

## RESOLUTION NO. 2025-30

A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF VISALIA, ADOPTING SINGLE-FAMILY RESIDENTIAL OBJECTIVE DESIGN STANDARDS APPLICABLE TO NEW SINGLE-FAMILY RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENTS. THE REGULATIONS WILL APPLY CITYWIDE TO PROPERTIES WITHIN THE CITY LIMITS OF THE CITY OF VISALIA.

**WHEREAS**, the City of Visalia had initiated a Zoning Text Amendment to establish new objective design standards pertaining to single-family residential development, including lots below 5,000 square feet in size, and pertaining to Planned Residential Developments, in response to an increase of utilization of smaller lot sizes and new design techniques by proponents, and in response from proponents seeking to have a clear set of reliable codified objective design standards from which to design a project and ensure support by City staff and officials, and in response to recent state legislation such as Senate Bill 9 (2021) and Senate Bill 35 (2017) that allows for ministerial approval of residential developments under certain provisions; and,

**WHEREAS**, the City of Visalia, following consultation with stakeholders, prepared a Public Review Draft Ordinance and posted said ordinance online at [www.housevisalia.com](http://www.housevisalia.com), and requested public comment for a 30-day review period, beginning August 30, 2024, and responded to comments received during the review period in a Revised Public Review Draft that would be presented to the Planning Commission and City Council; and

**WHEREAS**, the Planning Commission of the City of Visalia, after duly published notice, held a public hearing before said Commission on November 12, 2024; and,

**WHEREAS**, the Planning Commission of the City of Visalia considered the Zone Text Amendment in accordance with Section 17.44.070 of the Zoning Ordinance of the City of Visalia and on the evidence contained in the staff report and testimony presented at the public hearing, and recommended that the City Council approve Zoning Text Amendment No. 2024-03 by adopting the Revised Public Review Draft, as amended and presented to the Commission on November 25, 2024; and,

**WHEREAS**, the City Council of the City of Visalia, after duly published notice, held a public hearing before said City Council on December 16, 2024, and delayed action on the Ordinance to allow additional time for staff to meet with interested persons, stakeholders, and builders, to address concerns regarding standards and feasibility of the Revised Public Review Draft Ordinance; and

**WHEREAS**, the City of Visalia conducted additional consultation and meetings with persons, stakeholders, and builders, which included two virtual meetings held on January 30 and February 5, 2025, which resulted in a Revised Draft Ordinance that was circulated for a 15-day review period beginning on March 14, 2025, and then presented to the City Council without changes; and,

**WHEREAS**, the City Council of the City of Visalia, after duly published notice, held a public hearing before said City Council on April 21, 2025, and directed the

preparation of a Resolution for the adoption of Objective Design Standards, in lieu of the adoption of an Ordinance; and,

**WHEREAS**, the City Council of the City of Visalia finds that the project is exempt from further review under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines, Code of Regulations Section 15061(b)(3) (common sense exemption), as the proposed zone text amendment will not in and of themselves have an effect on the environment, and that the affected sites will continue to allow for residential development consistent with the land use designations and the respective density ranges specified in the Visalia General Plan Land Use Element.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** that the project is exempt from further environmental review pursuant to CEQA Guidelines, Code of Regulations Section 15061(b)(3).

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the City Council of the City of Visalia approves this resolution for the adoption of Objective Design Standards applicable to single-family residential development, included in Exhibit "A" of this Resolution, based on the following specific findings and evidence presented:

1. That the Zoning Text Amendment is consistent with the intent of the General Plan and Zoning Ordinance and is not detrimental to the public health, safety, or welfare, or materially injurious to properties or improvements in the vicinity, as described in the following Land Use and Housing Element Policies:

Land Use Element Policy LU-O-21 - Preserve and enhance the character of residential neighborhoods while facilitating infill development.

Land Use Element Policy LU-O-23 - Provide a range of housing types and prices within new neighborhoods to meet the needs of all segments of the community.

Land Use Element Policy LU-P-49 - Preserve established and distinctive neighborhoods throughout the City by maintaining appropriate zoning and development standards to achieve land use compatibility in terms of height, massing and other characteristics; providing design guidelines for high-quality new development; supporting housing rehabilitation programs; and other means.

Land Use Element Policy LU-P-50 - Provide development standards to ensure that a mix of detached and attached single-family and multi-family housing types can be compatible in a single development.

Housing Element Policy 1.4 - The City shall encourage a mix of residential development types in the city, including single family homes, on a variety of lot sizes, as well as townhomes, row houses, live-work units, planned unit developments, accessory dwelling units, and multi-family housing.

Housing Element Policy 3.11 - The City shall continue to support, facilitate the construction, and provide for the development of accessory dwelling units on parcels with single-family and multi-family units while protecting the character of neighborhoods and zoned parcels as a means of providing affordable housing.

HE Program 2.7 Missing Middle: The City will review and amend residential development standards to allow for and promote a mix of dwelling types and

sizes, specifically missing middle-density housing types (e.g., duplexes, triplexes, courtyard buildings, townhomes) to encourage the development of housing types affordable to the local workforce.

Housing Element Program 3.15 Promoting Accessory Dwelling Units. - The City shall promote the development of ADUs, prioritizing the higher resource areas.

2. That applying the proposed Single-Family Residential Object Design standards to future housing and residential uses will reflect sound planning principles and will assist in enhancing the character of residential neighborhoods.
3. That the City has determined that the amendments are exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to the CEQA Common Sense Exemption, Code of Regulations Section 15061(b)(3), since there would be no possibility of a significant effect on the environment.

PASSED AND ADOPTED: May 5, 2025

LESLIE B. CAVIGLIA, CITY CLERK

STATE OF CALIFORNIA )  
COUNTY OF TULARE ) ss.  
CITY OF VISALIA )

I, Leslie B. Caviglia, City Clerk of the City of Visalia, certify the foregoing is the full and true Resolution 2025-30 passed and adopted by the Council of the City of Visalia at a regular meeting held on May 5, 2025.

Dated: May 6, 2025

LESLIE B. CAVIGLIA, CITY CLERK

By Reyna Rivera, Chief Deputy City Clerk

## City Council Resolution No. 2025-30

### EXHIBIT “A”

The following Objective Design Standards are adopted by Resolution No. 2025-30 to read as follows:

#### Single-Family Residential Objective Design Standards

##### 1. Purpose and Applicability

- A. Purpose. The purpose of this Outline is to establish objective design standards that provide developers with a clear understanding of the City’s expectations for all residential project design and streamline the construction of housing units by reducing subjectivity in the entitlement process. All applicable development projects are required to comply with all design standards found in this Outline in addition to all applicable Building Permit requirements, Zoning Ordinance requirements, City Engineering Division Design and Improvement Standards, and all other applicable City, County, and State provisions.
- B. Applicability. The standards of this Outline apply to all new single-family residential developments on lots regardless of parcel size, except as described below.
  - 1. For the purposes of this Outline, accessory dwelling units (ADUs) are considered accessory structures to a single-family residence and are subject to all applicable design standards for accessory structures established in this Outline except where they interfere with State law or the City’s ADU Ordinance.
  - 2. Buildings and structures listed on the City’s Local Register of Historic Structures are excluded from the requirements of this Outline but are subject to committee review (see Visalia Municipal Code (“VMC”) Chapter 17.56).
- C. Exception Powers of the Planning Commission. The Planning Commission may grant one or more exceptions to any of the regulations prescribed in this Outline by using the following exception process.
  - 1. Application. Applicants seeking an exception shall follow the same procedures as those prescribed in VMC Chapter 17.42 for obtaining a variance. City staff shall prepare a separate form for applicants seeking an exception to file.
  - 2. Review and Decision. In reviewing a request for an exception, the Planning Commission is not required to make any or all of the five findings required for a variance action found in Section 17.42.090. Rather, the Commission must make a finding that the standards requested through this exception process become an integral part of the site development (e.g., design, material, contour, height, distance, color, texture) and do not adversely affect the established and distinctive character of any existing neighborhoods that are adjacent to the site being developed to achieve land use compatibility in terms of height, massing and other

characteristics.

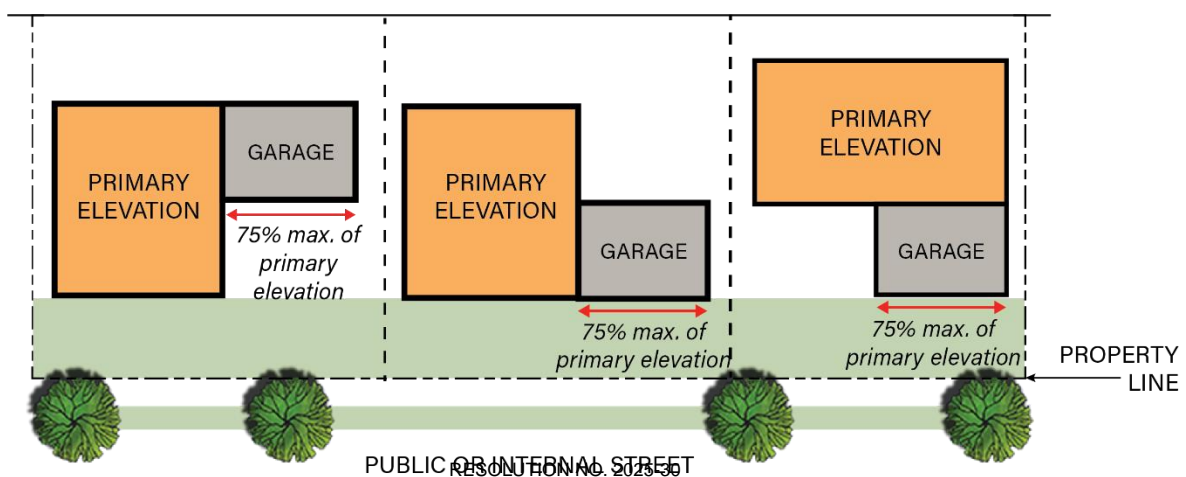
3. Appeals. The decision by the Planning Commission over the requested exception may be appealed to City Council in the same manner as a variance under the appeal provisions of Section 17.02.145.
4. Revocation and Lapse of Approval.
  - a. If the exception is approved, then the exception shall be subject to revocation or lapse in the same manner as a variance under VMC Chapter 17.42.
  - b. If a request for an exception is denied or revoked, then no application for the same or substantially the same variance on the same or substantially the same site shall be filed within one year of the date of denial or revoked unless the Planning Commission or City Council specifically allow such further applications in the decision for denial or revocation.

## 2. Site Planning

### A. Site Placement

#### 1. Orientation

- a. The primary elevation of the residence shall face the primary public or private right-of-way on which the parcel is located. For the purposes of this Section the primary elevation is that in which the primary entrance is located.
- b. On corner lots, the primary elevation is considered the elevation that is facing the street in which the residential address is associated with and front door is located. The applicant/developer/property owner may file for an address change if they would like to change what street the primary elevation is located.
- c. On corner lots, garages may be located on the secondary elevation and are required to include a garage setback of 22 feet.
- d. Garages (attached or detached) shall not exceed 75 percent of the width of the primary elevation. For lots less than 40 feet wide, this standard does not apply.



**B. Site Development.**

1. **Setbacks.** Structure setbacks shall be subject to the provisions of the applicable zone of which the subject parcel is located in. For single-family provisions please see VMC Chapter 17.12. For lots less than 5,000 square feet the setback requirements specified in Section 17.12.135 shall apply.
2. **Height.** Structure height shall be subject to the provisions of the applicable zone of which the subject parcel is located in. For single-family provisions please see VMC Chapter 17.12. For lots less than 5,000 square feet the height requirements specified in Section 17.12.135 shall apply.
3. **Front Entryways.** Front entryways shall comply with one of the following styles:
  - a. **Front Porch.**
    - i. Front porches shall be at least three feet deep and six feet wide.
    - ii. Front porches shall be covered by a roof with a similar style and material as the primary elevation.
    - iii. The front porch shall include a minimum of one window.
    - iv. Front porches may project up to six feet into the front yard setback
    - v. Front porches shall include at least one step
  - b. **Recessed Entry.**
    - i. Recessed entries shall have a depth of at least one foot from the primary elevation to create a covered landing area.
  - c. **Deep Overhang.**
    - i. Deep overhangs shall be a minimum depth of three feet and a maximum of five feet.
  - d. **Front Landing.**
    - i. Front landings shall be at least one foot deep.
    - ii. Front landings shall include at least one step.
    - iii. Front landings shall be covered with a roof in similar style and material as the primary elevation.

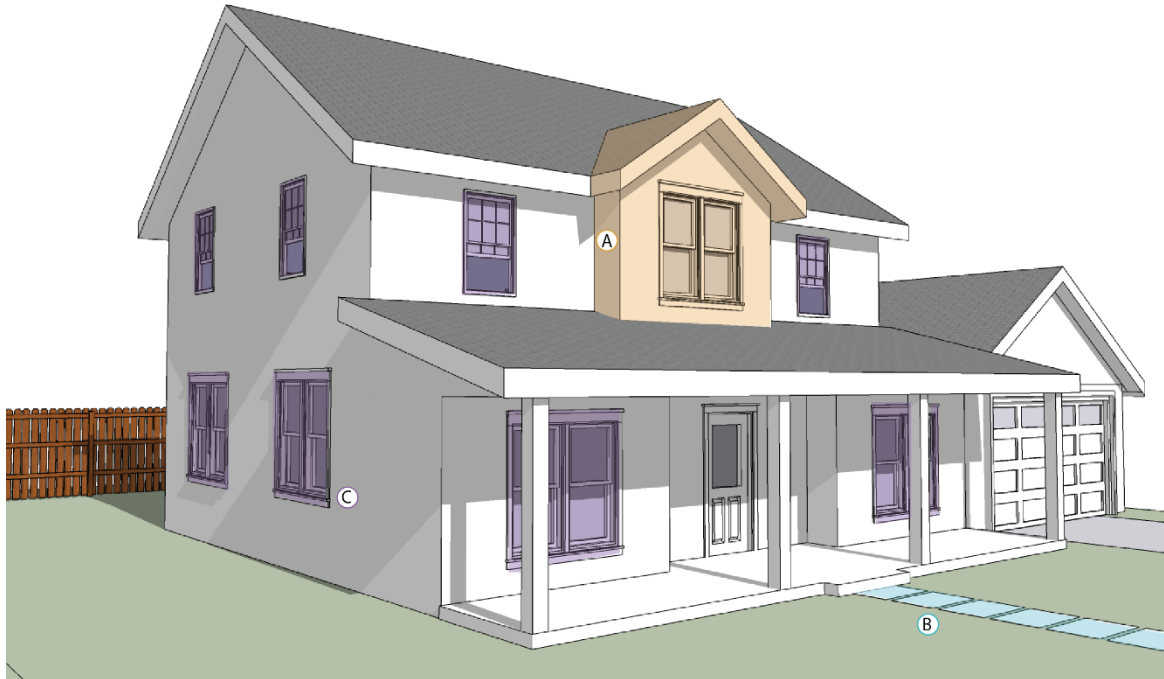
**3. Structure Design Standards.**

**A. All developments shall include at least three of the following design elements:**

1. A projection for every 25 feet of continuous plane on each elevation. Each projection shall be at least two feet deep and five feet wide. A projected area shall be capped with an eave or gable that matches the same materials and style as the main structure. A projection may extend into the required setback if it complies with Section 17.32.090 (Yard requirements

– Exceptions) of this Title.

2. A recession for every 25 feet of continuous plane. Each recession shall be at least two feet deep, but no more than six feet deep, and at least five feet wide.
3. Second Floor Stepbacks. For two-story structures, the second floor shall be stepped back by at least three feet, but no more than 12 feet, from the ground floor wall plane. The stepback shall extend along at least 50 percent of the length of the wall plane. The stepback may be continuous or composed of multiple segments that together total the required length.
4. A protruding window (such as a bay window) at least two feet in depth.
5. A change in total height of a façade for every 15 feet of continuous plane. Change in height shall be a minimum of two feet.
6. Change in roof pitch or form for, at least, every 15 feet of continuous plane.
7. A gable or dormer for, at least, every 15 feet of continuous plane.
8. A Juliette balcony for, at least, every 15 feet of continuous plane.
9. A second story balcony at least three feet deep and five feet wide.
10. A decorative trellis, at least, every 15 feet of continuous plane.
11. A window for, at least, every 15 feet of continuous plane.
12. A pedestrian walkway, measuring at least three feet wide, other than the driveway, provides direct access to the front entryway of the residence to the primary sidewalk, or primary right-of-way if no sidewalk is present. Pedestrian walkways may be constructed with any materials (i.e., aggregate or natural stone or rock, brick, gravel, wood, poured concrete), except for dirt or topsoil. On corner lots, where the garage is on the secondary elevation, a walkway shall provide direct access from the front entryway to the primary sidewalk.
13. A tandem garage with a maximum width of 13 feet and a minimum depth of 38 feet. This option is only allowed for lots less than 40 feet wide.



- Ⓐ Projection or recession measuring at least two feet deep and five feet wide and capped with a gable
- Ⓑ A pedestrian walkway measuring at least three feet wide, other than the driveway that provides direct access to the front entryway from the sidewalk
- Ⓒ A window for, at least, every 15 feet of continuous plane.

*NOTE: The rendering above is meant for illustrative purposes only to demonstrate a development in compliance with the requirements established in the subsection Structure Design Standards.*

## B. Fenestration.

1. All windows and doors shall include at least one of the following exterior design details:
  - a. A recess of at least two inches from the wall plane.
  - b. Wood, metal, stucco covered foam, or engineered wood trim around the entire window or door.
2. If used, shutters shall be sized to cover 100 to 105 percent of the window and match the exact window shape.

## C. Design Details.

1. Materials
  - a. No more than four materials or finishes (not including roofing, door, or window materials) shall be used on each elevation, and no more than five materials or finishes (not including roofing, door, or window materials) in total shall be used across all elevations.
  - b. The following materials are prohibited from use as exterior finishes (excluding windows and doors):



- i. Vinyl siding
- ii. Plastic
- iii. Raw, non-treated/coated metal

2. **Colors**

- a. Single-Family Standalone Unit. A minimum of two, but no more than five, colors (or tints, shades, or tones of the same color) shall be used on the entire exterior of the building.
  - b. Single Family Subdivisions. Single family subdivisions shall provide a minimum of three color schemes and shall not use a single color scheme on more than 40 percent of the residential units. Structures shall incorporate a color scheme that contains a maximum of four distinct colors per building. A color scheme is defined as (body one and/or body two, trim, and a contrasting accent color). Adjacent colors shall not use the same color scheme.
3. Accessory Structures. All accessory structures (i.e., accessory dwelling units, garages, workshops, storage sheds) visible from the primary street shall be constructed of the same materials, colors, and roof type as the primary structure. This standard only applies to accessory structures constructed together with the primary dwelling unit.

**4. Utility and Service Areas**

- A. Above ground utilities, transformers, and other mechanical equipment placed between the front or street side of a residence and a public street or vehicular or pedestrian accessway, shall be screened from view by a fence, wall, or landscaping in accordance with this Outline.
- B. If private vehicle charging facilities are provided in the development, these facilities shall be located close to the garage's electrical panel and blend in with the house design/color to provide architectural compatibility.

**5. Landscaping.**

- A. All areas not occupied by structures or pavement in the front yard area shall be landscaped. Landscaped areas shall consist of plantings, turf, mulch, or bark.
- B. All landscape areas shall meet the requirements of the State Model Water Efficient Landscape Ordinance, or if applicable, the Water Efficient Landscape Ordinance of the City of Visalia. [Source: 17.30.015.C.1.a]
- C. Pavement or hardscape shall not make up more than 50 percent of the front yard, unless necessary to meet other standards required by this Outline.

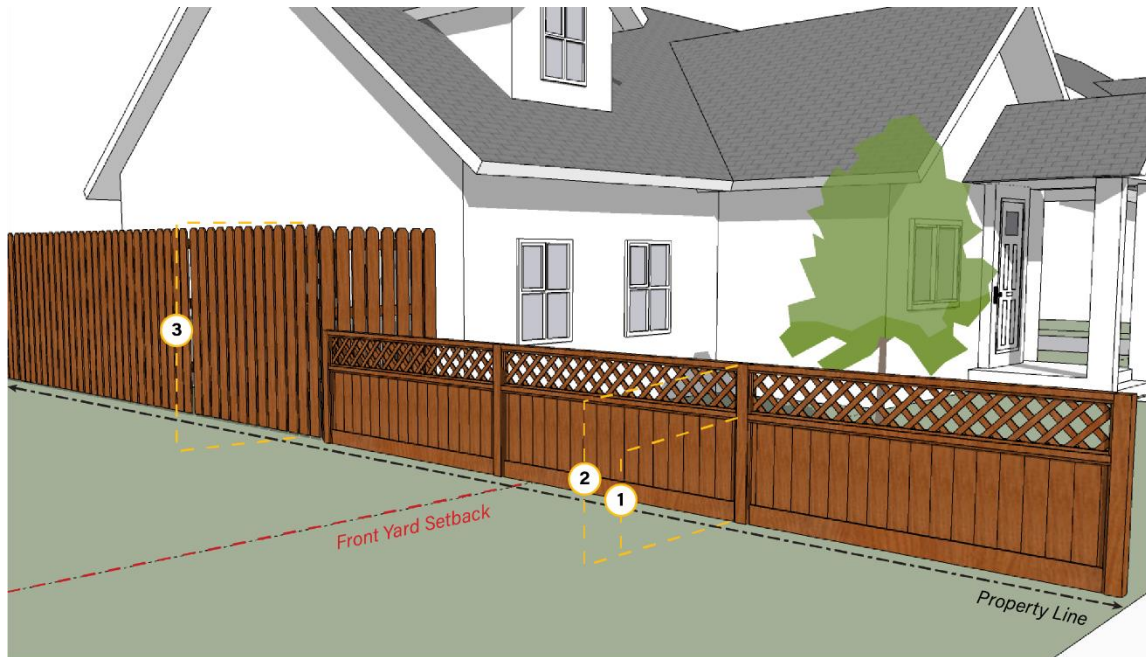
**6. Fences, Walls, and Hedges.**

- A. Height. Fences, walls, and hedges shall not exceed seven feet in height if on the side or rear yard setbacks, or three feet in height if in the front yard setback. A front yard fence or wall may be allowed to a height of up to four feet only if the portion exceeding three feet, at minimum, is constructed with a material that has a visibility percentage of at least 50 percent (i.e., lattice fencing). These

standards also apply within five feet of the street side property line for corner lots.

B. **Materials.** The following materials are prohibited from use as fencing:

1. Barbed wire
2. Electric charged fencing
3. Corrugated Paneling
4. Chain link (except for three to four-foot height fences within the front yard and street side yard setback)



- ① Maximum height of three feet in front yard setback.
- ② Maximum height of four feet in front yard setback if top one foot of fence is at 50 percent visibility.
- ③ Maximum height of seven feet in on side and rear yard setback.

**7. Exterior Lighting.**

A. All entryways, porch areas, pedestrian pathways, and gates shall include lighting for safety and security. All exterior lighting fixtures shall comply with all of the following standards:

1. Be fully shielded and shall not spill onto adjacent properties;
2. Ground-mounted light fixtures to illuminate driveways, landscaped areas, or pedestrian pathways shall be no more than three feet in height; and
3. Use light emitting diodes (LEDs) with a maximum temperature of 3000 kelvins.

B. Permanently installed light fixtures that blink, revolve or flash are prohibited. This excludes decorative seasonal lighting.

**8. Off-Street Parking Facilities.**

A. The number and type of off-street parking facilities for a single-family residential development shall comply with the requirements of the underlying zoning district

as established in VMC Chapter 17.34. In addition to the provisions in VMC Chapter 17.34, all off-street parking facilities shall comply with the following standards:

- B. Covered parking areas shall be in garages. Carports are allowed only if they do not serve as the required covered parking (e.g., porte cocheres, carports in front of garages). [Source: 17.12.135.A.7]
- C. Uncovered parking areas (i.e., driveways) shall be paved with concrete or a permeable or impermeable surface. [Source: 17.34.030.P]
- D. Off-Street Guest Parking Facilities for Planned Unit Developments. Planned unit developments with four or more dwelling units shall provide off-street guest parking spaces when on-street parking is not allowed on the streets within the development. Planned unit developments shall provide a minimum of one guest parking space per four dwelling units within the total project. If a fraction occurs based on the specified number of guest spaces, the project applicant shall round up to the next round number of guest spaces.

**9. Useable Common Open Space Areas for Planned Unit Developments.**

- A. Useable Common Open Space. Planned unit developments shall provide usable outdoor passive/active open space with outdoor amenities as required in Table 1 (Outdoor Amenities). Useable common open space means an unobstructed area or areas, accessible to all occupants of the structure it serves, having no dimension less than 10 feet in any direction. Useable common open space excludes areas designated for parking, including surface parking, carports, or garages. A minimum of 60 percent of the common useable open space shall be provided as landscaped green area (not hardscaped).
- B. Recreational Amenities. Recreation amenities as required in Table 1 (Open Space and Recreational Requirements) can be either passive or active as described below, or a combination of the two.
  - 1. Passive Recreational Amenities. Passive recreation refers to recreational activities that require minimal to no facilities or development to perform such activities. Passive recreation amenities include, but are not limited to, community gardens, outdoor gathering/seating area, picnic/barbeque area, pet area/dog park, courtyard/plaza. All passive recreational amenity area shall be a minimum of 200 square feet unless otherwise stated.
  - 2. Active Recreational Amenities. Active recreation refers to recreational activities that require specific facilities or equipment to perform such activities. Active recreational amenities include, but are not limited to, playground/tot lot, sports court/field, fitness area, swimming pool, clubhouse w/kitchen, community room. All passive recreational amenity area shall be a minimum of 500 square feet unless otherwise stated.
- C. Seating. Seating shall be provided for all common open space areas.
- D. Playgrounds/tot lots shall be located in an area with direct visibility from a minimum of three dwelling units to allow for casual surveillance.

**Table 1**  
**Open Space and Recreational Requirements**

Number of Units in Project	Minimum Number of Amenities <sup>1</sup>	Minimum Total Area <sup>2</sup>
Less than 5	1	500 sq. ft.
5-10 <sup>1</sup>	1	500 sq. ft. plus 100 sq. ft per unit over 5 units
11-30	2	1,000 sq. ft. plus 150 sq. ft per unit over 10 units
31-60	2	4,000 sq. ft. plus 165 sq. ft per unit over 30 units
61-100	2	9,000 sq. ft. plus 200 sq. ft per unit over 60 units
101-150	3 plus 1 additional amenity for every 50	17,000 sq. ft. plus 250 sq. ft per unit over 100 units

1 – Minimum number of amenities can be passive or active amenities as described in Recreational Amenities subsection above.

2 - Minimum Total Area means the combined area of all amenities. Each amenity must still meet all applicable standards established in this Section.

#### **10. Sidewalks for Planned Unit Developments.**

Sidewalks within a Planned Unit Development shall incorporate the following standards:

- A. Shall be a minimum width of five feet; and
- B. Shall implement the concrete specifications for sidewalks and ramps as determined by the City of Visalia City Engineering Division Design and Improvement Standards.