



City of Santa Cruz Bird-Safe Building Design Standards

When do the standards apply?

Bird-safe building design standards apply to any portions of buildings or structures that require design review and are located adjacent to or within 300 feet of and could reflect areas with a General Plan land use designation of CR, PR, NA, or AG, any open waterway mapped in the City-wide Creeks and Wetlands Management Plan, or any area deemed by the Zoning Administrator to need consideration for bird-safe design due to proximity to natural features.

Which architectural features require glazing treatment?

Treatment is required for 90 percent of all glazing within 40 feet above grade.

Glazing treatment standards

Staff will work with developers to decide on best design measures. Glazing treatment shall follow the 2" x 4" rule: spaces of untreated glazing must have a maximum height of two inches and a maximum width of four inches. Birds cannot see untreated glazing and may attempt to fly through "openings" greater than these dimensions. 2" x 2" spacing is highly encouraged. Pattern elements should be at least 1/8" thick. Glazing treatment shall include at least one of the following:

- Bird safe glass approved for use by the American Bird Conservancy
- Fritted windows
- Patterned windows
- UV pattern film (not appropriate for all locations)
- Window nets
- Window screens
- Any American Bird Conservancy approved product: <https://abcbirds.org/get-involved/bird-smart-glass/>
- Other design measures that have been identified by qualified professionals as providing adequate bird protections, subject to the discretion of the Zoning Administrator.

Lighting standards

Exterior lighting shall be downward cast only. Horizontal or upward cast lighting can attract or disorient birds and cause them to fly into windows.

Exceptions

The following may qualify for an exception to these requirements with approval of the Zoning Administrator :

- Projects on Historic buildings where meeting bird-safe glazing standards precludes the building from meeting Secretary of Interior's Standards or otherwise detracts from the design/historic character
- Where an assessment by the Zoning Administrator, in coordination with and a qualified biologist with a thorough knowledge of bird-safe design standards, determines that the project as designed will not be detrimental to bird safety
- First floor windows on buildings which require clear glazing due to the nature of the business or character of the area (e.g., retail uses).