

# CORRESPONDENCE

## McMillan, Acquanette (Netta)

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**From:** Jacob Pierce  
**Sent:** Friday, November 21, 2025 3:33 PM  
**To:** PublicComment-AutoResponse  
**Cc:** Michael Canavan; Scott Epstein; Hampton, Tyron; Gordo, Victor; Madison, Steve; Rivas, Jessica; Jones, Justin; Lyon, Jason; Masuda, Gene; Cole, Rick; Paige, Jennifer  
**Subject:** Re: Item 16—Objective design standards  
**Attachments:** Abundant Housing-Objective Design Standards 11\_21\_2025.pdf

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Dear Mayor Gordo and members of the Pasadena City Council,

Abundant Housing LA and our local chapter, Abundant Housing Pasadena, write with comments in response to item 16 on Monday's agenda.

This policy is of special importance, as it implements programs in Pasadena's Housing Element. We support objective standards as a way to provide predictability in housing development for all parties. Although many of the proposals would deliver on these goals, we write to make suggestions for ways to further refine the policy proposal to make the program more useful for builders and more beneficial for the broader community.

Our letter is attached.

Thank you,  
Jacob Pierce

**Housing Elements & Policy Analyst**  
Abundant Housing LA  
[@jacobpierceLA](#)





11/21/2025

Pasadena City Council  
Pasadena City Hall  
100 N. Garfield Ave.  
Pasadena, CA, 91101

**RE: Agenda item 16 — Objective Design Standards**

Dear Mayor Gordo and members of the Pasadena City Council,

Abundant Housing LA and Abundant Housing Pasadena strongly support efforts to make housing easier to build and better suited to needs of future residents, as well as those of the broader community. We endorse many elements of the recommendations before you but believe some would benefit from further refinement.

The adoption of objective design standards will implement programs in Pasadena's 5th Cycle Housing Element. Specifically, the policy aligns with both HE-1.3 Housing Design and HE-2.8 Development Process. The Housing Element even makes the case for why the existing design-review status quo is not working. "While the Design Review process is not used to deny or reduce density or intensity of residential projects, it does add review time to projects," the document states. "Thus, the review time frame and fees can add costs."

Subjectivity is often the enemy of smart growth, thoughtful urban planning, and a well-designed urban fabric. When it comes to applications for housing development, subjectivity creates unnecessary delays in housing and does not guarantee a better project. The delays make housing more expensive to build—a trend Pasadena must reverse in order to meet its state obligations for housing production, end its housing shortage, and stabilize housing costs for Pasadena residents. Objective standards can fix these problems—speeding up housing approvals, ensuring that a development meets the needs of a given community, providing community benefits, and creating predictability for all parties.

We do, however, encourage your City Council to further strengthen the proposal with some amendments. To provide flexibility for builders, please provide direction to allow for the following:

- **Looser restrictions on balconies** and allowances for all balconies to protrude more than a mere two feet from the façade
- **Shorter façade lengths**, as small as 45 feet, to allow for smaller multifamily buildings, as well as housing on smaller sites and irregular lots

- **Adjustments to void-to-solid ratio** to provide more optionality for spacing between windows; the current language, as written, would likely result in smaller windows for residents
- **More more than two materials and two colors** permitted on exterior walls to allow more creative façade designs
- **A wider range of finish materials** that do not prohibit metal or composite materials, like faux wood
- **More pedestrian space**—by allowing up to 30% of the building’s base to be recessed up to four feet from the setback; this also creates more flexibility for seating, ADA-accessibility features and improvements to the public realm
- **More options for massing and articulation**, such that a facade up to 125 feet in length would have no requirements for breaking; relatedly, please allow breaks with partial openness to the sky, as small as eight feet deep and eight feet wide, as this aligns with the typical construction beam length of eight feet

We support the overall objective-design framework and would like to particularly applaud the following provisions in the proposed standards:

- **Objective, quantifiable, SB 330-compliant rules** that provide clear guidelines in accordance with state housing law
- **Streamlined design review** to make housing approvals more expeditious and predictable for developers who opt in to the program
- **Clear two-typology system with two pathways**, with different designs to choose from
- **Flexible sustainability compliance** and incentives to allow for rooftop gardens, which will provide a valuable greenspace for residents

We thank the City of Pasadena for its work on this issue. The suggestions outlined in this letter are intended to eliminate subjectivity, encourage housing production, ensure timely approvals of projects and support community benefits, like pedestrian access, livability for residents and an enlivened public realm.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

*Scott Epstein*

Scott Epstein  
Policy and Research Director  
Abundant Housing LA

*Michael Canavan*

Michael Canavan  
Chapter leader  
Abundant Housing Pasadena




## McMillan, Acquanette (Netta)

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**From:** juddschoenholtz  
<juddschoenholtz@everyactioncustom.com>  
**Sent:** Friday, November 21, 2025 4:01 PM  
**To:** PublicComment-AutoResponse  
**Subject:** Support Objective Standards, with amendments to make sure they work!

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Dear City of Pasadena City,

As a member of the Pasadena community, I care deeply about making the City of Roses a more affordable and better place to live.

I write in support of recommendations from Abundant Housing LA to further strengthen the objective design standards (item 16) up for consideration before you. It's important to get these details right, as objective design standards have the potential to improve the lives of future residents, as well as those of the broader community—while also building the housing Pasadena needs to help end its housing shortage.

When it comes to applications for housing development, subjectivity creates unnecessary delays in housing and does not guarantee a better project. The delays make housing more expensive to build. This is a trend that Pasadena must reverse in order to meet its state obligations for housing production, end its housing shortage, and stabilize housing costs for residents. Objective standards can fix these problems—speeding up housing approvals, ensuring that a development meets the needs of a given community, providing community benefits, and creating predictability for all parties.

I ask that you further strengthen the proposal with some amendments. To provide flexibility for builders, please provide direction to allow for the following:

- Looser restrictions on balconies and allowances for all balconies to protrude more than a mere two feet from the facade
- Shorter facade lengths, as small as 45 feet, to allow for smaller multifamily buildings, as well as housing on smaller sites and irregular lots
- Adjustments to void-to-solid ratio to provide more optionality for spacing between windows; the language, as written, would likely result in smaller windows for residents
- A wider range of finish materials that do not prohibit metal or composite materials, like faux wood
- More pedestrian space—by allowing up to 30% of the building's base to be recessed up to four feet from the setback; this also creates more flexibility for seating, ADA-accessibility features and improvements to the public realm

I support the overall objective-design framework and would like to particularly applaud the following provisions in the proposed standards:

- Objective, quantifiable, SB 330-compliant rules that provide clear guidelines in accordance with state housing law
- Streamlined design review to make housing approvals more expeditious and predictable for developers who opt in to the program
- Clear two-typology system with two pathways, with different designs to choose from
- Flexible sustainability compliance and incentives to allow for rooftop gardens, which will provide a valuable green space for residents

Thank you to the City of Pasadena for its hard work on this issue. The suggestions outlined above are intended to eliminate subjectivity, encourage housing production, ensure timely approvals of projects and support community benefits, like pedestrian access, livability for residents and an enlivened public realm.

Sincerely,  
Judd Schoenholtz  
Pasadena, CA 91105-2809

## McMillan, Acquanette (Netta)

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**From:** Ralph Begleiter  
**Sent:** Sunday, November 23, 2025 3:35 PM  
**To:** PublicComment-AutoResponse  
**Subject:** Public comment re: Pasadena City Council agenda for 11-24-2025

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To the City Council of Pasadena -

This correspondence relates to:

Agenda Item 16. ZONING CODE AMENDMENT TO IMPLEMENT OBJECTIVE DESIGN STANDARDS  
FOR HIGH DENSITY RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

My name is Ralph Begleiter. I reside at 842 E. Villa Street in Pasadena, inside the "Lake Station District" identified in the proposal you are considering tonight, which has been thoroughly vetted by the city Planning Commission and thoroughly aired with the community across years of discussion and amendment. After this thorough process, the Planning Commission has unanimously recommended its approval by the City Council.

I strongly support the proposal for the North Lake District Specific Plan. This plan aims to produce a people-friendly segment of Pasadena, while promoting much-needed improvements to the North Lake Avenue area.

I especially commend the Planning Commission for its careful separation of the plan into two categories affecting density and height of construction... divided north and south at Orange Grove Boulevard. Under this plan, to protect the character of historically important neighborhoods north of Orange Grove, the city will discourage high-density and encourage low-height development north of Orange Grove.

At the same time, the city will encourage (with height averaging) higher density and higher-height development south of Orange Grove, especially in properties adjacent to Lake Avenue and between Villa and Maple Streets, to help ease the region's housing shortage, control escalating housing prices and boost transit ridership.

I also applaud the Planning Commission's decision to allow developers to use "open spaces," including generous balconies and street-level spaces such as parking lots, to permit greater flexibility in density and height restrictions for their projects.

Since the Planning Commission's unanimous endorsement of this Lake Station District Plan, the state of California has enacted into law new requirements encouraging denser/higher development within short distances of key transit stations, aligned completely with the one in the Lake Station District of Pasadena.

It's long past time for urban areas like Pasadena to recognize and support the benefits of increased housing availability close to transit stations, benefits which have been visible for decades in other states and urban areas. The Lake Station District is a textbook example of both the need for more housing - including more affordable housing - as well as the urban geography perfect for locating such development within walking distance of the Lake Avenue Station.

I urge the Pasadena City Council not only to approve the pending Lake Station District Plan, but also to throw its considerable weight behind vigorous implementation in the immediate future. This is a change that's good for the neighborhood, good for the housing supply, good for public transit and good for the city. It's time to move forward, not to delay any further.

Thank you for your consideration. Respectfully submitted,

Ralph Begleiter

=====  
Ralph Begleiter



## McMillan, Acquanette (Netta)

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**From:** julianna  
**Sent:** Sunday, November 23, 2025 5:02 PM  
**To:** Gordo, Victor; Rivas, Jessica; Rick Cole; jess@jessforpasadena.com; Lyon, Jason; Jones, Justin; Hampton, Tyron; Masuda, Gene; PublicComment-AutoResponse; Jomsky, Mark; Madison, Steve  
**Cc:** 'julianna'; Paige, Jennifer; Rocha, Luis; Mikaelian, Jason; Johnson, Kevin; Potter, Martin; Marie-Claude Fares; 'David Delgado'; 'Carol Hernandez'; 'Bridget Lawlor'  
**Subject:** RE: November 24th City Council Agenda Item #16: Zoning Code Amendment to Implement Objective Design Standards for High Density Residential Development

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DATE: November 22, 2025

TO: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council

FROM: Julianna Delgado, MArch, PhD, FAICP, Chair City of Pasadena Design Commission

RE: November 24<sup>th</sup> City Council Agenda Item #16: Zoning Code Amendment to Implement Objective Design Standards for High Density Residential Development

Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council,

As Chair of the City's Design Commission, I have recently had the privilege to test the draft Objective Design Standards along with City Design and Historic Preservation Staff on a proposed project post-Preliminary Consultation, the first step in the Commission's review process. The test occurred as part of a Commission Subcommittee's work with a willing applicant and project architect for Consolidated Design Review (combined Concept and Final Design Review) for a new, high-density 100% affordable housing project. It was an enlightening, transformative experience. Application of the proposed Standards during our working sessions will result not only in streamlining the production of needed affordable housing by meeting the applicant's needs and funding deadlines but as a benefit also produce a building far superior in design than what was originally proposed by the applicant and in keeping with the best of Pasadena's traditional-style architecture. Thus, I would urge you adopt the recommendations in the Staff Report with which I concur.

However, I would also urge you to consider one amendment. The intent of State law (SB 330) is to increase the production of much-needed housing by requiring local governments to adopt Objective Design Standards (ODS) to reduce red-tape and the time to approval for applicants. Depending on the project, however, additional building forms and greater creativity may be more appropriate than what would result from applying ODS strictly in a two-step process. Please consider extending the choice to ALL applicants regardless of lot size—not just to those with two acres or more—to decline adhering to ODS and consent to an alternate review so that superior design is not inadvertently precluded. The consequence for the applicant would solely be the increase in one more review before the Design Commission, as it is now, at their discretion.

Finally, I would be remiss not to mention that the lion's share of the work on ODS and our appreciation for completing this daunting task must go to City Staff, especially Principal Planners Kevin Johnson and Martin Potter. After several years of little consultant-led progress with both the Planning and Design Commissions, their leadership along with masterful, meticulous analysis of elements of building form appropriate for Pasadena that could be translated into objective standards, ultimately led to the sound recommendations you are now reviewing. Please do give them the recognition they so merit.

Respectfully,  
Julianna Delgado, MArch, PhD, FAICP  
Chair, City of Pasadena Design Commission  
Member, City of Pasadena Planning Commission

**Julianna Delgado, M.Arch, Ph.D, FAICP**  
President, Southern California Planning Congress  
Professor Emerita, Department of Urban and Regional Planning  
California State Polytechnic University, Pomona

***After enlightenment, do the laundry.***  
*- Zen proverb*

## McMillan, Acquanette (Netta)

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**From:** bert <bert@cityofpasadena.net>  
**Sent:** Friday, November 21, 2025 9:19 PM  
**To:** PublicComment-AutoResponse  
**Subject:** Support Objective Standards, with amendments to make sure they work!

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Dear City of Pasadena City,

As a resident of Pasadena since 1991, I'm writing in support of a policy that will help us build the housing we need.

I write in support of recommendations from Abundant Housing LA to further strengthen the objective design standards (item 16) up for consideration before you. It's important to get these details right, as objective design standards have the potential to improve the lives of future residents, as well as those of the broader community—while also building the housing Pasadena needs to help end its housing shortage.

When it comes to applications for housing development, subjectivity creates unnecessary delays in housing and does not guarantee a better project. The delays make housing more expensive to build. This is a trend that Pasadena must reverse in order to meet its state obligations for housing production, end its housing shortage, and stabilize housing costs for residents. Objective standards can fix these problems—speeding up housing approvals, ensuring that a development meets the needs of a given community, providing community benefits, and creating predictability for all parties.

I ask that you further strengthen the proposal with some amendments. To provide flexibility for builders, please provide direction to allow for the following:

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- More pedestrian space—by allowing up to 30% of the building's base to be recessed up to four feet from the setback; this also creates more flexibility for seating, ADA-accessibility features and improvements to the public realm

I support the overall objective-design framework and would like to particularly applaud the following provisions in the proposed standards:

- Objective, quantifiable, SB 330-compliant rules that provide clear guidelines in accordance with state housing law
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- Flexible sustainability compliance and incentives to allow for rooftop gardens, which will provide a valuable green space for residents

Thank you to the City of Pasadena for its hard work on this issue. The suggestions outlined above are intended to eliminate subjectivity, encourage housing production, ensure timely approvals of projects and support community benefits, like pedestrian access, livability for residents and an enlivened public realm.

Sincerely,  
Bert Newton  
Pasadena, CA 91106-1472  
bert`



## McMillan, Acquanette (Netta)

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**From:** rachelorfila  
**Sent:** Saturday, November 22, 2025 4:48 AM  
**To:** PublicComment-AutoResponse  
**Subject:** Support Objective Standards, with amendments to make sure they work!

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Sincerely,  
Rachel Orfila  
Pasadena, CA 91107-3562

**McMillan, Acquanette (Netta)**

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**From:** thomasboat  
<thomasboat@everyactioncustom.com>  
**Sent:** Saturday, November 22, 2025 1:24 PM  
**To:** PublicComment-AutoResponse  
**Subject:** Support Objective Standards, with amendments to make sure they work!

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Dear City of Pasadena City,

My name is Tom Boat and I have lived and owned a home in Pasadena for more than 25 years. Both of my sons had a great experience in the Pasadena public schools.

I write in support of recommendations from Abundant Housing LA to simplify the objective design standards (item 16) up for consideration. We are experiencing a severe housing shortage that is causing extreme hardship for over half of our residents. The recent fires made the housing shortage even worse. Simplifying design standards should make building new housing easier and more affordable.

Before I retired, I worked as a Controller of a manufacturing company in North Hollywood. We had a full time employee who lived in his car because he could not afford rent. All of the young adults I know in Pasadena are living at home with their parents because rents have become unaffordable.

We have the land, labor, materials and technology to increase the housing supply and make it more affordable right now. In my view the roadblocks to more affordable housing are restrictive zoning, excessive regulation, and local residents who oppose new developments out of fear of increased traffic.

As a parent and uncle of three young adults that would like to stay in Pasadena, I urge you to work to simplify the housing approval process so we can make housing for affordable for our next generation.

Sincerely,  
Tom Boat  
Pasadena, CA 91107-1838

**11/24/2025**  
**Item 16**