



# County of San Diego – *Sweetwater* Objective Design Standards Checklist

---

Design Review Checklists have been prepared to provide objective design standards (ODS) to conduct design review if utilizing State Legislation to streamline a housing development. If a project is found to be eligible for, and consistent with, the applicable State legislation permitting checklist, it will be exempt from the Site Plan Permit requirement of Section 5756. This objective design checklist has been created to provide measurable, verifiable, and clear objective design standards. The standards are based on Community Plan policies and Design Guidelines, as well as relevant policies from the General Plan and other adopted documents.

Design review is only one part of the development review process. Development projects are subject to the requirements of the Zoning Ordinance, as described in the [Zoning Ordinance Summary Brochure](#). The Zoning Ordinance addresses components of project development that impact design, such as building height, lot coverage, and setbacks, which are not duplicated on this checklist.

Key Zoning Ordinance sections pertaining to development and design include:

- Part One - Basic Provisions including definitions. See section 1100 - Definitions of Terms, for definition of street; usable open space, group; usable open space, private; landscaped street edge zone; and other terms used as a part of design review
- Part Four - Development Regulations including standards for density, lot size, building type, maximum floor area, floor area ratio, height, lot coverage, setbacks, and usable open space. For open space, see section 4900 (through 4999, inclusive) - Usable Open Space Regulations, when usable open space is the focus of a standard
- Part Five - Special Area Regulations including standards for Airport, Flood Plain, Historic and Scenic areas
- Part Six - General Regulations including parking, signage, outdoor lighting, fencing, and solar energy systems; see section 6700 - Screening Requirements, when screening is required per a standard

In addition, other County ordinances may have an impact on project development and design and must be consulted when applicable, including:

- County of San Diego 2023 Consolidated Fire Code or California Building Code
- Subdivision of Land – Title 8, Division 1
- Resource Protection – Title 8, Division 6, Chapter 6
- Water Conservation in Landscaping – Title 8, Division 6, Chapter 7, and Water Efficient Landscape Design Manual
- Grading, Clearing, and Watercourses – Title 8, Division 7
- Centerline – Title 5 sets requirements for right-of-way, street improvement standards, and setbacks
- Public Roads Standards
- San Diego Off-street Parking Manual
- Dark Sky Ordinance – Section 51.201 et seq.
- Watershed Protection Ordinance – Section 67.801 et seq. and associated manuals. See [2020 BMP Design Manual \(Complete\)](#)
- Other relevant land use regulations listed on the [Zoning Ordinance Summary](#) brochure (PDS-444)

As needed, a list of additional definitions related to design review may be developed for terms not found in Zoning Ordinance section 1100. If specific standards vary based on location, maps may be developed to understand where specific standards apply.



County of San Diego - Sweetwater  
Objective Design Standards Checklist

		Guideline Reference	Y/N	Comments
<b>SITE LAYOUT DESIGN STANDARDS</b>				
<b>Building Location &amp; Orientation</b>				
1	If a project provides pedestrian and vehicular linkages to adjacent developments, then it shall do so by connecting and aligning interior sidewalk(s), common entrance driveway(s), street(s), driveways, and common service/delivery areas. (See illustration for guidance)	A3.1(p14) B1.2(p30)		
2	Each mixed-use and multi-family residential building shall have one façade that includes an entry that is adjacent to and opens onto an on-site usable open space. (See illustration for guidance)	A3.1(p14) B1.1(p30)		
3	The proposed project shall incorporate at least one of the following specified site features: courtyard, porch, arcade, loggia, veranda, and/or overhang. (See illustration for guidance)	A3.2(p15)		
4	A tree canopy shall be provided for required on-site usable open space, as defined in Section 1100 of the Zoning Ordinance.	A3.2(p15)		
<b>Parking Lot Location, Access &amp; Connections</b>				
5	Within the 20-foot landscaped edge zone along the property line, parking lots are prohibited.	B1.1(p30) B2.1(p34)		
6	Access to a parking lot shall be from the side streets. If a side street is not available, then access shall be from the rear street. If all previous options are not available, access can be from the front street.	B1.2(p30)		
7	Parking lots that have more than 24 parking spaces shall provide a landscaped pocket for every six continuous perpendicular or angled parking spaces. A landscape pocket shall be at least 10 feet wide and planted with trees and/or shrubs.	B1.3(p31)		



County of San Diego - Sweetwater  
Objective Design Standards Checklist

ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN STANDARDS				
		Guideline Reference	Y/N	Comments
<b>Building Form &amp; Massing</b>				
8	A tree canopy shall be provided for more than half of the side yard area between new and adjacent buildings.	A4.1(p16)		
9	Proposed buildings shall provide shade and shadow on building facades by incorporating at least one of the following specified architectural features: roof overhangs, projections, recesses, and plan offsets. (See illustration for guidance)	A4.1(p16)		
10	If visible from public streets, rear facades shall be finished in the same colors and materials as that of the principal side of the building.	A4.1(p16) A4.3(p17)		
11	Building entrances shall incorporate at least one of the following specified architectural features: porches, loggias, and/or arbors.	A4.5(p18)		
<b>Multi-Building Projects</b>				
12	Facades and roof lines facing public streets and parking areas shall be finished in the same colors and materials as that of the principal building.	A4.3(p17)		



County of San Diego - Sweetwater  
Objective Design Standards Checklist

<b>ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN STANDARDS</b>		<b>Guideline Reference</b>	<b>Y/N</b>	<b>Comments</b>
<b>Elevations &amp; Building Façade Materials</b>				
13	<p>The proposed project shall incorporate at least one of the following materials:</p> <p>Exterior Walls</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brick, adobe brick, and stone masonry</li> <li>• Wood siding</li> <li>• Exposed wood structural members</li> <li>• Cement plaster (stucco) in grey, white, tan, or beige colors</li> <li>• Split-faced textured concrete masonry in brown, tan, green, or grey colors</li> </ul> <p>Roofs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Concrete shingles in brown, tan, green, or grey colors</li> <li>• Clay tile in brown, tan, green, or grey colors</li> <li>• Metal ribbed roofing of weathered metal (treated to be discolored or stained by exposure to weather) or in brown, tan, green, or grey colors</li> <li>• High profile composition shingles (laminated shingles made from fiberglass and asphalt and textured to give a three-dimensional look) in brown, tan, green, or grey colors</li> </ul> <p>Foundations and Low walls up to three feet in height:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brick and native stone</li> </ul>	A4.4(p17)		
14	<p>The following building materials are prohibited:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Areas of glass longer than 50 feet, except at pedestrian level store fronts</li> <li>• Red, yellow, blue, orange, green, purple colored glazed masonry, except for small areas of detail</li> <li>• Glass curtain walls</li> <li>• Galvanized sheet metal</li> <li>• Built up roofing (continuous roof covering made up of various plies or sheets of saturated or coated felts cemented together with asphalt)</li> <li>• Reflective or shiny materials, not including solar panels and/or materials permitted in checklist standard #13</li> </ul>	A4.4(p18)		
15	Excluding ground floor retail windows, the maximum horizontal width of all windows shall be less than the total horizontal width of solid building walls.	A4.5(p18)		
16	Windows shall be recessed to produce shadow lines.	A4.5(p18)		
17	The vertical dimension of a window opening shall be a maximum of seven feet, except for pedestrian level store fronts. In case of a multi-story building, this dimension shall not exceed the height of a single story.	A4.5(p18)		
<b>Roof Forms</b>				
18	For every 50 feet in length of sloped roof, there shall be at least one change in plane, roof height, pitch and/or other architectural treatments like cornices, dormers or similar. (See illustration for guidance)	A4.2(p17)		



County of San Diego - Sweetwater  
Objective Design Standards Checklist

<b>ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN STANDARDS</b>		<b>Guideline Reference</b>	<b>Y/N</b>	<b>Comments</b>
19	Changes in roof pitch and adjacent heights shall be accompanied by plan offsets. (See illustration for guidance)	A4.2(p17)		
20	The proposed project shall have one of the following sloped roof forms with a pitch between 2:12 to 5:12, for a majority of the roof area: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gabled</li> <li>• Hip</li> <li>• Shed</li> </ul>	A4.2(p17)		
21	Roof overhangs and eaves shall be a minimum of 12 inches in depth.	A4.2(p17)		
<b>Fences &amp; Walls</b>				
22	Fences and walls along major streets shall have a maximum height of three feet, except for noise walls for highways used to buffer traffic noise.	A4.7(p19)		
23	Areas between public streets and fences shall be landscaped, including walls that have a height greater than three feet.	A4.7(p19)		
24	If solid walls are proposed to buffer traffic noise, then the walls shall have a change of plane at a minimum of every 30-feet. (See illustration for guidance)	A4.7(p19)		
25	Wall and/or fencing materials shall include one of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wood and wood rail fences</li> <li>• Stone and brick masonry walls</li> <li>• Wrought iron (for gates)</li> <li>• Walls with cement plaster finish</li> </ul>	A4.7(p19)		



County of San Diego - Sweetwater  
Objective Design Standards Checklist

LANDSCAPE DESIGN STANDARDS				
		Guideline Reference	Y/N	Comments
<b>Plant Selection Guide &amp; Landscape Manual</b>				
26	Plants shall be selected from the Sweetwater Plant Selection Guide of the Sweetwater Design Guidelines and/or the County Water Efficient Landscape Design Manual.	A6.3(p22)		
<b>Design Concepts</b>				
27	Areas between a building or parking lot and the edge of the property shall be landscaped along all public streets.	A6.1(p21)		
28	Project shall include shrubs or drought resistant grasses beneath trees (instead of turf or ornamental ground covers), except in the following locations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parks and other active use areas such as ball fields or areas proposed for recreational uses can use grass</li> <li>• Areas designated as group usable open space including seating/picnic, dining, gathering, or similar</li> </ul>	A6.3(p22)		
29	The use of growing turf shall only be permitted in parks or active and recreational use areas, such as ball fields, dog parks, and/or playgrounds.	A6.3(p22)		
<b>Preservation of Significant Natural Features</b>				
30	Removal of trees with a diameter of more than 12 inches, or any trees with two trunks with a combined diameter of 16 inches, as measured four and one-half feet above the root crown shall be prohibited.	A2.1(p13)		
31	Removal of existing landforms and rock outcrops within the landscaped edge zone shall be prohibited.	A1.3(p12)		
<b>Perimeter &amp; Parking Lot Landscaping</b>				
32	At least five percent of the internal parking areas for parking lots greater than 6,000 square feet shall be planted with trees and shrubs. (See illustrations for guidance)	B1.4(p32) B2.5(p37)		
33	An area between the parking lot and the building shall be a minimum of five feet in width and landscaped with trees and shrubs, except if used as a pedestrian walkway.	B1.4(p32) B2.5(p37)		
34	At least one tree shall be provided for every 300 square feet of the required street facing landscape edge zone.	B1.3(p31)		
35	For a multifamily residential only project, at least one tree shall be provided for every 200 square feet of required interior yard landscaped area.	B2.5(p37)		
36	Every parking space shall be located within 30 feet of the trunk of a tree. (See illustrations for guidance)	B1.4(p32)		
37	All required trees shall be a minimum 24-inch box size, except when specified by another standard in this checklist.	B1.4(p31) B2.4(p36)		



County of San Diego - Sweetwater  
Objective Design Standards Checklist

<b>LANDSCAPE DESIGN STANDARDS</b>		<b>Guideline Reference</b>	<b>Y/N</b>	<b>Comments</b>
38	All shrubs that provide visual screening shall be of a type that reach a minimum of 30 inches in height after two years growth and shall be spaced so that the branches intertwine.	B1.4(p31) B2.5(p36)		
39	The edge zone provided along all public street frontages shall be landscaped.	B1.1(p30) B2.1(p34)		

<b>SIGNAGE DESIGN STANDARDS</b>				
		<b>Guideline Reference</b>	<b>Y/N</b>	<b>Comments</b>
<b>General Design Criteria</b>				
40	External sign illumination shall be directed downward toward the sign face, and the light source shall be shielded from view from adjacent public streets and pedestrian walkways at ground level.	A7.1(p23)		
41	All signs and sign components shall have a maximum of three colors in addition to black and white.	A7.1(p23)		
42	No sign, other than a sign installed by a public agency, shall be located in the public right-of-way.	A7.1(p23)		
43	No sign shall be located above eave height or parapet top of a proposed building.	A7.1(p23)		
44	Signposts and other structural elements shall be finished in white, black, brown, tan, green, or grey colors, or a natural stain finish.	A7.1(p23)		
45	LED lights proposed in sign frames, shall be shielded from view from adjacent public streets and pedestrian walkways at ground level.	A7.1(p23)		
46	Individual opaque letters shall be backlit to create a halo effect.	A7.1(p23)		



County of San Diego - Sweetwater  
Objective Design Standards Checklist

	<b>SIGNAGE DESIGN STANDARDS</b>	<b>Guideline Reference</b>	<b>Y/N</b>	<b>Comments</b>
	<b>Permitted Sign Types</b>			
47	<p>The project signage shall be one or more of the following types:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Awning Valance:</b> A sign or graphic attached to, or printed on, an awning's valance (not permitted in multi-family).</li> <li>• <b>Monument:</b> A sign supported by one or more uprights or braces on the ground, not exceeding four feet in height.</li> <li>• <b>Projecting:</b> Any sign which projects from, and is supported by, a wall of a building with the display surface of the sign perpendicular to the building wall (not permitted in multi-family).</li> <li>• <b>Single Pole Hanging Sign:</b> A sign which is suspended from a horizontal arm which is attached to a pole no higher than six feet in height.</li> <li>• <b>Wall:</b> A sign affixed directly to an exterior wall or fence.</li> <li>• <b>Window:</b> A sign affixed to or behind a window, no larger than 25 percent of the window on, or behind, which it is displayed (not permitted in multi-family).</li> </ul> <p>(See illustrations for guidance)</p>	A7.2(p24)		
	<b>Prohibited Sign Types</b>			
48	<p>The following sign types are prohibited:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pole signs</li> <li>• Roof signs and signs extended above roof parapets</li> <li>• Internally illuminated plastic signs, except where plastic is used only as raised letters</li> <li>• Internally illuminated back-lit signs</li> <li>• Portable or mobile signs (i.e. lettered flags, banners, or sandwich boards)</li> <li>• Signs with changing or moving copy</li> <li>• Neon signs, except for one per business where in a window and less than two square feet</li> </ul>	A7.4(p26)		
	<b>Multi-Family Residential Only Development</b>			
49	Project signage shall be one of the following sign types: Wall, Single Pole Hanging, or Monument.	A7.3(p25)		
50	A maximum of one sign shall be permitted per multi-family residential development entry from a public street or road.	A7.3(p25)		
51	Sign area shall be a maximum of 10 square feet for projects of less than 25 dwelling units, and 15 square feet for projects with 25 or more dwelling units.	A7.3(p25)		
52	Letter and symbol height shall be a maximum of six inches.	A7.3(p25)		





<b>LIGHTING DESIGN STANDARDS</b>		<b>Guideline Reference</b>	<b>Y/N</b>	<b>Comments</b>
<b>Prevent Glare, Preserve Night Sky</b>				
53	All outdoor lighting shall be directed downward and shall not cast direct lighting beyond the site boundaries.	A8.1(p27)		
54	All outdoor lighting fixtures shall be full shield cutoff and downward directed so that no light is emitted above the lowest light emitting part of the fixture.	A8.1(p27)		
55	Externally lit signs shall only use only top mounted, shielded, and downward directed light sources.	A8.1(p27)		
<b>Size, Color &amp; Materials</b>				
56	All luminaires or bollards with integrated lighting in residential parking areas greater than 12 feet in height are prohibited.	A8.2(p27)		
57	Overhead walkway lighting shall be less than eight feet in height and shall have shatter proof coverings.	A8.3(p27)		
58	Low-level walkway lighting shall be integrated into bollards or posts not more than three feet in height, with shatter proof coverings that direct light downward.	A8.3(p27)		

<b>BUILDING EQUIPMENT &amp; SERVICES STANDARDS</b>		<b>Guideline Reference</b>	<b>Y/N</b>	<b>Comments</b>
59	Trash containers and outdoor storage areas shall be screened from view from public streets and pedestrian areas, when not placed for collection. The screen for trash containers shall utilize at least one material that is utilized in the architecture of the principal building.	A9.1(p28)		
60	Utility meters shall be located in service areas or screened.	A9.1(p28)		
61	Exterior surface mounted utility boxes shall be painted the same color as their principal buildings or shall be screened from view if visible from a public street or pedestrian area.	A9.1(p28)		
62	Mechanical equipment, satellite dishes, communication devices, and other equipment shall be screened from view from public streets and pedestrian areas at the ground level.	A9.1(p28)		
63	Roof mounted equipment, except for solar panels, shall be screened from view from adjacent public streets and pedestrian areas at ground-level.	A9.1(p28)		
64	Solar panels shall be screened from ground-level view when mounted at an angle on flat roofs.	A9.1(p28)		



County of San Diego - Sweetwater  
Objective Design Standards Checklist

65	MULTI-FAMILY RESIDENTIAL-ONLY DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS	Guideline Reference	Y/N	Comments
65	Living spaces shall not be more than one half-story above ground level.	B2.1(p34)		
66	100 square feet of Private Usable Open Space, as defined by Section 1100 of the Zoning Ordinance, per dwelling unit is provided, and include the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ground-level private spaces shall have a minimum dimension of eight feet in each plan dimension</li> <li>• Decks used for upper floor private space shall have a minimum dimension of four feet in each plan dimension</li> </ul>	B2.2(p34)		
67	Parking lots shall be located on the side, rear, or internal to the property. Parking lots between the front of the buildings and the primary street is prohibited.	B2.4(p35)		
68	Projects with a common enclosed parking garage shall have a maximum of two garage doors that open on a public street.	B2.4(p35)		
69	Carports and garages shall be made of at least one of the same materials as the principal building.	B2.4(p35)		
70	Views to parking areas shall be screened from public streets and usable open space areas.	B2.4(p35)		
71	For every eight continuous perpendicular or angled parking spaces, a landscaped pocket a minimum of 10 feet wide shall be provided and planted with trees and/or shrubs.	B2.4(p35)		
72	Parking drives adjacent to the perimeter of project property lines are prohibited.	B2.4(p36)		





County of San Diego - Sweetwater  
Objective Design Standards Checklist

Applicant hereby agrees to comply with the applicable design review checklist standards; all applicable Federal, State, and Local laws and regulations, including but not limited to the County's Centerline, Watershed Protection, and Landscape Ordinances, for the life of the project, or until modified by a subsequent development approval; and he/she understands that additional changes to the project may be required prior to issuance of a building permit to ensure compliance with these regulations.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Applicant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

The Sweetwater Design Review Board hereby confirms that the proposed project complies with all of the applicable design review standards provided compliance with the applicable design review checklist standards is maintained as agreed by the Applicant above.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Chairman, Design Review Board

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**Project and Property Owner Information:**

APN(s): \_\_\_\_\_ Project Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Owner's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Owner's Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Agent's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

(If applicable)

Agent's Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**Brief description of the project:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_