

Brandon Smith

From: David Becerra <davidb@selfhelpenterprises.org>
Sent: Monday, March 31, 2025 12:29 PM
To: Brandon Smith
Cc: Betsy McGovern-Garcia; Tom Collishaw; Heather Mendonca; Rick Gonzales
Subject: Visalia Housing Design Review

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Brandon,

As a **non-profit affordable housing developer**, our financial viability depends on using **standardized master plans** to streamline approvals, reduce architectural costs, and maintain cost-effective construction. The proposed Objective Design Standards under Chapter 17.12 introduce numerous design mandates that are **incompatible with our current plans**, as indicated in redline comments such as *“plans do not comply.”* These requirements would force costly redesigns, threaten compliance with existing funding sources, and hinder the rapid deployment of affordable housing.

Below is a section-by-section breakdown of provisions that **will increase costs and where our plans currently do not comply**:

17.12.160 – Structure Design Standards

◆ A. Architectural Design Elements (Pages 5–6)

Redline Note: “Structure Design Standards pose a major issue – we only comply with walkway”

Requirements: Developments must include at least **3 of 13 design elements** on *each elevation* (front, side, rear). Elements include:

- Projections or recessions
- Second-floor setbacks
- Multiple roof forms or gables
- Juliette balconies
- Decorative trellises
- Bay windows, etc.

Redline Comment: “Plans do not comply” was applied to most of these features.

Cost & Design Impacts:

- Our master plans are intentionally simplified for efficiency. They do **not include setbacks, architectural projections, or roofline variations** on every elevation.
- Adding these features would require:
 - Full architectural redesigns
 - Additional materials (e.g., gables, eaves, trim)
 - Increased framing and labor time

This undermines one of our greatest cost-saving tools—**plan standardization across multiple lots and communities.**

17.12.160.B – Fenestration Requirements

Redline Comment: “Plans do not comply”

Requirement: All windows and doors must include:

- A minimum **2-inch recess**, or
- Trim of specific materials (wood, engineered wood, stucco foam)

Cost Impact:

- Our windows are currently flush-mounted vinyl in master plans.
 - Recessing windows or wrapping them in specialty trim adds:
 - Framing modifications
 - Labor for trimming
 - Increased inspection and material costs
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17.12.160.C.1 – Materials Limitations

Redline Comment: “Plans do not comply”

Requirement:

- No more than **4 exterior materials** per elevation
- **Vinyl siding is prohibited**

Cost Impact:

- Vinyl siding is one of our **most cost-effective and durable cladding options.**
- Replacing it with approved alternatives (fiber cement, stucco, etc.) increases:
 - Material cost by 20–40%
 - Labor and insurance (due to materials requiring special handling)
 - Ongoing maintenance costs for homeowners

This restriction **disproportionately affects affordability-focused developments.**

Additional “Plans Do Not Comply” Redline Sections

Section	Requirement	Impact
17.12.160.A.1	Projections every 25 ft	Requires design breakups our plans do not include
17.12.160.A.2	Recessions every 25 ft	Structural redesign

Section	Requirement	Impact
17.12.160.A.3	Second-floor setbacks	Not present in current 2-story plans
17.12.160.A.4	Bay windows	Costly and not used in standard plans
17.12.160.A.6	Roof pitch/form changes	Additional framing complexity
17.12.160.A.7	Gables/dormers	Not included; adds cost
17.12.160.A.9	2nd-story balconies	Not feasible within affordability model
17.12.160.A.10	Decorative trellises	Unnecessary aesthetic; adds cost
17.12.160.A.11	Window every 15 ft	Not met on side/rear elevations of our models

Conclusion and Request

Our master plans were developed with both **cost and speed of delivery** in mind, which are critical in addressing the region’s housing crisis. Imposing these standards—most of which **our current plans do not comply with**—will:

- Result in **significant architectural redesigns**
- Increase per-unit construction costs beyond affordable thresholds
- Delay or halt construction on projects already in the pipeline

Request:

We respectfully request the City consider:

1. **Exempting affordable housing developers using pre-approved master plans** from Sections 17.12.160.A–C.
2. Allowing **alternative compliance or a waiver process** for non-profits operating under fixed public funding programs.

Preserving flexibility in design for projects that already meet all health, safety, and basic zoning standards.




Thanks again for your time.

The Team at Self-Help Enterprises



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