

REGULAR MEETING AND STUDY SESSION
OF THE FOSTER CITY PLANNING COMMISSION

Council Chambers – 620 Foster City Boulevard – Foster City

M I N U T E S

April 17, 2025

1. CALL TO ORDER

At 7:00 p.m. by Chair Haddad

2. ROLL CALL

Present: Commissioners Jagtiani, Kenkre, Pedro, Stoveland, and Chair Haddad

Staff Present: Sofia Mangalam, Community Development Director; Leslie Carmichael, Consultant Planner; Denise Bazzano, Assistant City Attorney

3. COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

1. None

4. CONSENT CALENDAR

1. Regular Meeting Minutes from April 3, 2025

ACTION: Motion by Commissioner Jagtiani, seconded by Commissioner Kenkre to approve the Minutes of April 3, 2025 passed 5-0-0-0.

5. CONTINUED PUBLIC HEARING

1. None

6. NEW PUBLIC HEARING

1. None

7. OLD BUSINESS

1. None

8. NEW BUSINESS

1. None

9. STUDY SESSION

1. SINGLE-FAMILY OBJECTIVE DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS IS A CITYWIDE INITIATIVE TO MODERNIZE THE CITY'S SINGLE-FAMILY DESIGN GUIDELINES, POLICIES, AND APPLICABLE ZONING CODE REGULATIONS INTO ONE COMPREHENSIVE ORDINANCE AS WELL AS STREAMLINE THE PERMITTING PROCESS FOR THE HOMEOWNERS.

THE PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY SESSION IS TO PROVIDE THE PLANNING COMMISSION AND THE PUBLIC AN OPPORTUNITY TO REVIEW AND PROVIDE INPUT ON THE DRAFT REGULATIONS (PARTIAL), INCLUDING BUILDING DESIGN, SITE DESIGN, AND ACCESSORY STRUCTURES.

Summary of staff questions:

Entry Locations – Courtyards

- Should the definition of "principal entry" include the entry to the front courtyard if there is a wall or gate of at least 5' in height enclosing a courtyard between the house and the street?
- Should the front door in a courtyard still be required to be oriented to the street?
Should new units be allowed to have a courtyard entry?
- Should new units be allowed to have a side-facing entry (on non-corner lots)?

Commissioner Stoveland stated that courtyard homes are a standard for Foster City. He expressed his appreciation for the orientation of the door from a security perspective and added that having a hidden spot for package deliveries has been a benefit. He noted that the police department might prefer that they can see the entrance.

Commissioner Jagtiani asked if the question is if there is a front courtyard gate, does the other entrance need to be on the front facing as well.

Consultant Planner Carmichael confirmed.

Commissioner Jagtiani stated that the door can be faced in any direction, as long as the gate is front facing. He provided an example that buyers may want to face their door in a certain direction according to their beliefs.

Commissioner Pedro stated that he is fine with the definition of "principal entry" including the entry to the front courtyard if there is a wall or gate. He added that he does not think the front door in the courtyard should still be required to be oriented to the street and that the homeowner can decide where it goes. He stated that new units should be allowed to have a courtyard entry and that new units should be allowed to have side facing entry.

Commissioner Jagtiani stated that he is also a yes on the other two questions.

Commissioner Kenkre agreed with Commissioner Pedro on the first two points regarding principal entry. He stated that the front door to the courtyard should not be required to face the front. He supported allowing new units to have a courtyard entry and agreed that the units should be allowed side facing entry.

Commissioner Stoveland clarified that there is no requirement for a gate at the front of a courtyard.

Commissioner Pedro stated that he is comfortable with the definition of principal entry to include the entry to the front courtyard if there is a wall or gate of at least 5 feet in height in closing a courtyard between the house and the street. He furthered that there could be a courtyard entry where there is a gate with a side entry.

Commissioner Stoveland added that there could be no gate at all.

Commissioner Pedro stated that the most flexible is best.

Side Entry Garage Driveways

- Should a two (2) foot landscape buffer be provided between the driveway and the primary building?

Commissioner Stoveland asked what the definition of landscape is. He referenced the top example and asked if the property with 2 feet of white stones would be counted as a landscape buffer.

Consultant Planner Carmichael noted that the topic of landscape will be included in the next study session and mentioned that staff will be asking feedback on xeriscapes and use of colored rock. She stated that she does not currently have an answer.

Commissioner Jagtiani asked what the purpose of a landscape buffer was.

Consultant Planner Carmichael stated that it is partly for visual and for safety. She provided an example of a landscape buffer preventing a vehicle from backing into a wall.

Commissioner Kenkre stated that a landscape buffer is just for aesthetics and questioned the purpose if it's not well maintained. He noted that it should not be made mandatory.

Commissioner Pedro supported the proposed 2-foot landscape buffer, taking into consideration health and safety. He provided an example of an individual using the 2-foot buffer as a safety margin, allowing room to move out of the way in case of an incoming car.

Commissioner Haddad expressed support for the 2-foot buffer zone.

Commissioner Jagtiani stated that the 2-foot buffer should not be required and noted that it will not make much difference. He noted that an individual could still bump into the house with the buffer.

Commissioner Stoveland stated that many homes in Foster City feature side garages adjacent to one another and noted how aesthetically pleasing multiple houses in a row where the driveway extends directly up to the side of the house would be. He emphasized that standards are intended to provide clear guidelines for approval and that there is room for exceptions. He noted that we would want to limit the exception, and he questioned what considerations residents would want without addressing the Planning Commission.

Commissioner Pedro stated that if there is a requirement for a 2-foot buffer, individuals can still come to Planning Commissioner for an exception. He noted that having the buffer would allow it to be an over-the-counter decision.

Community Development Director Mangalam asked if there is a consensus to provide 2-foot landscape buffer.

Commissioner Kenkre stated that he changed his answer to yes.

Community Development Director Mangalam reiterated that a consensus needs to be reached because these regulations will eventually be in the Municipal Code and needs to ensure there is a consensus on the regulations.

Consultant Planner Carmichael noted that there will be another opportunity to discuss these topics as this is a study session and changes could be made before recommending it to the Council.

Shared Driveways

Commissioner Stoveland asked if a house does not currently have a reciprocal easement, would it be automatically applied in compliance with the proposed rule.

Consultant Planner Carmichael stated that the proposed regulation would not take effect unless an application is submitted.

Commissioner Stoveland reiterated that it is not possible to establish a reciprocal easement if they do not apply for something.

Consultant Planner Carmichael stated no.

Assistant City Attorney Bazzano asked if this is regarding new buildings.

Community Development Director Mangalam confirmed.

Commissioner Jagtiani asked what Consultant Planner Carmichael meant and provided an example of an individual applying for a remodel with no construction to the driveway.

Community Development Director Mangalam explained that if one property wants to break away from the shared driveway to have an independent driveway, the property would have to meet the standards as described as 25-foot distance and 2 feet landscape buffer.

Commissioner Jagtiani noted that most homeowners do not have a reciprocal easement agreement and asked if the property applies for a remodel, would the owner and the neighbor have to create the agreement.

Assistant City Attorney Bazzano stated that if the property owners are separating their driveway, there will be enough space to meet the City's standards for driveways and will not need to obtain reciprocal easements.

Consultant Planner Carmichael clarified that the question being asked is in regard to whether an application such as a second story addition would require property owners to obtain reciprocal easements.

Assistant City Attorney Bazzano stated that the driveway would not be affected by such an application and would be considered legal non-conforming for the driveways.

Building Massing

- Should the solar impact policy standards be included in the Municipal Code as objective standards? With changes?
- Compliance with standards would be a ministerial process and deviation from the standards would require Planning Commission review.
- Should a height limit be included for when a solar study is required?

Commissioner Jagtiani raised concern of the potential impact of reduced sunlight from neighboring construction. He provided an example of a kitchen window facing a cooking range and is now subjected to inadequate sunlight and inhibits the functionality of the window.

Consultant Planner Carmichael stated that if the Commission wants to prevent that type of impact, then the Commission would exclude the last standard that allows the aggregate impact of multiple windows to be considered and those who have a similar argument would have to come before the Planning Commission.

Commissioner Jagtiani confirmed. He added that he was in support of prioritizing height than the number of floors or stories a building has.

Commissioner Stoveland agreed and proposed to match the maximum allowable ADU height.

Commissioner Pedro supported the aggregate regarding shading and referenced a similar project that had come before the Planning Commission. He agreed with the height being the trigger rather than the second story and highlighted the potential costs it will cause homeowners for setting a maximum allowable height.

Commissioner Kenkre supported all three questions and added that solar panels are enhanced with direct sunlight but affirmed that they can still function without it.

Commissioner Haddad stated that he is not in favor of including solar impact in the Municipal Code as objective standards. He added that height should be included for when a solar study is required.

Community Development Director Mangalam clarified if the consensus is to include the solar study as part of the objective standards and asked if it was 3 yes's and 2 noes.

Commissioner Jagtiani confirmed.

Community Development Director Mangalam reiterated that the consensus is to include the solar study. She noted that there was also a consensus to include a height limit and asked what the height limit would be. She stated that there were considerations for

matching the height of an ADU, which per State law is up to 18 feet, and any height over 18 feet would require a solar study.

Commissioner Stoveland clarified if the 18 feet is based on the average height of the roof line and not the ADU.

Community Development Director Mangalam stated that there are State laws for ADUs, and the thought was to standardize the requirements.

Commissioner Pedro stated that he initially was leaning towards no for solar surveys and proposed considering their inclusion within the Municipal Code with changes. He asked for the average solar study cost and raised concern of cost and time added to the application process.

Community Development Director Mangalam proposed asking applicants who have recently done the solar study and suggested revisiting the topic in the next study session.

Assistant City Attorney Bazzano clarified that a detached ADU's base height limitation is 16 feet and increases to 18 feet if their property is within a half mile walking distance from major transit stop or high-quality transit corridor and provides an additional 2 feet for roof pitch to align with the roof pitch of the primary dwelling unit. She added that an attached ADU height limit is a maximum of 25 feet of the existing primary dwelling unit height limit lower than 25.

Commissioner Kenkre asked why some owners have done a solar study if there is no current requirement for one.

Community Development Director Mangalam stated that a solar study for second story additions is required per the solar impact policy.

Commissioner Stoveland reiterated that all second-story additions and their potential impact on their neighbors are being discussed and concurred that the impact on the construction costs should be considered. He furthered that without a solar study above a particular height the addition could impact the neighbor's quality of life

Commissioner Jagtiani added that it could have a potential impact on the value of the property.

Commissioner Pedro stated that he envisioned a sunken living room with an additional one to two feet of ceiling height.

Commissioner Jagtiani stated it would increase the construction cost more.

Front Elevation Articulation

- Should the front elevation articulation be required to utilize a minimum of 1 or 2 of the listed treatments?

Commissioner Pedro stated that he is comfortable with the requirement and questioned if it requires one or two.

Consultant Planner confirmed that it is one or two.

Commissioner Pedro suggested to utilize a minimum of one to be less restrictive.

Commissioner Kenkre and Commissioner Jagtiani agreed.

Commissioner Stoveland provided an example of a home with a wall of a home that has only one window and a side entrance with no variation of color or depth. He asked if this example, following the requirement, would be permissible without consideration.

Commissioner Kenkre asked if there is a scenario in Foster City that is similar to the example.

Commissioner Jagtiani clarified that this is regarding building new houses.

Commissioner Stoveland noted that if new houses are built using brutalist architecture, it may lead to numerous complaints.

Commissioner Jagtiani proposed at least 2 requirements.

Commissioner Stoveland, Commissioner Kenkre, and Chair Haddad agreed.

Commissioner Pedro stated that he was considering the principal entry on the front elevation as a requirement plus an additional 1 of the listed treatments.

Consultant Planner Carmichael stated that there can be considerations to move principal entry onto the list to allow side entry.

Community Development Director Mangalam clarified if there was a consensus on at least 2 treatments

Commissioner Stoveland confirmed.

Rear Elevation Articulation

- Should no rear elevation articulation run in a continuous plane of more than twenty (20) feet on any specific story without at least (1) of the specified treatments

Commissioner Pedro indicated his approval.

Commissioner Jagtiani and Commissioner Kenkre agreed.

Materials and Colors

Commissioner Stoveland mentioned that some siding materials, such as Hardie-plank, require additional materials and questioned if it is included in the three required elements.

Consultant Planner Carmichael stated that it will have to be worked into the definition.

Chair Haddad asked if roofing is not a part of the three elements

Consultant Planner Carmichael stated that the goal is to limit the number of siding materials and asked if the City should have a standard or not.

Chair Haddad provided an example of a steel post and whether it was allowed.

Consultant Planner Carmichael stated that it would be allowed if steel posts are not on the prohibited materials list.

Chair Haddad stated that he is not in favor of limiting the exterior elements to be three different materials and prefers basing it on architectural design.

Commissioner Jagtiani agreed and stated to not make it too restrictive in terms of how many materials can be used in hopes to see better designed, modern, creative homes in the future.

Commissioner Kenkre agreed to have no restrictions.

Commissioner Stoveland provided an example of an attached ADU at the front of the house, and they opted for steel plates as the siding. He asked if there are any number of different surfaces on a home's front that would be considered as too many.

Chair Haddad responded that there isn't and provided an example of a garage being a different material, such as metal, adding another element.

Commissioner Stoveland asked if this topic excludes garage doors.

Consultant Planner Carmichael confirmed.

Commissioner Pedro referenced Commissioner Stoveland's example and stated that ADU rules require the use of similar siding to the home or the main structure. He offered an amended question of whether an addition to the house that introduces metal siding as an element should be cause for concern.

Consultant Planner Carmichael clarified that there is a majority for not limiting the number of materials and asked if there should be a list of prohibited materials.

Commissioner Pedro supported the idea of a list of prohibited materials and asked if it would be approved at the staff level. He stated that the list can be adjusted as new materials come to the market.

Chair Haddad asked what materials could be prohibited.

Consultant Planner Carmichael mentioned vinyl siding and the consideration of corrugated metal fiberglass.

Commissioner Pedro asked if there is currently a maintained list of prohibited materials.

Community Development Director Mangalam stated that there are currently a lot of materials for roofs but no current list for exterior wall materials.

Commissioner Pedro stated that he'll opt to not having a material list of exclusions if there is no current ongoing list.

Commissioner Stoveland asked if the Commissioners would mind numerous homes with vinyl siding.

Chair Haddad stated that it depends on the neighborhood and the architectural design. He noted that this was for new houses and that the project would need to go through the approval process.

Community Development Director Mangalam clarified on the approval process and stated that projects that meet the standards will be administrative. She furthered that any time projects are outside of the standards or do not meet the standards, then the project will be brought to Planning Commission.

Chair Haddad noted that the standards could include a recommended prohibited list of material.

Community Development Director Mangalam stated that staff have come across materials that might become an issue and can create the list. She referenced the example of vinyl siding to be included in the list.

Commissioner Jagtiani asked if the prohibition is based on safety concerns or aesthetics.

Community Development Director Mangalam stated that it can be both. She furthered that some materials could be shiny and could cause traffic issues if the house is on the corner lot.

Commissioner Jagtiani noted that colors could cause an issue too.

Commissioner Kenkre indicated that the exclusion list is not meant to limiting the amount of materials that can be used but what type of materials.

Commissioner Stoveland noted that the standards and the creation of the prohibited materials list are meant to rubber stamp as much as possible and anything that does not meet the standards can be brought to Planning Commission.

Community Development Director Mangalam reiterated that if the list is established, the applicant still has the ability to go to Planning Commission and seek approval.

Consultant Planner Carmichael raised the final issue of colors and if there should be a limit.

Commissioner Pedro supported the use of any color. He raised concern that putting a limit on house colors would create HOA-style restrictions in Foster City and potentially deterring homebuyers. He noted that there is no need for a permit to paint the exterior of the house and questioned how the standards will be enforced.

Commissioner Kenkre noted that limiting colors could result in a boring, uniform look, while an excessive use of colors can lead to San Francisco-like aesthetics. He ultimately agreed on being flexible with the use of colors.

Commissioner Stoveland stated that he is not against the use of bright colors and expressed interest in getting public input on this matter.

Commissioner Jagtiani stated that he is open to any color and that the only prohibition factor for concern is whether the material is harmful or a safety concern.

Chair Haddad supported the use of any color and proposed a list of recommended unappealing colors or unused colors.

Assistant City Attorney Bazzano referenced how it previously was problem while developing the multifamily objective development and design standards. She asked if it meant creating a palette and raised concern that colors are somewhat subjective and that names change. She noted that names of colors can be different across brands and color identification is fairly limited. She noted that this would be for construction of new homes rather than existing homes.

Commissioner Stoveland asked if there are current restrictions on colors in the rules, and if a complaint is made, homeowners may be required to change the color of their house.

Community Development Director Mangalam confirmed that it is the current regulation.

Consultant Planner Carmichael stated that the standards that are proposed to be applied only to new units have the word "new" in them Staff envisioned similar requirements for colors as are in the current code, which apply to both new and repainting of existing units.

Commissioner Stoveland noted that if a house had four different and someone submitted a complaint, staff would be required to investigate the issue.

Assistant City Attorney Bazzano stated that amending a zoning code may turn existing units that conflict with the new zoning code into legal, nonconforming units. She furthered that they are not required to update their units to conform to the new law and stated that any substantial remodel or additions will require compliance.

Commissioner Stoveland questioned if painting the house qualifies.

Assistant City Attorney Bazzano stated that this standard will need to be established and raised whether a home who changes one or two elements to the front façade would be required to bring the entire home into compliance. She furthered that the issue will be addressed as the ordinance is drafted.

Commissioner Pedro asked if the three different material types exist in a currently existing standard.

Consultant Planner Carmichael stated there is no existing standard that does that.

Commissioner Pedro asked if the list of prohibited materials for exteriors exists in a currently existing standard.

Consultant Planner Carmichael stated that there is no existing standard for materials other than roof materials.

Commissioner Pedro asked if the restrictions on color are currently in effect.

Consultant Planner Carmichael stated that the current standard does not allow fluorescent or primary colors.

Commissioner Pedro suggested eliminating color restrictions and noted that the goal is to streamline the approval process. He raised concerns about the enforcement of the standards and questioned future challenges it may cause.

Assistant City Attorney Bazzano corrected a prior statement regarding the application to existing properties. She referenced Section 17.04.02 and stated improvements which are prohibited are repairing or restaining, which uses a bright pastel, fluorescent or primary color, or a color out of character, with existing colors used in the neighborhood. She furthered that chapter 17.58 applies to new buildings.

Commissioner Pedro stated that primary colors, such as blue and yellow, are common house colors and recommended removing the restriction to help Staff streamline processes.

Commissioner Stoveland agreed and noted that primary colors are specific shades of blues and yellows. He raised concern that the City is not actively enforcing the restriction and is purely compliant based.

Commissioner Pedro raised concerns about inconsistent enforcement of color restrictions and stated that if the City isn't willing to fully enforce the restriction, it may be better to remove the prohibition altogether.

Assistant City Attorney Bazzano noted that the enforcement of the standard is beyond the topic at hand and stated that since it is a regulation, the City is well within its right to enforce it. She asked If the Planning Commission would want to amend the requirement in some way.

Commissioner Pedro supported the removal of the color requirement for single-family homes.

Commissioner Stoveland raised the question on whether there is a limit on the number of colors.

Commissioner Pedro suggested that there should be a limit.

Commissioner Stoveland asked about if logos are permissible.

Consultant Planner Carmichael referenced an existing prohibition that prohibits murals, multicolored patterns, or similar features.

Community Development Director Mangalam furthered that it is referenced under repainting or restaining.

Commissioner Stoveland asked if that prohibition should be kept.

Commissioner Jagtiani stated that it should.

Assistant City Attorney Bazzano asked if they had reached a consensus.

Commissioner Pedro stated that he is flexible regarding murals and similar features and supported the City not having restrictions on exterior colors.

Commissioner Haddad clarified that the rule would apply to all single-family homes and raised concern for what can be the limitation of colors. He stated that color limitation for existing homes is not practical.

Community Development Director Mangalam clarified that the color restrictions would be triggered when an existing home is repainted in a new color, but not when it is repainted in the same existing color.

Commissioner Pedro stated that a homeowner could repaint their house in the same unapproved color without issue, unless a complaint is submitted to the City.

Commissioner Jagtiani asked if the house color was changed to a slightly different shade of the existing color.

Commissioner Pedro stated that the issue of nuances of color is too complicated and raised that it will cause financial burden to the homeowner who is required to repaint based on a neighbor's complaint.

Community Development Director Mangalam clarified if the consensus is to not limit colors and a consensus regarding a use of murals or multicolor patterns.

Commissioner Pedro and Commission Jagtiani agreed.

Commissioner Stoveland asked if there is an absolute limit on the number of colors that can be on one surface of a home. He noted that the use of different colors does not necessarily mean patterns and provided an example of a three-foot patch of a different color. He raised concern of the potential impact on visual standards of the neighborhood.

Commissioner Pedro raised concern that implementing color restrictions would require a building permit to be pulled. He stated that currently the enforcement is complaint-based and only affects those who are reported. He furthered that implementing the restrictions would have to be carried out across the board but raised concern that it would require too much staff time.

Commissioner Stoveland reiterated that the topic on hand is if there is a limit to the number of colors.

Commissioner Pedro stated that he would apply the same standard and questioned if the homeowner has to indicate how many types of colors will be used on their building permit application.

Commissioner Stoveland countered that if a number was in place, such as four different types of paint, a homeowner would not need a permit.

Community Development Director Mangalam cited the existing standard and stated that multicolor patterns are defined as three or four. She furthered that the Multifamily Objective Design and Development Standards, which were recently approved by the Planning Commission and City Council, prohibits fluorescent colors and emphasized the need to be consistent. She asked if this standard should be included in the Single-Family Objective Design and Development Standards where fluorescent colors are prohibited. Commissioner Pedro stated that he does not want to prohibit any colors on a single-family home. He raised concern that applying restrictions would make the City feel like an HOA and deter prospective homebuyers.

Community Development Director Mangalam suggested tabling the topic if there is no consensus. She stated that there is a consensus on limiting colors for now and to continue the discussion of including multicolor patterns.

Commissioner Pedro agreed to continue the conversation on multicolor patterns and emphasized that there should be no prohibitions on any one color.

Community Development Director Mangalam asked if the topic should be tabled.

Commissioner Kenkre asked if the use of fluorescent colors is acceptable.

Commissioner Pedro reiterated that he supports the use of any color.

Commissioner Kenkre asked what the implementation process is to ensure homeowners abide by the guidelines.

Community Development Director Mangalam stated that code enforcement is typically complaint-based and is proactively investigated by the Code Enforcement Officer.

Assistant City Attorney Bazzano noted that she does not have any information at the moment on whether the City has in the past enforced the provision of the zoning code as it is not the topic of discussion. She emphasized that the discussion is regarding whether the Planning Commission wants to make changes or revise the design standards in the way that staff is proposing or not. She stated that this topic can be further discussed at a later time with more information about the enforcement of the zoning code in the past.

Commissioner Pedro raised concern that one complaint could lead to numerous other reports of similar violations. He emphasized that during a study session, all elements of the existing ordinance are open for revisions to improve the current ordinance.

Assistant City Attorney Bazzano agreed that the Planning Commission can give directions on their ideas and thoughts on further amendments. She stated that the proposed ordinance has a narrow scope of revisions to a particular chapter or section and explained that what Planning Commission may want may be beyond what Staff intended to amend.

Community Development Director Mangalam recommended tabling the topic for now and that more information be provided at the next meeting. She noted that the existing regulations already prohibit fluorescent colors in multifamily housing and multicolor palettes in single-family homes. She suggested consolidating this information for the Planning Commission's future consideration.

Commissioner Stoveland agreed and asked if there has been any feedback from the community on the idea of color.

Community Development Director Mangalam noted that the intention was to do a study session first and then open for public feedback. She mentioned that there will be a feedback form on the Foster City webpage that will be open until May 8th to give an opportunity for homeowners to provide their comments. She furthered that the feedback will be shared in the next study session and will bring attention to any strong opinions from the community.

Roof Form – without Articulation

- Is this requirement too difficult for the smaller lots in Foster City?

Commissioner Pedro questioned the potential impact of implementing these processes would have on current housing stock and if anything would trigger on an existing home 50 percent plus remodel and addition.

Consultant Planner Carmichael stated it would only apply to new houses.

Commissioner Pedro clarified that it would trigger for those who would want to add out the back.

Commissioner Stoveland provided an example of a house was burnt down and the homeowner wanted to rebuild and asked if they would have to follow the new standard or rebuild the house as it presently exists.

Assistant City Attorney Bazzano stated that there will need to be an articulation of what uniform, new construction means.

Commissioner Stoveland emphasized the need for one definition of new construction that will applicable the standards and policies.

Consultant Planner Carmichael stated that there will be research on how the non-conforming chapter allows for rebuilding a destroyed structure. She clarified if there is a consensus for a requirement for roof articulation for new houses.

Chair Haddad confirmed.

Roof Forms – Pitch Materials

- Should there be an allowance for small deviations in roof pitch?
- Should the City allow the roof material for an addition to be different than the existing roof materials in any circumstances?

Commissioner Jagtiani stated that deviations should be allowed to promote creativeness. He referenced the second question and noted that materials may not be available at the time and should allow use of similar or different materials.

Commissioner Pedro agreed and noted to not limit materials for an addition and provided an example of a patio room off the back of the house having a gentler pitch or a tar and gravel roof that is not the same roofing material as the main home.

Commissioner Kenkre raised concern about the definition of a small deviation.

Consultant Planner Carmichael noted that the use of the term small deviation is not objective and stated that an approach to the standard could be having the pitch materials to match the main house and small deviations to be brought to the Planning Commission for evaluation.

Commissioner Kenkre referenced the second question and provided an example of a houses with solar tiles only on one side of the roof should not be required to put solar tiles across the entire roof.

Commissioner Pedro stated that if solar tiles are treated similar to solar panels, the solar roofing material would look like a patch.

Community Development Director Mangalam stated that solar panels are not roofing material and are exempt from State law. She furthered that there is a limit to solar panels and solar roofs, such as permitting requirements, and only require a building permit. She noted that Planning does not look at solar panels and solar roofs.

Commissioner Pedro reiterated that an individual could do a solar roofing material patch.

Community Development Director Mangalam confirmed and stated that it would go straight to a building permit. She reiterated that Planners do not review those permits and are not considered roof materials.

Commissioner Stoveland provided an example of a farmhouse style home being built on a vacant lot, whose roof includes a different pitch in the middle and an additional angled roof that comes out and asked if the farmhouse style home would be prohibited under this standard.

Consultant Planner Carmichael confirmed and stated that it would come to the Planning Commission as an exception.

Commissioner Pedro noted that it sounds simple but may take the applicant several months to go through the process. He furthered that there are some variations in design that are appealing and marketable that do not follow the proposed restriction. He raised concern that the popular style homes will not be built due to the additional step of coming to the Planning Commission.

Commissioner Stoveland provided an additional example of irregular pitched roofs as one of the worst possible examples and raised concern on what should the standard protect Foster City from.

Commissioner Pedro noted that if homes were built for resale, there would be market research done on popular homes. He stated that he leans towards less restrictive but raised concerns that this ordinance may prohibit and cause an extra three to six months of going through the Planning Commission process.

Commissioner Stoveland asked if the typical timeline for Planning Commission is two to three months if projects don't meet the set standards.

Community Development Director Mangalam estimated a minimum of two months, taking into consideration the administrative process and whether the project meets the objective criteria.

Commissioner Jagtiani noted that once the Objective Design Standards are in effect, the Planning Commission will not be as busy.

Consultant Planner Carmichael clarified if there was a consensus made.

Commissioner Pedro stated that what is written may be too restrictive and recommends opting for what is most flexible.

Garage Frontage

- Should the percentage of the front façade taken up by the garage door be limited? If so, is fifty (50) percent appropriate? This will force most 3-car garages to be side entry (e.g. Alden Park).

Commissioner Pedro stated that he is comfortable with it being limited and with the 50 percent.

Commissioner Jagtiani agreed.

Commissioner Kenkre asked how it is measured in the third picture.

Consultant Planner Carmichael stated that there is no garage facing front, making it a side entry garage and is measured as zero percent front façade.

Garage Articulation

- Should articulation be required for the streetfacing wall of side entry garages?

Chair Haddad supported the articulation for aesthetics.

Commissioner Pedro and Commissioner Haddad agreed.

Commissioner Stoveland referenced the example and questioned if the absence of the planter box pictured would not allow it to meet the requirements.

Consultant Planner Carmichael asked if the requirement should be a planter as an option or require landscaping. She added that it is hard to regulate plant placement.

Commissioner Stoveland asked if grass cannot go all the way up to the wall.

Consultant Planner Carmichael stated that it could.

Commissioner Pedro asked if it was referring to new construction.

Consultant Planner Carmichael stated that it was also for remodels.

Community Development Director Mangalam clarified that it is only if they are adding altogether a new garage.

Commissioner Pedro reiterated that remodeling a home will not trigger the requirement, but work done on a garage will.

Community Development Director Mangalam confirmed that it is if there is work on the garage all together. She furthered that interior remodel, such as a second story addition, will not be asked to comply with the regulation regarding articulation.

Commissioner Jagtiani referenced garage conversions into a JADU.

Community Development Director Mangalam stated that JADUs are subject to State ADU laws and Foster City has very few objective design standards in the current ADU ordinance.

Commissioner Stoveland asked if there is a requirement that a house have a garage.

Community Development Director Mangalam stated that there is a requirement; however, State law allows garage conversions into ADUs and does not require the building of another garage.

Commissioner Stoveland referenced the example and stated that he is in support of landscape up to the garage, although it did not have to be a planter box.

Community Development Director Mangalam noted that the example has articulation and has two materials and suggested expanding the articulation.

Commissioner Pedro stated that a flat wall with a single material would be for the potential addition of a window. He noted that the current guidelines present an either-or scenario and will ultimately not require the planter box.

Consultant Planner Carmichael confirmed.

Commissioner Stoveland asked if a flat stucco wall would be deemed unacceptable. He stated that he is in support of the flat stucco wall and landscape to the edge of the garage without the need for a planter box.

Commissioner Pedro stated that he prefers less restrictions but understands the want for articulation. He used a prior example of several houses in a row having the same blank wall.

Commissioner Stoveland provided an example of the adobe style homes in Arizona with no articulation and stated that this style home would not be approved under this requirement.

Commissioner Pedro clarified if Commissioner Stoveland is a no on the articulation requirement.

Commissioner Stoveland confirmed.

Commissioner Pedro expressed his agreement.

Principal Entry

- Are you all right with having these standards that would define the principal entry, make it more easily identifiable.

Commissioner Stoveland asked why is there a need to have a gate or a fence of at least 5 feet height at the entry to a courtyard.

Consultant Planner Carmichael stated that they could look into a different way to define a courtyard.

Commissioner Stoveland stated that some of the courtyards in Foster City are actually defined as recessed entries and referenced the first slide.

Consultant Planner Carmichael stated that some of the entry courtyards are just an opening between two wings of the house and then get bigger in the back.

Commissioner Stoveland asked if that is considered a courtyard or a recessed entry.

Consultant Planner Carmichael responded that it would be a courtyard.

Commissioner Stoveland stated that he would opt to take out a requirement for a wall fence or gate at the front of the courtyard.

Commissioner Haddad asked if this was referencing new homes and not for remodeling

Consultant Planner Carmichael confirmed.

Commissioner Haddad agreed to take it off.

Balconies

- Should Juliette balconies be allowed on any side elevation or only allowed if there's a minimum setback of 25' to adjacent house?
- Is there a need to establish a minimum size for balconies?

Commissioner Pedro stated that if there is a minimum setback at 25 feet for the adjacent home, then minimum size should not be established and left up to the applicant.

Commissioner Stoveland asked what the real difference between a Juliette balcony and a large window. He furthered that if there is no restriction on a large window on the side of the house, why would there be a restriction on a Juliette balcony on the side of the house. He reiterated that there should not be a setback for a Juliette balcony.

Commissioner Kenkre agreed and noted that privacy is violated in either case.

Commissioner Haddad stated that the Juliette balcony is not related to the size of the window. He stated that it could be a wide balcony and asked if it had different windows and doors.

Consultant Planner Carmichael stated that there are no regulations that prohibit full to the floor windows on a side elevation. She clarified that a Juliette balcony is a full height window with a railing.

Commissioner Stoveland furthered that Juliette balconies don't have a standing area.

Commissioner Pedro clarified that the general thought process is to treat Juliette balconies as windows.

Commissioner Stoveland asked if commissioners have an opinion on the minimum size of balconies.

Commissioner Jagtiani asked if balconies are defined as ones you can actually stand in.

Consultant Planner Carmichael confirmed.

Commissioner Jagtiani asked if there are any requirements on size, as far as safety is concerned.

Community Development Director Mangalam stated that there are building code requirements when it comes to size and that would be the trigger.

Commissioner Stoveland clarified that it was regarding things such as ADA.

Community Development Director Mangalam confirmed.

Windows

- Should the requirements for the use of grids and style (e.g. slider vs casement vs double hung) to match apply to all windows on a given elevation
- Or only the front and street facing sides?

Commissioner Jagtiani stated that only the front and street facing sides should be required. He provided examples such as if certain materials are no longer available or if only one window is broken, it shouldn't be required to change all the windows of the entire house.

Commissioner Pedro cited the example provided of 3 windows without grids and 2 windows with grids and proposed that the code be flexible enough when it comes to doors and side lights.

Consultant Planner Carmichael stated that they could look into a way to exempt side lights.

Commissioner Stoveland stated that windows are one of the most expensive things to replace for the house and that he wouldn't have an issue if there were inconsistencies. He provided an example of a window leak and if the homeowner were to only change the window casing for only that window.

Community Development Director Mangalam clarified that this is only referencing the replacement of windows.

Consultant Planner Carmichael confirmed that it is regarding the replacement of windows and that the criteria for new homes would be different.

Commissioner Stoveland stated that he agreed with requiring the same materials.

Windows

- Should the requirement for the use of grids and style (e.g., slider vs casement vs double-hung) to match apply to all windows on a given elevation?
- Or only the front and street-facing sides?

Commissioner Pedro stated that he likes the use of the term “loosening up” and provided his support.

Window Articulation

- Should there be requirements for front and street-side elevation window articulation?

Commissioner Stoveland stated that he does not think that it is necessary and that it would limit a home’s ability to look more contemporary.

Commissioner Kenkre concurred and stated to not put any restrictions.

Commissioner Jagtiani and Commissioner Pedro agreed.

Accessory Structures: Location

- Should this existing requirement limiting all detached accessory structures that are six (6) feet or taller to the rear half of the lot be changed?
- Should the accessory structures that are seven (7) feet in height be exempt if they are five (5) feet from the property line since one (1) foot of lattice is allowed on top of a six (6) foot fence?
- Should a detached arbor/trellis be allowed in the front yard?
- How should temporary structures like pop-up canopies be addressed? Should they be prohibited in the front yard?

Commissioner Jagtiani asked what would happen if someone wanted to build a parking structure in the front yard.

Consultant Planner Carmichael stated that the rear half of the lot requirement would prevent an accessory structure from being placed in the front yard. She explained that although you can add on within the setback requirements for the main building, such as garage or carport addition, accessory structures in the front of the house are not allowed.

Commissioner Jagtiani provided an example of creating a detached carport for covered parking because the garage was converted into a JADU. He supported his example and stated that it would increase the chances of JADUs being built in the City.

Commissioner Stoveland asked if Commissioner Jagtiani was contemplating limitations on what a carport can be made of and if it needs to be consistent with the home.

Commissioner Jagtiani stated as long as the material is consistent with the home and affirmed that detached accessory structures should be allowed.

Commissioner Stoveland provided an example of carports commonly used in other cities, that consist of four steel poles and an aluminum top.

Consultant Planner Carmichael stated that if the structure is attached to the house, it is subject to the setback requirements for the main structure. She furthered that detached accessory structures in the front yard may be harder to ensure consistency with the house.

Community Development Director Mangalam stated that permanent structures are counted towards lot coverage and are subject to 50 percent lot coverage requirements.

Commissioner Pedro clarified that Commissioner Jagtiani is looking to add the term carports to "detached arbor/trellis" to be read as "should a detached arbor/trellis/carports be allowed in the front yard."

Commissioner Jagtiani confirmed.

Commissioner Stoveland stated that an arbor placed outside the site visibility triangle of a corner lot is very different than a Costco carport and would not consider the two within the same bucket.

Commissioner Pedro asked if detached carports should be allowed. He stated that he is in support of allowing arbors and trellises in the front yard.

Consultant Planner Carmichael suggested establishing a size limit.

Commissioner Pedro referenced Commissioner Stoveland's comment on easy ups and asked how temporary structures, such as pop-up canopies, should be addressed and if it should be prohibited from the front yard. He recommended they be treated as temporary structures and require a time limit, similar to that of an RV.

Commissioner Stoveland asked if the fence was back further and the structure was just outside the fence, would it be ok for that storage unit to be on the side of the house.

Commissioner Pedro reiterated that if the fence were back further and the shed was in front of the fence, it may be considered on the back 50 percent of the lot.

Commissioner Stoveland stated that the shed is not shielded by a fence and asked if it was permissible to have the shed in front of the fence but within the back 50 percent of the yard.

Consultant Planner Carmichael stated that it is permissible under the current code.

Community Development Director Mangalam stated that accessory structures are allowed in the rear half of the property and staff would recommend a modification to require screening.

Accessory Structures: Setbacks to Property Lines

- The existing requirement for a 5' setback to the side and rear property lines is difficult on many lots.
- Should the setback be reduced to the side and rear property lines from 5' to 4'?
- Leave them excluded from street side setback?

Community Development Director Mangalam clarified that they wanted to be consistent with the 4-foot setback requirement for ADUs. Currently ADUs can have setbacks of 4 feet, but accessory structures have to be 5 feet.

Commissioner Pedro supported changing the setback to 4 feet.

Commissioner Kenkre concurred.

Commissioner Stoveland noted that there is already a 10-foot setback to the fence from the side property line on corner lots and expressed concern that it would reduce the usable space in the backyard. He asked whether the 10-foot requirement is purely for aesthetics or if there is another justification for it.

Commissioner Pedro asked if Commissioner Stoveland is suggesting the minimum to be less than 10' from the street side.

Commissioner Stoveland noted that it is a 4-foot setback from the other side and proposed allowing accessory structures, provided it is inside the fence

Community Development Director Mangalam confirmed that currently, fences are allowed 5 feet from the property line.

Commissioner Stoveland asked for the definition of property line.

Consultant Planner Carmichael responded that it is the edge of the public right of way and that it is usually a couple feet behind the sidewalk.

Commissioner Pedro asked if commissioners were leaning towards aligning with the number of feet for setbacks.

Commissioner Stoveland confirmed and stated that 10 feet is far.

Consultant Planner Carmichael reiterated that they are suggesting 4 feet from the fence.

Commissioner Stoveland stated that 4' from the fence is a bit obtrusive into the backyard. He proposed that accessory structure needs to be inside the fence or 1 foot inside the fence.

Accessory Structures: Setback to Main Structure

- Should the setback be reduced between the accessory structure taller than six (6) feet and the primary dwelling from 10' to 5'?

Commissioner Pedro agreed with the suggestion of going from ten feet to five feet.

Commissioner Kenkre agreed.

Commissioner Stoveland provided an example of the new louvered pergola with the four steel poles being considered under awnings and clarified if they do not have to be five feet from the house since they are freestanding.

Consultant Planner Carmichael stated that they will work on a definition on what attached is to include structures that are detached by less than six inches, so that it can be closed but not affixed to the main building.

Accessory Structures: Coverage

- Is a separate accessory structure coverage limit for the rear yard needed in addition to the 50% lot coverage limit?

Commissioner Pedro stated that he agrees with the 50 percent lot coverage and that 30 percent rear yard coverage is not necessarily needed.

Consultant Planner Carmichael noted that she saw heads nodding.

Accessory Structures: Height

- Should the maximum height of 9 feet plus 12 inches for trim be increased to 10 feet?

Commissioner Pedro agreed with keeping it simple.

Accessory Structures: Materials

- Should more materials be allowed so that people can use "store-bought" sheds, etc.?
- Are there any materials that should not be allowed?

Chair Haddad stated that he is fine with allowing more materials.

Commissioner Kenkre agreed.

Commissioner Jagtiani agreed and stated that as long as safety standards are met.

Consultant Planner Carmichael responded that over a certain square footage, a building permit will be required. She furthered that under 120 square feet, a building permit would not be required.

Accessory Structures: Decks and Patios

- Should the limitation of a vertical rise of eighteen (18) inches within a horizontal distance of six feet only apply to waterfront decks?

Commissioner Pedro agreed that the limitation of the vertical rise of 18 inches in the horizontal distance of 6 feet should only apply to waterfront decks.

Commissioner Stoveland stated he had a hard time visualizing this.

Consultant Planner Carmichael stated that the vertical rise is in reference to rear yards along the water that have different levels of decking. She furthered that this is a requirement, so the rear yards won't have one vertical rise up to a certain level. She concluded her presentation and informed that there is a feedback form available on the Foster City website and will be soliciting comments. She stated that through the remaining study sessions, staff will continue to allow residents an opportunity to react to the proposed standards.

Community Development Director Mangalam urged homeowners to provide the City with feedback using the forms in order to get as much feedback to finalize the regulations.

The following people addressed the Planning Commission:

Evan Adams addressed the Planning Commission via teleconference and raised concern that every house that has a garden window is now forced to have garden windows only made out of vinyl and that garden sheds made out of plastics are outlawed.

Planning Commissioners had the following comments:

Commissioner Stoveland addressed the comments made by Evan Adams and offered that they will have to take into consideration that garden windows are only made of one material and was not their intention. He added that they are not limiting materials that the shed could be made of. He thanked staff for this big undertaking.

10. COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT DIRECTOR REPORT

1. Community Development Director Mangalam stated that the May 1st meeting has been cancelled. She added that the May 15th meeting will be a joint Planning Commission and Parks and Recreation Committee Study Session and is regarding the General Plan updates of the two elements.

11. STATEMENTS AND REQUESTS FROM THE COMMISSIONERS

1. Commissioner Kenkre thanked staff and emphasized that Sofia and Leslie had taken time to educate the commissioners about the entire process and what each point meant.
2. Commissioner Stoveland stated that standards are meant to make things easy but are hard to set. He shared his appreciation for his fellow commissioners for engaging freely on this topic and thanked staff for preparing them.

3. Commissioner Jagtiani thanked staff for the packet and taking time to meet with the commissioners one on one. He stated that it helped him see the photos in the presentation versus just looking at the staff report.
4. Commissioner Pedro thanked fellow commissioners and staff for taking the time, energy, and effort in educating and supporting commissioners through questions and during the one-on-ones. He highlighted the value of putting in the time now to get the design standards in place and stated that it will save applicants time down the road. He wished everyone a Happy Easter.
5. Chair Haddad thanked City staff and consultants for the report and noted the amount of detail in the standard and preparation of the report. He stated that he did not attend the private presentation. He wished everyone a Happy Easter.

12. ADJOURNMENT

Adjourned at 9:29 p.m. to a Regular Meeting, May 1, 2025, Council Chambers, 620 Foster City Boulevard, Foster City, California.

PASSED AND ADOPTED by the Planning Commission of the City of Foster City at a Regular Meeting thereof held on June 5, 2025 by the following vote:

AYES, COMMISSIONERS:

NOES, COMMISSIONERS:

ABSTAIN, COMMISSIONERS:

ABSENT, COMMISSIONERS:

NICOLAS HADDAD, CHAIR

ATTEST:

SOFIA MANGALAM, SECRETARY