

SUMMARY OF CHANGES TO SFDB GUIDELINES

The table below provides an outline of the changes to the SFDB General Design Guidelines and Meeting Procedures, proposed to be renamed as the SFDB Guidelines. Below the table is an

Updated Guidelines Section Name & Page Number	Summary of Changes
Table of Contents, pp. 2-3	Reformatted and shortened for easier navigation.
Introduction, pp. 4-7	Added consolidated SFDB Goals, a Statement on Neighborhood Compatibility, Character, and Architectural Style; added a reference to other applicable guidelines; removed reference to outdated guidelines.
Section 1 - General Information, pp. 8-17	Review process information consolidated into one section. Added information about SFDB jurisdiction and the design review process, including submittal requirements, levels of review, and steps in the process. Added a section on determining substantial conformance to approved plans.
Section 2 – Meeting Procedures, pp. 18-26	General meeting procedures information consolidated into one section.
Section 3 – Meeting Conduct for SFDB Members, pp. 27-29	Moved Board member-specific meeting conduct information to follow general meeting procedures.
Section 4 – Submittal Requirements and Visual Aids, pp. 30-35	Clarifications and updates regarding when visual aids are required, with explanations of commonly used visual aids. Added procedure for waiving story pole requirements and included description of the levels of story pole installation.
Section 5 – Landscape Design Guidelines, pp. 36-46	Reorganized and reformatted. Minor updates and clarifications. Replaced outdated Water Conservation information with a reference to the City website for current Water Conservation best practices; relocated subdivision grading plan guidelines from the Meeting Procedures section.
Section 6 - Administrative Approval Standards, pp. 50-61	Added procedures for administrative review. Added general administrative approval standards for landscape projects, designing projects in consideration of neighbors, changes to approved plans, and home hardening for fire resistance. Expanded general standards for additions and alterations. Added project-specific standards for screening and screening waivers. Expanded project-specific standards for accessory buildings, additions, decks, fences, hardscape & landscape, pools & spas, retaining walls, roofs, tree removal, trellises, and windows.

explanation of key changes to the administrative approval standards.

Key Changes to the Administrative Approval Standards

For brevity, only the key changes to the Administrative Approval Standards are discussed below. Refer to Exhibit F (Draft SFDB Guidelines, Section 6.1-6.3) for the full text of the SFDB Administrative Approval Standards.

New Procedures Section

The current Administrative Approval Standards lack thorough instructions for use, which makes it difficult to train staff, applicants, and the public on how to use them. The proposed guidelines address this issue with a new Procedures section that outlines how to review projects using the General Administrative Approval Standards and the Project-Specific Administrative Approval Standards. The procedures include step-by-step instructions and an example.

Updated General Administrative Approval Standards

The General Standards assist with “big picture” considerations such as how to evaluate architectural style, designing projects in consideration of neighbors, how to review changes to approved plans, and how to evaluate a project’s scale in relation to the neighborhood. The General Standards have been expanded to include new standards for landscape, designing projects in consideration of neighbors, reviewing changes to approved plans, and home hardening for fire resistance. The existing General Standards have been updated for consistency with the proposed ordinance and to include additional guidance to assist Staff, applicants, and the public understand what the broad considerations are to grant an administrative approval.

General Standards: Home Hardening for Fire Resistance

The General Administrative Approval Standards are proposed to be expanded with new, more lenient standards for home hardening projects in High Fire Hazard Areas that are using State-recognized fire-resistant materials. Fire preparedness is an increasingly important topic to homeowners in the City, particularly with the July 2025 expansion of the City’s mapped High Fire Hazard Areas. If a project is proposing new fire-resistant materials and site design, staff will be able to administratively approve those elements even if they do not explicitly meet the applicable project-specific administrative approval standards. This is not anticipated to result in undesirable design outcomes, since most common and approvable building materials, such as standing seam roofing, 2-piece clay tile, class A asphalt shingles, and dual pane tempered glass windows already meet State fire resistance requirements. However, if the decision is between a project being aesthetically superior or fire resistant, the proposed guidelines allow staff to approve the more fire-resistant option.

Updated Project-Specific Administrative Approval Standards

The Project-Specific Standards have been updated to include more types of projects that can be administratively approved. Along with increasing administrative approval size limits for accessory buildings, additions, and decks, the Project-Specific standards include fewer restrictions on the types of exterior materials that are eligible for administrative approval, including windows, decks, fences, and roofing. To temper the increased allowances in the standards and maintain aesthetic

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oversight, new criteria have been added regarding elements such as project height, location on the lot, screening, and preservation of character-defining features. Examples include:

- Accessory buildings up to 800 square feet may be administratively approved, however they cannot exceed one story or 17 feet in height, cannot be located in the front yard, and must match the architectural style of the main house if the accessory building is publicly visible, and other standards.
- Additions of up to 800 square feet may be approved administratively, however existing development must be less than 4,000 square feet, the addition must not significantly alter the front façade, and the project must not exceed 85% of the maximum required floor area ratio (FAR), and other standards.
- Vinyl windows are no longer disqualified from administrative approval and may be administratively approved if they are a visual match to the existing windows, are not replacing original wood windows, and other standards.

The intent in adding these caveats to the more inclusive Project-Specific administrative approval standards is to introduce flexibility into the process while ensuring projects are compatible with the neighborhood. Adding this level of specificity to the standards also facilitates more straightforward review by staff by reducing confusion and adding objectivity. Key changes to specific standards are described in more detail below.

Project-Specific Standards: Accessory Buildings

The current Project-Specific Standards only allow administrative approval of accessory buildings of up to 250 square feet and 500 square feet if not publicly visible. The proposed standards increase the administrative approval limit to 800 square feet, consistent with State accessory dwelling unit regulations that allow ministerial approval of units up to 800 square feet. New standards that act as guardrails are proposed along with the increased size limit, including that accessory buildings not used for covered parking and located in the front yard are not eligible for administrative approval. These changes encourage accessory buildings to be located in the back yard and limited to one story, while allowing a larger size than the current standards.

Project-Specific Standards: Additions

In terms of impacts to the site and neighborhood, the most significant change proposed for the Project-Specific Administrative Approval Standards is to increase the size of additions that can be administratively approved by staff. The current SFDB Guidelines allow administrative approval of first-story additions up to 250 square feet and upper story additions up to 150 square feet. A first story addition of up to 500 square feet can be administratively approved if it is not publicly visible¹ and is located in consideration of neighbors². The proposed amendments increase the size of additions that can be approved administratively from 500 to 800 square feet on the first story

¹ A building, structure, or improvement is publicly visible if it may be typically, reasonably, and usually observed by an average person standing or traveling upon a public right-of-way (including streets and sidewalks) or visible from a public park, beach, or other area generally open for public use. If the building, structure, or improvement is only visible from a very distant viewing location where the building, structure, or improvement would not be readily discernable from the viewing location, then the building, structure, or improvement is not considered publicly visible for purposes of interpreting these Guidelines (SFDB Guidelines & Meeting Procedures p.15).

² I.e., generally consistent with the Good Neighbor Guidelines (Single Family Residence Design Guidelines p. 67-N).

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(to align with the State law allowance for one 800 square foot ADU), and from 150 to 250 square feet on an upper story. This would keep these modest additions with little to no potential for negative neighborhood impacts out of a public hearing.

The proposed administrative approval standards include a caveat for large residential development, consistent with the design review trigger for additions on lots developed with more than 4,000 net square feet of floor area. The proposed administrative approval standards allow staff to approve additions of up to 800 square feet on lots developed with up to 4,000 square feet of floor area, but for lots developed with more than 4,000 square feet of floor area, only up to 250 square feet of additions can be approved administratively. This places more scrutiny on additions to homes that are already large by Santa Barbara's standards and gives staff the flexibility to approve larger additions to smaller homes.

Project-Specific Standards: Decks

Currently, the SFDB Guidelines allow administrative approval of first-story decks up to 200 square feet, and do not allow administrative approval of balconies or upper-story decks. This project proposes to increase the allowable size for administrative approvals of decks to 400 square feet at the first story and 250 square feet for decks at the second and higher story. Upper story decks under 160 square feet would be exempt from design review provided that they meet the new zoning standards for balconies and upper story decks. Consistent with the Single-Family Residence Design Guidelines, an existing design standard is proposed to be added to the zoning ordinance requiring decks greater than 20 square feet to be located at least 15 feet from interior lot lines. Planning Commission supported this concept at the March 21, 2024 discussion on this project. Any project that does not comply with this standard may be approved by the applicable Design Review body, but would not be eligible for administrative approval.

Roof decks (decks on top of the roof of the highest story) would not be eligible for administrative approval. The SFDB/AIA subcommittee agreed that roof decks require more scrutiny due to their potential for privacy and noise nuisance issues.

Project-Specific Standards: Windows

The current Project-Specific Standards for windows are ambiguous about the eligibility of two of the most common window materials: aluminum and vinyl. This leads to confusion among staff and inefficient processing of applications, even for windows on the rear of the house that aren't publicly visible. The proposed standards remedy this issue by changing the criteria to not exclude aluminum or vinyl and to encourage new and replaced windows to match the existing windows. They also add a new standard, that the replacement of original wood windows or Special Design Windows³ with another type of window is not administratively approvable. This places more scrutiny on projects that propose to remove character-defining features and less scrutiny on a homeowner replacing an aluminum rear bathroom window with vinyl. Although it seems minor, this change will allow staff to be more efficient with their review of home improvement projects.

³ A window that uses quality materials such as wood or steel and is constructed using a unique or artistic design style is considered a Special Design Window. Such windows are an important component of a building's character and may be an enhancement to the entire neighborhood. Such windows include, but are not limited to, leaded glass windows, stained glass windows, multi-pane wood windows with elaborate muntin patterns, or non-rectangular accent windows.