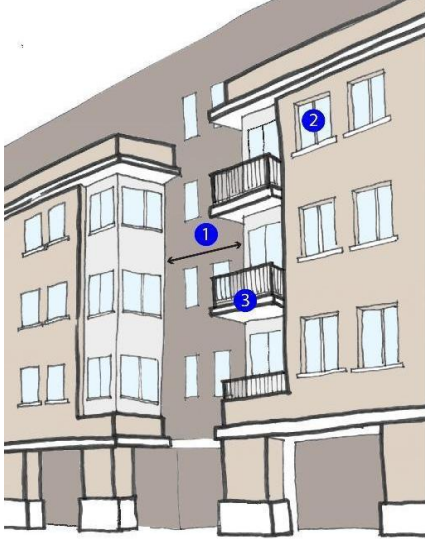
Objective Standard	Illustration	Compliance
1. The primary façade of a new mixed-use residential structure in a commercially zoned area shall have a setback of ± 2 feet of the prevailing setback of existing Contributing properties along the same block face. If there are no Contributing properties on the same block face, including when the new structure comprises the entire block face, the primary façade setback only needs to meet existing underlying zoning requirements.		☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A
2. The ground story shall be located parallel to the primary lot line for at least 75% of the length of the primary façade. Curved or chamfered building façade corners are allowed when the structure is located on a corner lot.		☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A
3. Parking areas and driveways shall be located underneath or behind the rear wall of the new mixed-use residential structure.		☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A

Objective Standard	Illustration	Compliance
If a mid-block property does not have alley or side street access, a driveway may be located at the front building façade to access rear or below-grade parking. The driveway shall be no wider than 20 feet.		
4. Parking areas visible from a public street (excluding alleys) shall be screened by: A solid wall, fence, and/or hedge between 5 and 8 feet in height.		☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A
5. Ground-mounted mechanical equipment that is located in the front yard or side yard and is not behind a fence shall be screened with a material that matches the color and finish of the building façade.		☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A

2. MASSING & ORIENTATION

Intent: Historically, buildings in commercial areas were generally flat-roofed rectangular buildings with articulated ground story storefronts oriented towards the street. The purpose of the following standards is to ensure that new mixed-use residential structures are compatible with the massing and articulation of historic commercial properties within historic districts.

Objective Standard	Illustration	Compliance
1. For new mixed-use residential structures that exceed the height of one or more adjacent Contributing properties, all stories above the tallest adjacent Contributing property shall have a stepback of no less than 15 feet from the primary façade.		☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A
2. New mixed-use residential structures that exceed the height of one or more adjacent Contributing buildings shall incorporate a horizontal element, either in the form of a change in material or a raised element with a minimum 2-inch profile, aligned with one of the adjacent Contributing building cornices or rooflines.		☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A

Objective Standard	Illustration	Compliance
3. All exterior building walls shall provide a break in the plane, or a change in material, at least every 20 feet in horizontal length and every 15 feet in vertical length, created by an articulation or architectural detail, through incorporation of at least two of the following features: • A change in plane of at least 18 inches; • Windows that project such as bays; • Building overhangs, such as canopies or eaves; • Terraces, balconies, porches or cantilevers; • Varying roof forms and heights; and • Window trim or a reveal that is a minimum of 2 inches in depth	 ☒ 1 Change in plane ☒ 2 Inset windows ☒ 3 Balconies	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A
4. The roof shall be flat with an overhang or a parapet.		☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A
5. Roof-mounted mechanical equipment shall be screened if located on a pitched roof or taller than the height of the rooftop parapet. Screening shall be a material that matches the color and finish of the building façade or roof.		☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A
6. New mixed-use residential structures shall have at least one street-oriented entrance.		☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A

3. OPENINGS & STOREFRONTS

Intent: The character of historic commercial block fronts is largely defined by ground story storefronts with large expanses of glass, well-marked entryways, and regularly spaced, punched window openings at upper stories. The purpose of the following standards is to ensure that new mixed-use residential buildings incorporate a vocabulary of ground story storefronts, articulated entryways, and upper-story fenestration patterns that are compatible with surrounding historic commercial properties.

Objective Standard	Illustration	Compliance
1. The ground story of new mixed-use residential structures must incorporate at least two (2) of the following features: • Transom window(s) • Storefront bulkheads • Awning, canopy, or other architectural projection • Corner entrance (only if the structure is on a corner lot) • Different wall cladding material than the upper stories • Horizontal band course with a minimum 2-inch profile between ground story and upper stories.		☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A
2. The ground story of the primary façade shall have a minimum of 50% and maximum of 80% of transparent area. No more than 10% of glazing shall be tinted or translucent at the ground story. The other stories of the primary façade shall have a minimum of 15% transparent area, inclusive of all of those stories. All other street-facing façades (excluding alleys) shall have a minimum of 30% and maximum of 65% transparent area. Mirror or reflective glazing is prohibited.		☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A
3. The entrances (including entrances to individual commercial units and to the residential lobby) along the primary façade shall be recessed from the wall plane by 3 to 5 feet.		☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A
4. Upper-story windows shall be inset a minimum of 2 inches at all façade planes.		☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A

Objective Standard	Illustration	Compliance
5. Retractable gates and security grilles must meet both of the following requirements: • Be a minimum of 75% open or transparent; and • Be concealed during business operating hours behind an architectural element, within a framed pocket opening, mounted on the interior, or attached to a storefront return.		☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A
6. The following awning types are prohibited: • Awnings illuminated from below or internally • Box awnings • Waterfall awnings		☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A

4. MATERIALS & DETAILS

Intent: Materials commonly used on the façades of historic commercial structures include brick, stucco, and masonry. Architectural details were usually embellishments added to the solid plane of the façade or parapet details rising from it. The purpose of the following standards is to ensure that the materials and detailing of new mixed-use residential infill are generally compatible with the surrounding historic commercial properties.

Objective Standard	Illustration	Compliance
1. The following building façade cladding materials are prohibited: • Vinyl • Metal • Mirror glass or reflective materials • Concrete masonry units		☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A
2. Architectural details made of foam, exterior insulation finish system (EIFS), or other synthetic imitation materials are prohibited.		☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A