

# STANDARDS FOR DESIGN FOR ONE-FAMILY AND TWO-FAMILY RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE MIDCOAST (SECTION 6565.20.) (El Granada, Miramar, Moss Beach, Montara)

## Background (6565.20(A))

### 1. Application

The following design standards shall apply to all one-family (single-family) and two-family (duplex) development in all areas zoned "Design Review" (DR) within the urban MidCoast (El Granada, Miramar, Moss Beach, and Montara). Where used in this document, the terms "house," "home" and "single-family" shall also refer to two-family or duplex residential development.

### 2. Setting

The MidCoast has a unique character that makes it a desirable place to live. Although it is only a few miles from the more heavily urbanized Bayside, the MidCoast has a coastal, semi-rural, small town, diverse character that residents value and want to preserve. It is a collection of five distinct communities (Montara, Moss Beach, El Granada, Princeton and Miramar), each with individual neighborhoods differing in architecture, size, scale and character. The individuality of each community is vital to the overall character of the MidCoast. Residents and visitors alike also enjoy the area's many natural amenities, including the beaches and bluffs, creeks and streams, hillsides and mountains.

### 3. Purpose/Legislative Intent

The purposes of the Design Review Districts Chapter (Chapter 28.1) are contained in Section 6565.1.D. Consistent with Section 6565.1.D, the purpose of the Midcoast Design Standards is to encourage new single-family homes and additions that have their own individual character, while ensuring that they are complementary with neighboring houses, the neighborhood character of each Midcoast community, and the surrounding natural setting.

The Midcoast design standards are intended for use by homeowners, builders, architects and designers, by neighbors, and by community groups in their consideration of new single-family homes and additions to existing homes. The Design Review Administrator, the Coastside Design Review Committee, the Planning Commission and the Board of Supervisors will also use

these standards in their review of projects, as set forth in Section 6565.7.

Each design topic in Sections 6565.20(C) through (G) is divided into two sections: (a) a discussion with illustrations section, and (b) a design standards section. The discussion and illustration section is intended to explain the reasons for the standards and to provide further clarification of the standards' objectives. The design standards section states the regulatory standards. Only the design standards section has the force of law and constitutes the regulatory criteria by which projects will be reviewed.

Consistent with Section 6565.1.0, the design standards are not intended to preclude individual initiative in the design of any particular project, nor to require that substantial additional expense be incurred. There are a variety of creative ways in which a dwelling can be designed to comply with the standards, but still retain its own individual identity. By thoughtful application of the standards and balancing of the design objectives embodied in the standards, an architect or designer can achieve compliance with these design standards and reduce a project's potential to cause conflict, avoiding costly delays caused by subsequent project revisions.

When the term "to the extent feasible" is used, it shall mean that if a house can be designed to comply with that standard, without conflicting with other applicable design and zoning requirements, the house shall comply with the standard. If a house cannot be designed to comply with the standard, it shall be designed to substantially comply.

### 4. Relationship To Other County Regulations

The design standards are intended to implement the County General Plan and the Local Coastal Program (LCP). The design standards are separate from, but intended to complement, other required County ordinances including the Zoning Regulations, which establish development standards for single-family and two-family residential development.

Consistent with Section 6565.10, it shall be the responsibility of the applicant and home designer to

comply with both the Design Standards and the Zoning Regulations development standards (e.g., height limit, maximum floor area, setbacks and maximum parcel coverage). The emphasis for design review will be on a home's appearance, not on its actual size or height. As such, compliance with design standards will be achieved solely by requiring design techniques consistent with zoning development standards that make homes appear smaller, lower or less massive; house size or height reductions will not be required. This does not preclude an applicant from voluntarily choosing a home design that is actually smaller, lower, or less massive than the maximum allowed by the zoning development standards.

Other relevant County ordinances include, but are not limited to: (1) the Building Regulations, which establish construction requirements including structural, mechanical, electrical, and plumbing requirements; (2) Public Works standards for driveways, curb cuts and other work in the public right-of-way; (3) the Heritage and Significant Tree Ordinances, which establish criteria for tree removal; and (4) the Grading Ordinance, which establishes standards for conducting grading activity.

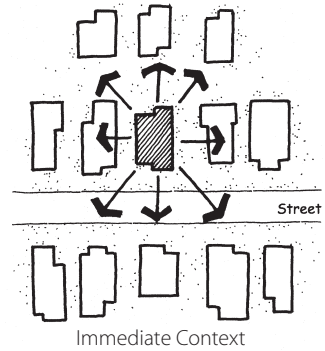
Where conflicts exist between the provisions of this Section and the policies of the LCP, the policies of the LCP shall control. Where conflicts exist between the provisions of this section and other provisions of the Zoning Regulations, they shall be resolved in a manner that on balance most protects significant coastal resources consistent with Coastal Act Section 30007.5.

## Nighborhood Definition and Neighborhood Character (6565.20(B))

### 1. Neighborhood Definition

#### a. Neighborhood Context

Discussion: What is a neighborhood? One of the first steps in designing a new home or an addition to an existing home is to understand the neighborhood in which the home is located. A neighborhood generally has two components: (1) the immediate context, or how a house relates to adjacent houses and natural features, and (2) the neighborhood context, or how a house relates to the visual character and scale of other houses and natural features in the vicinity.



#### b. Neighborhood Limits

Discussion: The process of defining a neighborhood begins by defining the area surrounding a house within 300 ft.. Then, other factors may be considered that would further influence the limit of a neighborhood, making it larger or smaller, such as noticeable changes in topography, or proximity to open space or the urban/rural boundary.



Neighborhood Context

## Neighborhood Definition

### Definition:

A neighborhood is defined as the area within 300 ft. of an existing or proposed house. Certain factors may be present which would further define or alter the limit of a neighborhood, making it larger or smaller, including, but not limited to, the following:

- (1) Significant changes in topography;
- (2) Changes in land use such as from residential to commercial;
- (3) Proximity to designated open space or urban/rural boundary;
- (4) Changes in the land subdivision pattern;
- (5) A wide street or natural feature such as a riparian corridor;
- (6) Noticeable changes in building type, such as from one-story to two-story homes;
- (7) Visibility from off-site vantage points in the vicinity of the project.

## 2. Neighborhood Character

Discussion: What is neighborhood character?

Neighborhood character is the combination of qualities or features within a neighborhood that distinguishes it from another neighborhood. For the purposes of these design standards, the key qualities or features of single-family residential neighborhoods include the appearance of the homes (e.g., architectural style and elements), the collective appearance of the homes (e.g., pattern, scale, size), and the appearance of natural features (e.g., natural vegetation, landforms).

How does a house contribute to the visual character of a neighborhood? The architectural elements of a house such as its shape, the arrangement of its doors and windows, its roof style, and its architectural style all contribute to the appearance of the house, which in turn contributes to the collective appearance or character of the neighborhood. Some of the most common architectural elements that contribute to the character of an individual house and the collective character of the neighborhood are listed below:

- a. How houses are sited on their lots;
- b. How houses blend with surrounding scenic and natural environments;
- c. Architectural style, including how house styles compare, contrast or complement each other;

- d. Scale, or the appearance or proportion of a house relative to others, including the number of stories.
- e. Arrangement/placement/massing of major building forms;
- f. Parking and garage patterns;
- g. Location of entries;
- h. Roof forms;
- i. Exterior materials and colors;
- j. Window type and placement;
- k. Landscaping;
- l. Older buildings or features having historic character.

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## Site Planning and Structure Placement (6565.20 (C))

One of the key elements that define the visual character of an individual house and the neighborhood is how it is located or placed on its site. A single building out of context with its site or neighboring houses can appear disruptive.

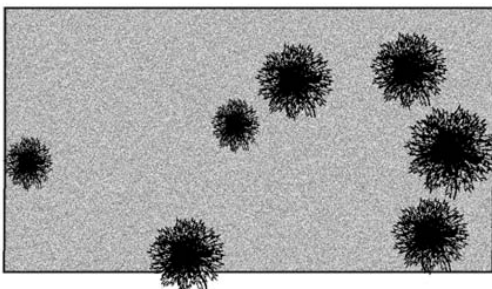
### 1. Integrate Structures with the Natural Setting

New houses, additions and accessory structures should be located, designed and constructed to retain and blend with the natural vegetation and natural land forms of the site, and should be complementary to adjacent neighborhood structures.

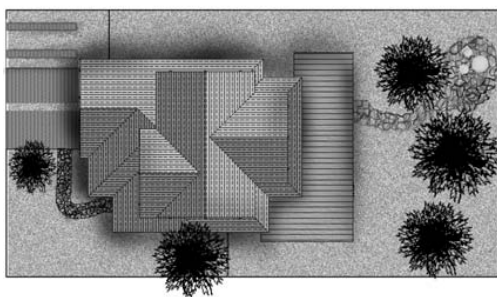
#### a. Trees and Vegetation

Discussion:

When siting a new home or an addition on a parcel, the goal should be to disturb as little vegetation as possible, with priority placed on retaining healthy, native species and those trees that are heritage or significant trees by definition. Fire prevention measures should also be considered. Refer to County fire hazard prevention requirements.



Undeveloped site



Sensitive site development to retain vegetation and other natural features

#### Standards:

To the extent feasible, site new buildings, additions, and associated infrastructure (wells, septic systems, water tanks, paved areas) on a parcel in locations that:

- (1) Minimize tree and vegetation removal to the extent necessary for the construction of the structures.
- (2) Retain heritage and significant trees, with priority placed on retaining healthy, native species. Blend new structures and landscaping with the remaining natural vegetative cover of the site.
- (3) Tree removal and replacement shall be in accordance with Section 6565.21, Standards for the Protection of Trees and Vegetation. Replacement trees and new trees shall be from the list specifying recommended/discouraged species for the Midcoast, adopted by the Board of Supervisors.

## b. Grading

### Discussion:

As defined in the County Grading Ordinance, grading is any excavating, filling, or placement of earth materials or a combination of these activities. Excavation (or cutting) is the mechanical removal of earth material, while filling is the deposit of earth or waste material placed by artificial means. The following design standards are intended to regulate the aesthetic aspects of grading; the technical aspects of grading are regulated by the County Grading Ordinance. In the interest of retaining as much of the natural character of the site as possible, an effort should be made to place structures so that grading activity and the area disturbed by grading is limited; however, on sloping sites and where a basement is proposed, it is recognized that a certain amount of excavation may be necessary so that the end result is a house that blends into the site.

### Do This



Structure is designed to blend with the natural contours and features of the site. Only grading necessary for construction was used.

### Not This



Structure is not suited to the terrain. Extensive grading was used to create building pad, and to terrace site beyond the immediate vicinity of the structure.

### Standards:

To the extent feasible, site new buildings, additions, and associated infrastructure (wells, septic systems, water tanks, paved areas) on a parcel in locations that:

- (1) Minimize filling or placement of earth materials. Avoid raising the building pad for a new home or an addition above the existing grade, unless required for technical or engineering reasons by a registered civil engineer, licensed architect or geotechnical consultant;
- (2) Encourage excavation when needed to blend the house into the site;
- (3) Limit grading to the footprint of the structure and its immediate vicinity, unless otherwise required for technical or engineering reasons by a registered civil engineer, licensed architect or geotechnical consultant.
- (4) Result in a finished grade beyond the structure and its immediate vicinity that is similar to the existing grade, unless otherwise required for technical or engineering reasons by a registered civil engineer, licensed architect or geotechnical consultant. Existing grade means: (a) natural grade, or (b) grade at time of house construction/ enlargement, providing that prior grading on the site was approved by the County or occurred before the County regulated grading activities.
- (5) Keep the height of freestanding retaining walls to a minimum. Retaining walls shall be surfaced, painted, landscaped or otherwise treated to blend with their surroundings.

### c. Streams and Other Drainage Features

Discussion:

The Midcoast communities are crossed by a number of streams. In addition, many less developed drainage features including swales, gullies and ditches cross the area. If there is a stream or other drainage feature on or adjacent to your property, you should consult the Local Coastal Program Sensitive Habitats Component for policies related to sensitive habitats, riparian corridors and wetlands to determine if these policies apply.

All streams and natural drainage features should be avoided when deciding where structures should be placed to protect them from erosion, siltation and polluted run-off. Man-made drainage features may be covered or relocated in order to conform with the design standards of this Section, provided that: (1) sensitive habitats are not disturbed and (2) alterations are done pursuant to a drainage plan prepared by a registered civil engineer and reviewed and approved by the Planning and Building Division.

Builders should also take advantage of the opportunity to improve local storm drainage systems and protect streams and drainage features from erosion, siltation, and polluted runoff by improving water retention and movement on site, prohibiting runoff onto neighboring properties, and preventing overloading of local stormwater systems. Please refer to Section 6565.20(E) for guidelines regarding landscaping and paved areas that should be used to enhance project appearance and storm water pollution control. Please also refer to the County's Stormwater Pollution Prevention program publications, available at the Planning Counter, for further information and innovative ideas on this topic.

**Standards:**

- (1) Avoid locating structures on or near streams and natural drainage features;
- (2) Permit alteration of man-made drainage features when necessary, providing that (a) LCP Sensitive Habitat Component policies are met, where applicable, and (b) alterations are done pursuant to a drainage plan prepared by a registered civil engineer and reviewed and approved by the Planning and Building Division.

**Do This**



Structure is set back to avoid alteration of natural drainage feature.

**Not This**



Structure is too close to natural drainage feature.

### d. Ridgelines, Skylines and View Corridors

Discussion:

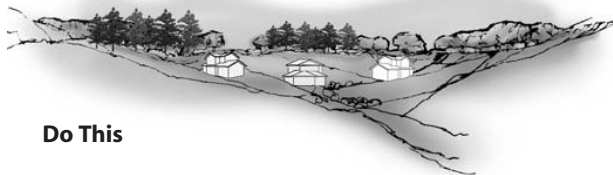
The varied terrain of the MidCoast offers scenic views of both the ocean and the hills that should be protected. The LCP Visual Resources Component contains policies protecting ridgelines and skylines. As defined by LCP Policy 8.7, ridgelines are the tops of hills or hillocks normally viewed against a background of other hills. A skyline is the line where sky and land masses meet. The Cabrillo Highway Scenic Corridor offers perhaps the most significant public views in the MidCoast, however, other public views should be considered as well. A public view is a range of vision from a public road or other public facility. It is important to note that the LCP may require the maximum building height for structures located on a ridgeline or skyline to be lower than the maximum allowed by the Zoning Regulations.

#### Standards:

Please refer to LCP Policy 8.7.



**Existing**



**Do This**

Structures blend with existing land forms and vegetation.



**Not This**

Ridgeline silhouette has been destroyed through the removal of vegetative masses and natural land forms.

### e. Relationship to Open Spaces

Discussion:

In some areas of the MidCoast, the neighborhood's proximity to designated open space is one of the factors which defines the neighborhood character, and special attention should be paid to those transition or buffer areas where residential and open space land uses meet.

**Standards:**

Consider how a new or remodeled home will appear as viewed from adjacent designated open space areas; the structure placement and design shall harmonize with the natural setting with regard to massing and materials.



## 2. Complement Other Structures in the Neighborhood

Most home building in the Midcoast takes place on “infill” lots – vacant parcels next to developed lots with existing homes. As such, careful attention must be paid to the placement, orientation and design of new homes and additions to ensure that they are complementary to other homes in the neighborhood.

### a. Privacy

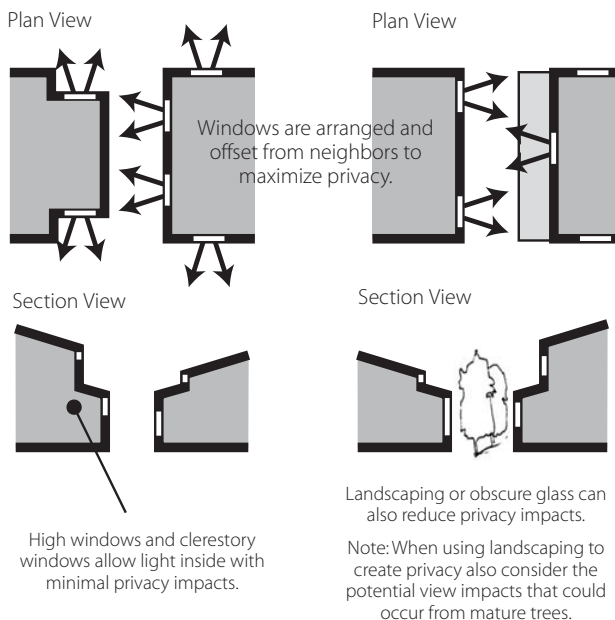
Discussion:

Privacy is one of the keys to a property owner’s enjoyment of their property and their quality of life. The placement of a new home or an addition, and/or the location of windows on a new home or an addition, can have a significant impact on privacy, both for the neighbors and for the occupants of the new home. Decks and balconies can provide outdoor living space and add architectural interest to a home. However, they must be carefully designed to avoid substantially affecting neighbors’ privacy. It is particularly important to consider the impact the placement of a new structure and/or windows may have on privacy when setbacks are the minimum allowed by the Zoning Regulations. This may involve modifying a proposed floor plan or proposing other architectural solutions or landscaping to enhance privacy. To reduce the potential for future privacy conflicts, a project designer should also consider the probable location and intensity of development that is likely to occur on parcels in the vicinity of the proposed project.

### Standards:

To the extent feasible, site and design new buildings, additions, decks, balconies and associated infrastructure to respect the privacy of neighboring houses by:

- (1) Locating, orienting and designing windows, entrances, decks and balconies to minimize and mitigate direct views into neighboring houses and outdoor decks/patios;
- (2) Locating, orienting and designing high activity areas (kitchen, family room, patio) so that they are not adjacent to low-activity areas (bedrooms) on adjacent properties;
- (3) Proposing roof-top decks only when they are: (a) designed to avoid direct views into neighboring houses and outdoor decks/patios; (b) accessed by interior means and (c) integrated into the roof design.
- (4) Using appropriate landscaping and other architectural solutions such as clerestory windows or obscure glass.



## b. Views

### Discussion:

Homes in the Midcoast enjoy a variety of views. Some are views of the ocean, others are of the hills, and others are vistas through the neighborhood. Views add value and enjoyment to a property, however, private views are not protected by existing regulations. Due to the configuration and size of some parcels and their topography, there may be no way to build without affecting someone else's view. However, when designing a new home or an addition, an effort should be made to minimize the affect on views from neighboring houses. Possible methods to minimize view blockage include: locating living space where it would have less view impact, increasing the setback of second stories, lowering roof plate heights, and choosing roof forms that minimize mass. To reduce the potential for future view conflicts, a project designer is encouraged to also consider the probable location and intensity of development that is likely to occur on parcels in the vicinity of the proposed project.

### Do This



A second story stepped back from the front and sides minimizes view blockage from neighboring homes.

### Not This



A more massive second-story creates greater view blockage.

### Standard

When designing a new home or an addition, an effort should be made to minimize the effect on views from neighboring houses.

## Elements of Design (6565.20) (D)

One of the greatest challenges of residential construction in the MidCoast is the building of a contemporary home that is compatible with surrounding, older homes of varying styles built during previous eras when the construction of smaller homes, and sometimes homes of lower quality, was more typical. The architectural elements of a house can affect its apparent mass, architectural character, and the visual quality of the neighborhood. Every effort should be made, by following these guidelines, to place new structures so that they blend with those existing nearby and to achieve a higher quality of design and construction. Elements of design explored further in this section include: (1) building mass, shape, and scale; (2) architectural styles and facades; (3) roof design; and (4) exterior materials and colors.

### 1. Building Mass, Shape and Scale

The apparent mass of a building is determined by the actual size of the building, and whether or not the building shapes and facades are simple or broken into more varied forms. With regard to actual size, new homes and additions must meet the building floor area standard set by the Zoning Regulations. However, even a home that complies with this standard may appear massive or bulky, if the building shape and/or facade is too simple. Simple forms often appear more massive and larger, while houses with more variety in their forms appear less massive and often more interesting. Likewise, long, blank walls appear more massive than walls with spaces and corners that create shadows and architectural interest. Finally, a house should appear to be proportional, or in "scale," with other buildings in the neighborhood. The following standards encourage building designs that reduce apparent mass and increase compatibility with the neighborhood.

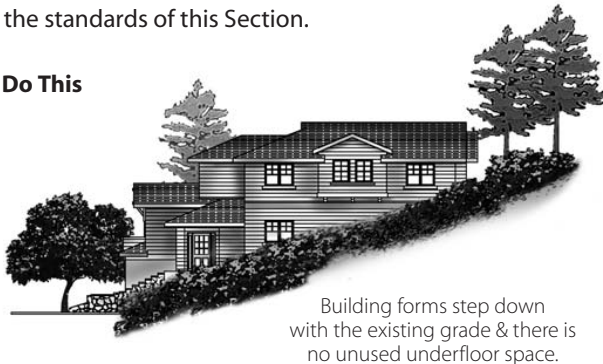
#### a. Relationship to Existing Topography

Discussion:

Many existing lots in the MidCoast are on steep slopes, and in many cases, the topography of a site is its key natural characteristic. New homes and major additions should be designed so that the structure will follow the existing contours of the land. A building's appearance of bulk can be reduced by shaping the building forms so that they harmonize rather than contrast with the existing topography.

While projects proposing the use of either manufactured homes or stock building plans are not prohibited, such projects may encounter difficulty in conforming to the existing topography and to other design standards. Applicants for such projects should be prepared to consider design changes when necessary to comply with the standards of this Section.

#### Do This

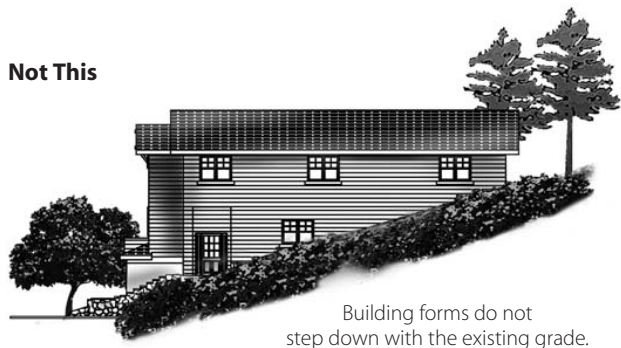


#### Standards:

To the extent feasible, structures shall:

- (1) Conform to the existing topography of the site by requiring the portion of the house above the existing grade to step up or down the hillside in the same direction as the existing grade.
- (2) On downslope lots, minimize unused, enclosed space between the lowest floor and the grade below. When planning additions, consider converting existing under floor space to living area, rather than adding an additional story.
- (3) Minimize building extensions out over a slope supported on high stilts.

#### Not This



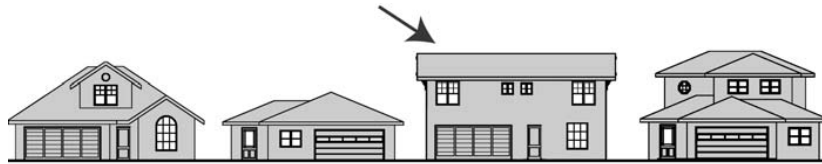
## b. Neighborhood Scale

Discussion:

“Scale” refers to a relative level or degree, or a proportion or relationship between two things. Neighborhood scale refers to the appearance of a home in relation to other homes in the neighborhood; is it properly related in size, height or other characteristics (shape, level of detail or articulation, etc.) to other homes in the neighborhood? Or is it out of proportion to other homes? As mentioned previously, whether or not a house appears proportional to adjacent homes is determined by the size and height of the house and whether or not the building shapes and facades are simple or broken into more varied forms. For example, large homes generally look less massive if they have more varied, rather than simple building forms. As such, even homes of different sizes can be in scale with one another if they share other architectural characteristics including building shape, simplicity or complexity of building form, and architectural styles and details. Where adjacent homes are not built to conform to these Design Standards (e.g., they have little articulation and appear out of proportion, boxy or massive), project designers are encouraged to avoid repeating such mistakes in an effort to be in scale with the neighborhood.

### Standards:

- (1) New and enlarged homes should respect the scale of the neighborhood through building dimensions, shape and form, façade articulation, or architectural details that appear proportional and complementary to other homes in the neighborhood.
- (2) On relatively level lots, avoid designs that incorporate more than two useable floors, excluding basements, within the maximum height limit, since this contributes to a massive or boxy appearance for the home and makes it more difficult to be in scale with surrounding one and two story homes. Multiple stories are allowed on sloping lots where it is necessary to ensure that the home steps up or down with the slope.



This house appears out of scale because its form is too simple.



The revised design became compatible with its neighbors by stepping back the second story and providing variation in the roof and building forms.

### c. Second Stories

Most homes built today are two-story homes, and a common way to increase the size of existing homes is to add a second story. This presents a challenge, when the parcel being built on is surrounded primarily by one-story homes, or where a new two-story home or second-story addition has the potential to impact the privacy and views of existing homes. The following sections describe how two-story homes and second-story additions can be designed to be compatible with, and have minimal impact on, existing homes.

#### (1) Second-Story Location

Discussion:

Since a second-story over a portion of a house will visually emphasize that area of the home, placing the second-story over just one portion of the home can make it appear unbalanced. Placing the second story over the entire first story can make the home appear boxy. Locating the second story towards the center of the first story and away from property lines results in a more balanced, less boxy appearance and increases light into neighboring properties.

#### Standards:

- (a) Locate the primary portion of the second stories towards the center of the first story and away from property lines whenever feasible;
- (b) Avoid locating second stories only over the garage.
- (c) One story designs are strongly encouraged in areas where one-story homes are predominant. If a two-story design is chosen, minimize the size of the second story.
- (d) Where new homes or additions are to be located between one and two-story homes, consider split level designs with the two-story portion of the home oriented toward other two-story homes;
- (e) Avoid designs where large areas or lengths of upper-story walls overhang or cantilever out over lower-story walls.



These second stories held toward the center of the property allow greater sunlight into neighboring properties and help protect views and privacy.

#### Do This



This second story addition centered over the lower floor away from property lines appears less boxy.

#### Not This



This second story appears more boxy.

#### Not This



This second story located only over the garage appears out of balance..

## (2) Lowering the Eave Line

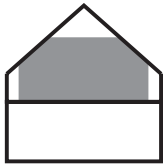
Discussion:

One way to make a two story home more compatible with its single-story neighbors is to lower the eave line of the second-story roof. Lowering the eave line also ties the two stories of a house together. Setting second-stories back into the area of rooflines is often a solution for meeting Daylight Plane requirements, and it generally will lower the apparent height of the home. Lowering the eave line of the second story roof can also reduce the apparent building mass, which may result in the scale of the building being more compatible with its neighborhood.

### Standard:

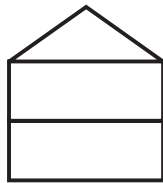
Consider bringing some portions of the roof down to the gutter or eave line of the first-story roof to reduce the apparent mass of the building.

**Do This**



Second floor rooms in attic space allows roof line to be lowered with minimal reduction in floor area.

**Not This**



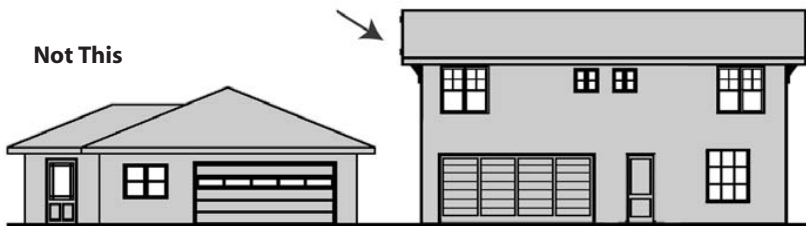
Full height second story results in tall walls and a more massive appearance to the home.

**Do This**



Second floor stepped back from property line and held within the roof line of the main portion of the home.

**Not This**



Avoid creating tall two-story exterior walls that are less compatible with single-story neighbors.

### d. Daylight Plane/Facade Articulation

**Discussion:**

The Daylight Plane/Facade Articulation requirements contained in the County Zoning Regulations are included below as a starting point for designing a two story home or a second story addition. For more detail regarding facade articulation, please refer to Section 2, Architectural Styles and Facades.

**Standards:**

New residential development shall conform to either the daylight plane or facade articulation options described in this section, as determined by the project applicant.

**(1) Daylight Plane Option** - The daylight plane shall be established on two opposite house sides, i.e. either from the front and rear setback lines, or from the side setback lines, as determined by the project applicant and approved by the Design Review Committee.

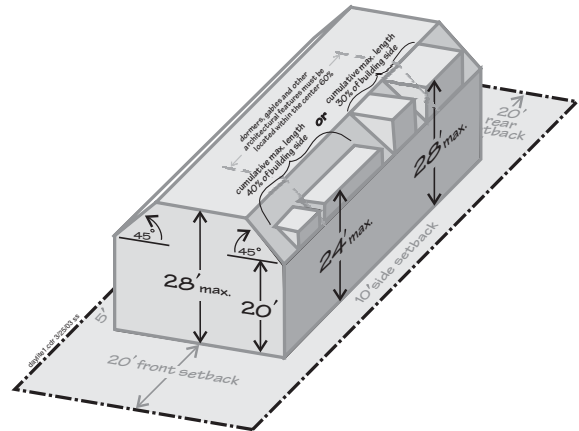
The daylight plane shall be measured from the setback line at existing grade, upward a vertical distance of 20 feet, and then inward at an angle of 45 degrees until the maximum building height is reached.

Cornices, canopies, eaves, roof overhangs, chimneys, fire escapes, stairways; landing places; uncovered porches, and similar architectural features may extend into the daylight plane at the front, side, or rear yard, to the extent allowed by Zoning Regulations Section 6406.

Chimneys, pipes, mechanical equipment, antennae, and similar equipment may extend into the daylight plane up to a maximum of 36 feet as required for safety or efficient operation.

Dormers, gables and other architectural features located in the center 60% of the house may extend into the angled portion of the daylight plane, subject to Design Review Committee approval, provided that:

- (a) The combined length on any building side does not exceed 40% of the length of that building side, and the height of such features does not exceed 24 feet.
- (b) The combined length on any building side does not exceed 30% of the length of that building side, and the height of such features does not exceed 28 feet.



**(2) Facade Articulation Option** - Facade articulation shall be provided on all building sides, and is subject to approval by the Design Review Committee. Facade articulation is intended to break up the appearance of shear walls through the placement of projecting or recessing architectural details, including decks, bays, windows, balconies, porches, overhangs, and cantilevered features.

In order to approve proposed facade articulation, the Design Review Committee must find that: (a) all building facades are well articulated and proportioned, and (b) each building wall is broken up so as not to appear shear, blank, looming or massive to neighboring properties.

### e. Wall Articulation

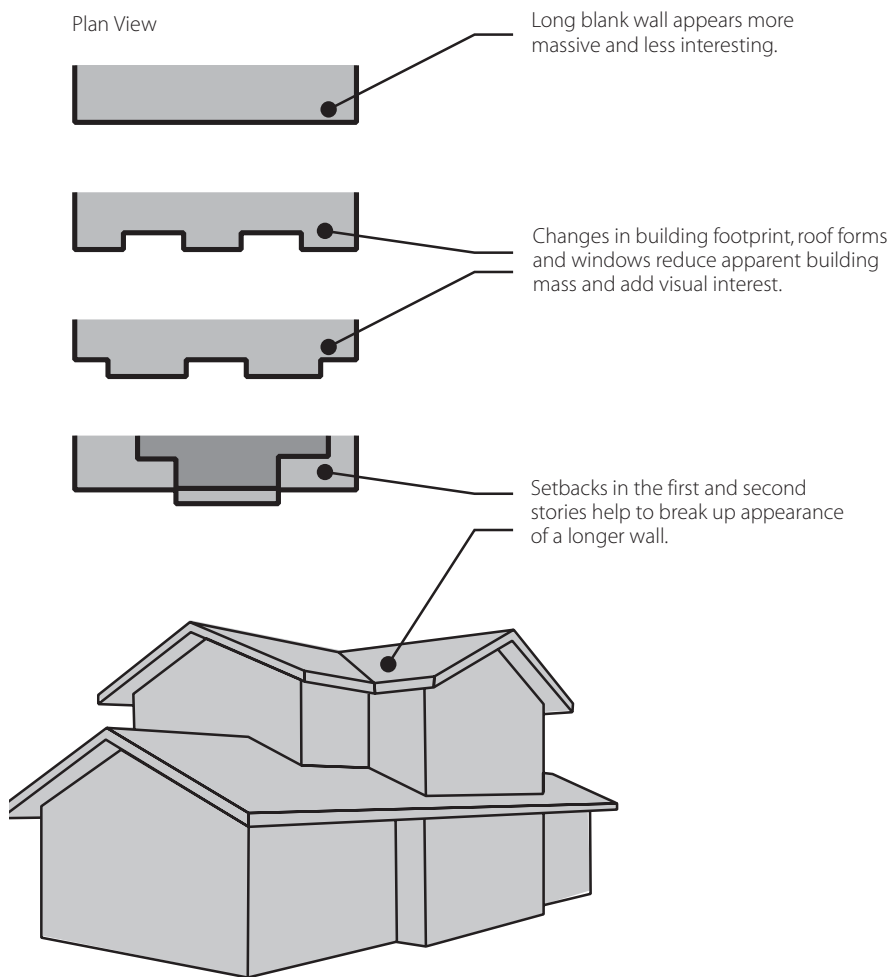
Discussion:

Building wall gaps that articulate the walls of the house create shadows and contribute to the architectural character of the home. These changes to the form of a building can have a great affect on the apparent building mass. Longer flat walls generally appear more massive and less interesting. Adding steps and breaks to long or tall walls will reduce apparent mass and add visual interest. Likewise, changes in building materials or colors and appropriate architectural details can help break up long or tall walls and keep a house from appearing massive or boxy.

**Standards:**

These standards apply in addition to either the Daylight Plane or Façade Articulation Options in the preceding section:

- (1) Require at least one step or off-set extending to grade on the long dimension of the house.
- (2) Projecting or recessing architectural details (decks, bays, windows, balconies) and changes in building materials or colors are also encouraged to visually break up building walls.





## 2. Architectural Styles and Features

Many architectural features can affect whether or not a house appears to be compatible with its neighborhood, including building bulk and height, which are discussed in the previous sections. Other important elements in defining compatibility include architectural style and architectural details, such as window, door, and garage patterns and types.

### a. Architectural Style

Discussion:

When designing a new home or an addition, architectural style should be evaluated by considering what building elements define the architectural style of the house (e.g., building shape, roof design, exterior materials, window size and type, etc.), what defining elements are common to other houses in the neighborhood, and what elements characterize the natural setting (e.g., vegetation, landforms, etc.).

There are many different architectural styles present throughout the MidCoast communities. In some neighborhoods the architectural style is more defined than in others and on some houses it is more apparent than on others. Designing a home and choosing a style that is complementary to adjacent homes can be challenging when the homes are of many different styles, have no defined architectural style or do not conform to these Design Standards (e.g., they have architectural details that are inconsistent, out of proportion, or inappropriate for the style). In that case, a project designer should strive for a style that at least is not jarring or disruptive in appearance when compared to adjacent homes, and foster compatibility through other elements of design such as similar building shapes, exterior materials or colors, window/door styles, and roof massing and design. While no particular architectural style is prohibited, a style that reflects the Midcoast's coastal, semi-rural, diverse, small town character (e.g., coastal craftsman) will more readily be found to be complementary to the neighborhood. Finally, consideration should also be given to the natural setting, and a complementary style chosen depending on whether the site is, for example, steeply sloped, heavily wooded, or more open in character.

#### Standards:

- (1) Use an architectural style and design elements that complement the predominant style of nearby homes, only when such homes conform with the Design Standards. Likewise, avoid the architectural styles and design elements of nearby homes when such homes do not conform with the Design Standards. Where no predominant architectural style can be defined, encourage compatibility through the use of similar building shapes, exterior materials or colors or architectural features such as roofs, windows/doors, etc.
- (2) Architectural styles that complement the coastal, semi-rural, diverse small town character of the area, such as coastal craftsman are encouraged. Contemporary and uncommon styles can be compatible if building shapes and materials are carefully chosen to complement other homes in the neighborhood.
- (3) Architectural styles that complement the natural setting are encouraged.

## b. Openings

Discussion:

Windows and doors are often the most visually distinctive features on a house. They are a link between private and public space and can provide a sense of security for both. They also can establish an architectural rhythm and affect the apparent mass of the house. There may be a proportion to the openings - vertical or horizontal - that is common to the house or the neighborhood. Dominant window/door materials or style - such as an arched shape or divided windows - should also be considered.

### Standards:

- (1) Select windows and doors that are compatible with the dominant types on the house and in the neighborhood; when assessing compatibility consider the size and proportions of the openings, materials, and style or detailing.
- (2) When designing and placing windows and doors, consider their location, size and proportions and how they may relate to adjacent buildings; walls broken by proportioned patterns of windows are encouraged where neighbor's privacy can be protected.

### Do This



Style and materials of new second story windows match and appear compatible with the original first-story of the house.

### Not This



These new second story windows are of different shape and proportions and material (metal vs. original wood) than the original first-story and do not appear compatible.

### c. Entries

Discussion:

Front walkways, front doors and windows, and front porches that face the street make for safer neighborhoods by keeping “eyes on the street” and create a human-scaled appearance to a building. The design and prominence of entries in the neighborhood should also be considered.

#### Standards:

- (1) Front Doors – Design front entries on a scale compatible with the other features of the house to maintain a residential rather than institutional or commercial appearance.
- (2) Front Porches - Where front porches are a part of the neighborhood pattern, a new house or new entry should consider including this feature similar in size and proportion to the other homes in the neighborhood.

#### Do This



Scale of entry is compatible with other features of the house.

#### Not This



Entry is out of scale and has a commercial appearance.

## d. Garages

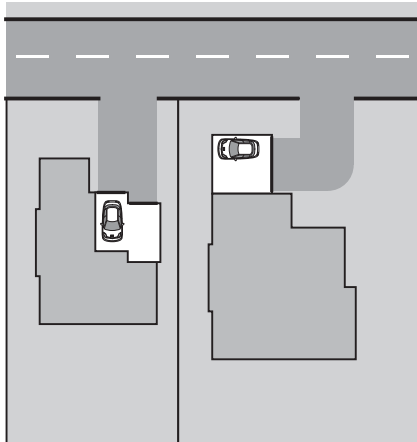
### Discussion:

The location, size, position and appearance of a garage can have a great effect on the appearance of a home and should be designed with care. While in most cases it is preferable to emphasize the front entrance of a home, rather than the garage, a prominent garage may be unavoidable, particularly on steeply sloping lots. In some neighborhoods, there may be an established pattern in the size, position or appearance of garages. Examples of patterns that meet the Design Standards are garages with single rather than double garage doors, or garages facing away from or set back from the street. If there is no established pattern, greater flexibility in design and appearance of garages should be considered.

### Standards:

- (1) Avoid making the garage the dominant feature as seen from the street. Where it is unavoidable, for example on steeply sloping lots, pay special attention to garage appearance by choosing decorative doors (or two single rather than one large double door) that are consistent with the style of the house, and by articulation of the front garage facade.
- (2) Respect the existing pattern in the size, position or appearance of the garages in the neighborhood, providing that pattern conforms with the Design Standards.

Plan View



Garages appear less prominent when facing away from or set back from the street.



When a prominent garage is unavoidable, choose decorative garage doors that are consistent with the home's architectural style.

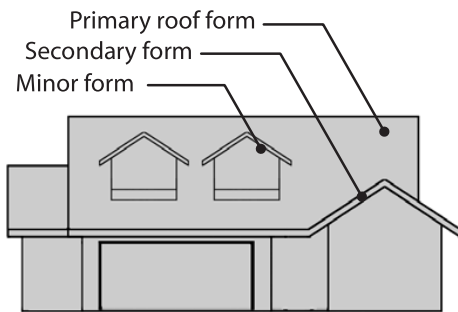
### 3. Roof Design

Roof shape and type can be the most obvious elements in defining the appearance of a house and a neighborhood. When designing a new home or an addition, it is important to consider the massing of roof forms and neighborhood roof patterns and compatibility.

#### a. Massing and Design of Roof Forms

Discussion:

The mass of a roof and how it is articulated into different shapes contributes to the character of a house. Most houses with sloped roofs, and many with flat roofs, have a primary roof form and smaller secondary and minor forms that contribute to the overall style of the house. Evaluate the massing of the roof form and determine how it will benefit the appearance of the house and be compatible with the neighborhood.



#### Standards:

- (1) When planning a new home or second story addition, begin with a primary roof form. Consider additions to the primary roof such as secondary roof forms and dormers that may serve to reduce the home's apparent mass and scale, provide visual interest and have an appropriate number of roof forms. Additional roof forms shall be architecturally compatible with the primary roof form's slope and material.
- (2) Pitched roofs are encouraged; flat roof designs may be acceptable if the height does not exceed 22 feet from existing grade for the flat roof portion, the flat roof portion does not exceed 20% of the total roof area, and it is compatible with neighboring homes.
- (3) Non-reflective roof materials and colors are encouraged. Solar panels are acceptable in appropriate locations where they will blend with the rest of the roof.

## b. Design Compatibility

### Discussion:

Some neighborhoods have roof patterns that are distinctive and repeatable from home to home. Other neighborhoods have greater variety or less distinctive roof forms, and greater deviations from neighboring roof forms could appear acceptable. Roof patterns are created through the roof slope, materials and massing of roofs. Evaluate the pattern of roofs in the neighborhood.

### Standard:

If there is an established architectural style of roofs in a neighborhood, roof shape and types should be compatible with roofs in the neighborhood and with the existing home. Express this compatibility through roof forms, slope, materials and massing. Applicants may also consider alternate roof forms that improve the architectural quality of the house where the design enhances the character of the neighborhood.



These two story houses all display roof forms compatible with their architectural style and compatible with neighboring roof forms.

## 4. Exterior Materials and Colors

Discussion:

Exterior materials and colors should complement the style of the house and that of the neighborhood, and blend with surrounding natural features when viewed from a distance. These standards are not intended to interfere with individual initiative, but rather to encourage compatibility within neighborhoods and with the natural setting. When selecting materials and colors, consider the type and character of materials and colors, number of different materials and colors, the quality of materials, and how ornamentation is applied. While no building material or color is prohibited as a matter of policy, as with other design elements, the neighborhood context provides direction for the choice of materials and colors. Use of complementary materials and colors will help a house appear compatible with its neighbors and blend with its natural setting including surrounding vegetation and landforms. Darker rather than lighter exterior colors may be used to reduce the apparent mass of a home.



The exterior materials and appropriate ornamentation of these houses complement the natural setting.



### Standards:

#### a. Compatibility

- (1) Use non-reflective exterior materials and colors that complement and improve the neighborhood and are compatible with the architecture of the house.
- (2) Consider the exterior materials and colors used on neighboring houses; strive for complementary materials and colors on new and remodeled homes; avoid the use of materials and colors that are too similar, repetitive, or clashing.
- (3) Use warm, muted colors and natural appearing materials on the house that blend with the surrounding natural features when viewed from a distance. While earthtone colors are encouraged, along with darker colors used to reduce apparent mass, other colors may be appropriate based on the architecture, neighborhood and surrounding natural features.

- #### b. Quality - Use exterior materials and colors that are of a similar or better quality of those used in the neighborhood and are consistent with the architecture of the house; avoid T-111 siding unless necessary for additions to match the existing house.

#### c. Quantity

- (1) Use a number of exterior materials and colors that is consistent with the neighborhood and the architectural style of the house.
- (2) Encourage the use of 3 or more colors on larger houses to reduce the appearance of bulk by emphasizing architectural features and trim.
- (3) Discourage the use of a single exterior material or color in a large unbroken surface.

- #### d. Ornamentation - Use ornamentation or architectural details to reduce the appearance of bulk on larger homes. Apply ornamentation in a manner consistent with the style and size of the house; avoid using ornamentation in a manner that will make the house appear too plain or overly decorated.

## Additional Site Planning and Design Considerations (6565.20(E))

### Standards:

1. Multiple contiguous or nearby projects developed concurrently by one owner, applicant, developer, or builder shall:
  - a. Avoid similar or the same, but reversed, building elevations and/or floor plans located directly across the street from each other or on adjacent parcels.
  - b. Vary in structure placement enough to avoid a “tract home” appearance.
  - c. Vary in design style, exterior detail, roof lines, finish materials, and landscaping enough to avoid overly repetitive appearance;
2. To the extent feasible, structures should be located and designed to minimize the blockage of sunlight on neighboring buildings (see further discussion under “Second Stories”). Siting and design for energy conservation/generation purposes is encouraged.



Vary the design of contiguous projects to avoid a repetitive appearance.



Avoid creating mirror-image or duplicate homes on adjoining parcels.



## Landscaping, Paved Areas, Fences, Lighting and Noise (6565.20(F))

While the appearance of new residential structures is of primary importance, ancillary development on a residential site can also have a significant visual impact, and should be designed carefully to complement a new or remodeled home and to prevent adverse impacts to neighboring properties. The following section provides guidance and standards for landscaping, paved areas, fencing, lighting and noise.

### 1. Landscaping

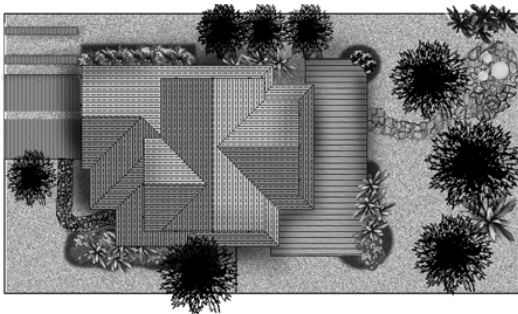
Discussion:

Landscaping should complement and enhance the design of the home, while harmonizing with the overall landscape character of the neighborhood. New landscaping should also harmonize with existing trees and vegetation remaining on site. Landscaping should not be used in place of other more permanent architectural solutions, but should be used to accent or enhance architectural features. When developing a landscape plan, consideration should be given to water availability and the function of the landscaping - to provide shade or screening, or to protect privacy - and location and species should be selected accordingly. While no plant species is prohibited by policy, native and drought tolerant species are preferred. For more detailed landscape plan requirements and specifications, please see the County's [Minimum Standards for Landscape Plans](#).

#### Standards:

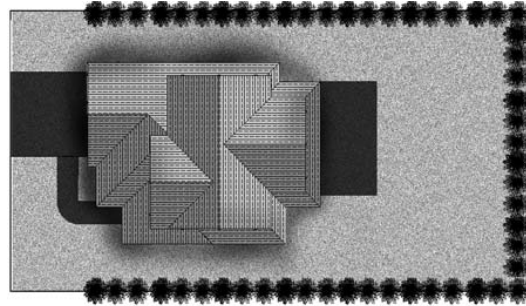
- a. Require a landscape plan prepared according to the County's Minimum Standards for Landscape Plans.
- b. Finished landscape plans should be compatible with and enhance the design of the home and the trees and vegetation remaining on the site and in the surrounding neighborhood after construction.
- c. Tree removal and replacement shall be in accordance with Section 6565.21, Standards for the Protection of Trees and Vegetation. Replacement trees and new trees shall be from the list specifying recommended/discouraged species for the MidCoast, adopted by the Board of Supervisors. Native and drought tolerant species are encouraged.
- d. Finished landscape plans shall include provisions for watering plants as needed to ensure initial plant growth. Different watering systems including low cost, low technology systems may be appropriate depending on the plants chosen. Drip irrigation systems are encouraged where appropriate.
- e. Landscaping along retaining walls is encouraged using planted areas along the bottom and top of the walls to reduce their apparent height and blend with their natural surroundings.

#### Do This



New landscaping harmonizes with existing trees and natural character of the neighborhood.

#### Not This



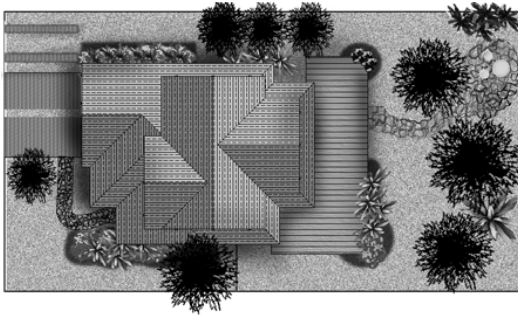
Landscaping does not present a natural appearance.

## 2. Paved Areas

### Discussion:

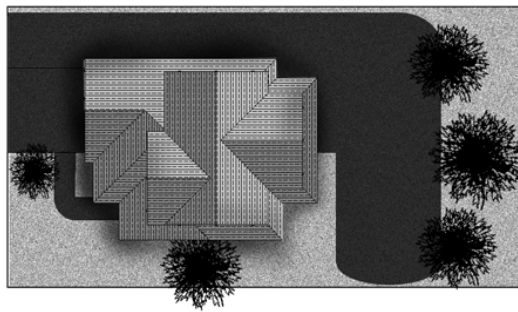
Environmentally sensitive planning and design of paved or hardscape areas on site will produce a more natural appearance and prevent storm water pollution by reducing the volume of surface run-off, increasing infiltration, and preventing pollutants from entering the creeks and ocean. Please refer to the County's Stormwater Pollution Prevention program publications, available at the Planning Counter, for further information and innovative ideas on this topic.

### Do This



Amount of hardscape and size of driveways, walkways and parking areas minimized; alternatives to asphalt and concrete used.

### Not This



Directly connected impervious surface covers most of lot.

### Standards:

- a. Minimize the hardscape or impervious areas on-site in order to maximize permeable surfaces that have a more natural appearance, reduce the volume and improve the quality of run-off into creeks and storm drains;
- b. Maximize the use of surfaces on-site that have a more natural appearance than asphalt or concrete, decrease run-off and maximize absorption; alternative surfaces may include wood decks, special perforated paving systems, unmortared brick, stone or tile.
- c. Driveways, walkways and parking areas on-site should be as small as possible within allowable standards, and should drain into adjacent on-site landscaped areas, where possible;
- d. Minimize directly connected impervious areas on-site by means of landscaping or other permeable surfaces to soften the visual appearance, allow absorption into the soil and reduce run-off.

### 3. Fencing

Discussion:

Site fencing should complement and enhance the design of the home, while harmonizing with the overall character of the neighborhood. Fencing should be considered and designed as an integrated part of the project, not left as an afterthought when the project is completed. Fences and walls shall comply with the height limits specified in Section 6412 of the Zoning Regulations.

**Standard:**

The design of fences, walls and similar site elements shall be compatible with the architecture of the main buildings and should blend with the surrounding neighborhood.



fence designs enhance the homes' architectural style.

## 4. Lighting

### Discussion:

The location and style of exterior and interior lighting chosen for a single-family home can have a significant impact on the home's design. It can also affect adjacent neighbors, or depending on topography, more distant views from scenic corridors. An appropriate lighting plan will complement the home's design and provide adequate light and security for the subject site. At the same time the plan should prevent direct light and glare from extending in any direction, including upward, beyond the boundaries of the site. In general, low level lighting directed toward the ground is preferred.

### Standards:

- a. Choose exterior lighting that is architecturally integrated with the home's design, style, material and colors.
- b. All exterior, landscape and site lighting shall be designed and located so that light and glare are directed away from neighbors and confined to the site. Low-level lighting directed toward the ground is encouraged.
- c. Exterior lighting should be minimized and designed with a specific activity in mind so that outdoor areas will be illuminated no more than is necessary to support the activity designated for that area.
- d. Minimize light and glare as viewed from scenic corridors and other public view corridors.

**Do This**



Low level light is directed toward the ground.

**Not This**



Lighting is high intensity and is not confined to the site.

**Not This**



Light and glare extend in all directions, including up.

## 5. Noise

### Discussion:

Unwanted noise impacting neighboring properties can be avoided through proper placement and design of new homes, residential additions and ancillary equipment. For example, outdoor activity spaces should be located away from neighbor's bedrooms. Ancillary equipment, for example irrigation systems, pool equipment, generators and the like, should be located away from neighbors and be as quiet as possible. Walls, fences, and landscaping can also be used to buffer sound between neighboring properties.

Please note that all land uses shall conform to the County Noise Ordinance, administered by the Environmental Health Division. The Noise Ordinance limits unusually loud, uncommon noise that would disturb the neighborhood peace.

### Standard:

Design new homes, residential additions and ancillary equipment to reduce noise impacts on neighboring properties.

## Utilities and Ancillary Structures (6565.20(G))

Utilities and ancillary structures are a necessary, but often unsightly, component of residential construction. Consideration should be given to minimizing the visual impact of such facilities. Property owners and project designers are encouraged to coordinate building, utility and ancillary structure placement at the start of a project, so that all zoning, environmental health and design standards can be met.

### Standards:

- a. Consistent with General Plan Policy 4.20, install all new service lines underground for the segment extending from the nearest existing distribution point/pole to the new home or addition.
- b. All wells, storage tanks, exterior trash and storage areas, electric and gas meters, fire sprinkler valves, irrigation backflow prevention devices, transformers, and other ancillary structures shall be screened from view in a manner that is compatible with the building and site design. Screening materials shall be substantial and durable.
- c. To the extent feasible, all ancillary structures should be located to the rear or side of the site and/or away from the street.

## Second Units (6565.20(H))

The development of second dwelling units in single-family residential neighborhoods is an efficient and effective way to increase affordable rental housing options. However, it is important that second units be designed and constructed to be compatible with surrounding homes, and so that they do not detract from the single-family character of the area.

### Standards:

The following design standards shall apply in addition to the standards for second dwelling units contained in Chapter 22.5 of the County Zoning Regulations:

- (1) Required parking spaces for second dwelling units shall be in a location that can conveniently be used by occupants of the unit and to avoid a "parking lot" appearance.
- (2) Due to the increased density, second units shall be designed to avoid substantially affecting the privacy of neighboring properties. The privacy standards contained in Section 6565.20(C) shall also apply to second units.

