

# PACIFICA



*Scenic Pacifica*

# DESIGN GUIDELINES

CITY OF PACIFICA  
DESIGN GUIDELINES

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## CITY OF PACIFICA DESIGN GUIDELINES

### PURPOSE OF GUIDELINES

The City of Pacifica has adopted Design Guidelines as one step in a continuing effort to maintain the quality of the City's physical development where desirable attributes exist, and to improve the quality of development where such attributes are lacking. While some of these guidelines are general, others have been designed to respond to specific recurring problems that are peculiar to a coastal community like Pacifica.

The guidelines will be used by the Planning Commission and planning staff when reviewing and evaluating the design of all new development and additions to existing development in the City.

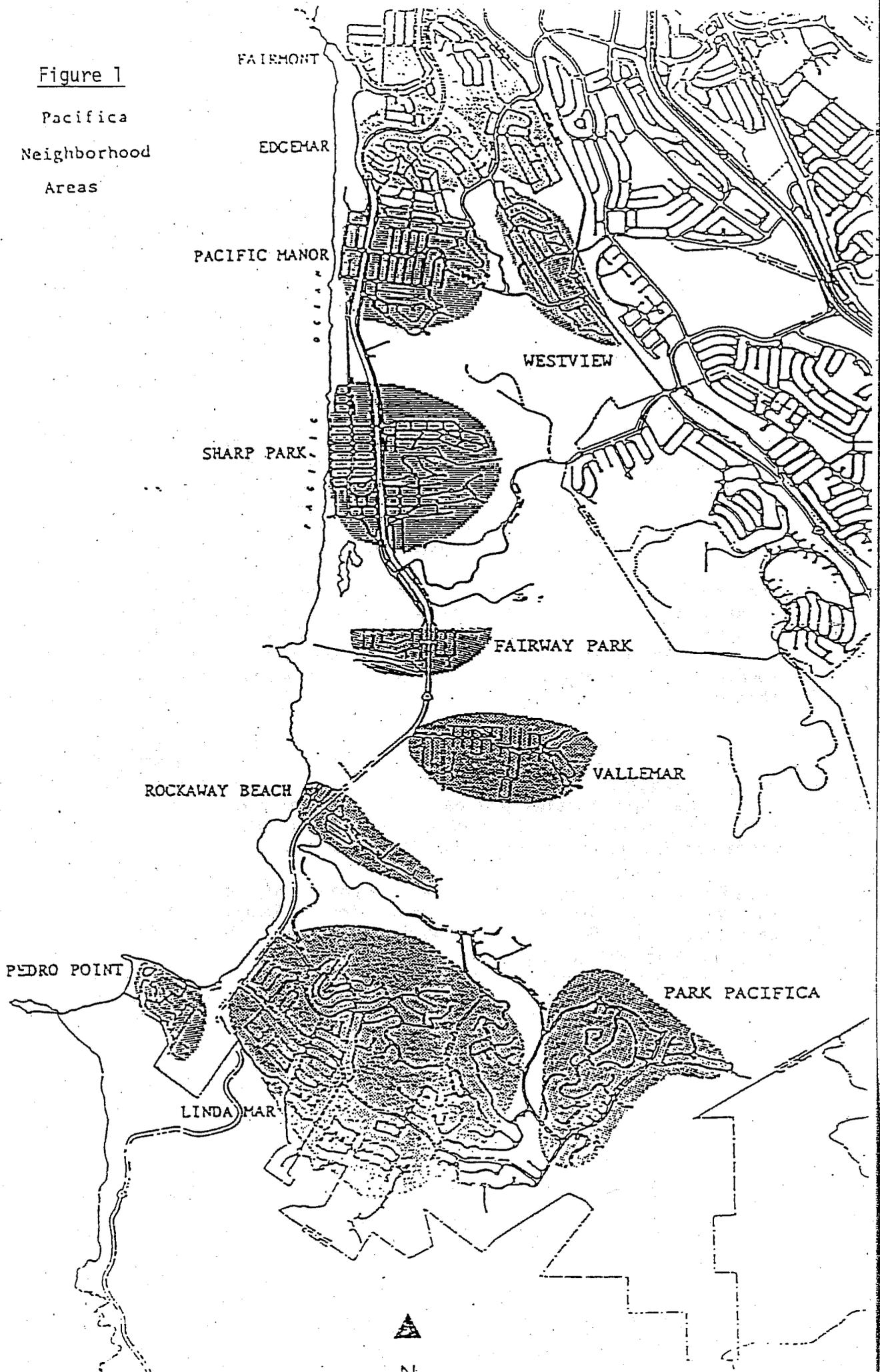
These guidelines are intended to:

- ensure at least a minimum standard of design through the application of consistent policies.
- encourage new construction which exceeds minimum standards and discourage construction which falls short of those standards.
- provide a framework for review and evaluation of design proposals.
- implement applicable General Plan and Local Coastal Plan goals and policies.
- expedite and facilitate the planning permit process.
- provide direction for design and redesign of projects.

These guidelines are not intended to solve design problems for an applicant or serve as a substitute for professional design advice. The guidelines are concerned only with the design aspects of a development proposal. Technical issues such as General Plan inconsistencies, zoning problems, variances, building code standards, etc., are not addressed in the guidelines. Questions on subjects not covered by these guidelines should be referred to City staff.

Figure 1

Pacifica  
Neighborhood  
Areas



It should be noted that the requirements of other City departments, such as Parks, Beaches and Recreation, Community Development and Services, and the Department of Public Safety, may have an impact on the design of projects. Applicants should become aware of possible additional requirements early in the design process.

The guidelines are not meant to discourage innovative design solutions, but design shall be consistent with these guidelines to the maximum extent feasible, creating a project which is a positive addition to the physical fabric of Pacifica.

## HISTORICAL INTRODUCTION

Pacifica is a coastal city which has been incorporated from distinct coastal communities. These neighborhoods are clearly defined from the topographical features of the Coastal Range, the Pacific Ocean, and the series of transverse ridges and corresponding valleys. The City is bisected by California Highway 1 and is close to both the City of San Francisco and the San Francisco International Airport.

The formation of the urban community now known as Pacifica dates from construction of the Ocean Shore Railroad in 1905. The railroad resulted in the subdivision of Edgemar, Vallemar, and the areas now known as Sharp Park, Pedro Point, and Rockaway Beach. These early subdivisions created many of the substandard lots which exist throughout the City today.

A boom of coastal cottages occurred in the twenties and thirties. The cottages were small, one story, modest bungalows, often with detached one-car garages. Many of these cottages still exist in the Sharp Park area. The late forties and early fifties saw the arrival of several tract home builders. This development is typified by the homes in Linda Mar Valley and south of the Sharp Park Golf Course.

In 1957, the City of Pacifica was incorporated, making one political entity out of nine separate communities: Edgemar, Pacific Manor, Westview, Sharp Park, Fairway Park, Vallemar, Rockaway Beach, Linda Mar and Pedro Point. The Fairmont area in the north end of the City was subsequently developed with higher density housing projects and a major shopping center; and the Park Pacifica development was completed in the seventies. Figure 1 shows the location of the eleven communities which make up the City of Pacifica.

## I. GENERAL GUIDELINES

### A. Site Planning

1. Site Improvements. Locate site improvements such as buildings, parking areas, and walkways to take advantage of desirable site features. For example, existing healthy trees and distinctive berms or rock outcroppings should be incorporated into site design. Buildings should be oriented to capitalize on views of hills and ocean.

Site improvements should be designed to work with site features, not against them. Lot grading should be minimized and disruption of natural features such as trees, ground forms, rocks, and water courses should be avoided.

2. Building Location. Buildings should be sited to consider shadows, changing climatic conditions, the potential for passive or active solar energy, safety, and privacy of adjacent outdoor spaces.

Building placement should take into account potential impacts on adjacent property. Existing views, privacy, and solar access of surrounding properties should be preserved wherever possible. (See Section II A, Hillside Development.)

In multi-unit developments, buildings should be located so as to avoid crowding and to allow for a functional use of the space between buildings.

3. Lighting. Exterior lighting should be subdued, and should enhance building design as well as provide for safety and security. Lighting which creates glare for occupants or neighbors should not be used. In general, large areas should be illuminated with a few low shielded fixtures. Tall fixtures which illuminate large areas should be avoided.
4. Screening. Exterior trash and storage areas, service yards, landing docks and ramps, electrical utility boxes, etc., should be screened from view of all nearby streets and adjacent structures in a manner that is compatible with building and site design. Such facilities should be conveniently located, but must not interfere with circulation or parking on the site.
5. Parking. The visual impact of parking areas should be minimized when appropriate to the site by locating parking areas to the rear or side of the property, rather than along street frontages. Ample landscaping should be used to help screen parking areas from both exterior and interior views.

6. Security. Consideration should be given to security and safety concerns in the location and design of parking areas.
7. Phasing. In projects which feature phased construction, each phase of the design should be completed in its functional, traffic, visual, drainage, and landscaping aspects to the maximum extent possible.
8. Grading. Where significant amounts of grading are required, contours should be graded to blend with those of adjacent properties. Contours should be rounded on both cut and fill slopes, horizontally and vertically.

## B. Building Design

1. Design. The style and design of new buildings should be in character with that of the surrounding neighborhood. This does not mean that new buildings should be identical to existing buildings on neighboring lots, but that new buildings should complement, enhance, and reinforce the positive characteristics of surrounding development. This can be accomplished by incorporating the dominant architectural features of an area into the design of new development. Such features may include bay windows, chimneys, balconies, porches, roof shapes, and other architectural details and materials.

Additions to an existing structure should also retain and/or be consistent with the positive architectural features of the original structure.

2. Scale. An important aspect of design compatibility is scale. Scale is the measure of the relationship of the relative overall size of one structure with one or more other structures. Scale is also used to refer to a group of buildings, a neighborhood, or an entire city. A development can be "out of scale" with its surroundings due to its relative height, bulk, mass, or density.

A structure which is out of scale with its site and neighborhood threatens the integrity of the overall streetscape, and residential projects, particularly single-family dwellings, which are much larger than neighboring structures are therefore discouraged. The City's height limitation is a maximum only, and the maximum height may often be inappropriate when considered in the context of surrounding development and topography. The "carrying capacity" of a given site is also an important factor in determining appropriate scale and lot coverage. As with the height limitation, the City's lot coverage limitation is a maximum only.

3. Details. Use architectural features and details to help create a sense of human scale. Wall insets, balconies,

window projections, etc., are examples of building elements which may help reduce the scale of larger buildings.

4. Materials. Compatibility of materials is an essential ingredient in design quality. In areas with either historic or architecturally significant structures, the use of similar exterior construction materials should be used in new construction in order to maintain neighborhood character. Consistency and congruity of materials and design elements on individual structures is also important.
5. Color. Building color should be compatible with the neighborhood and should reinforce and complement the visual character of the building's environment. Multiple colors applied to a single building should relate to changes of material or form.
6. Privacy. Consideration should be given to the impact of development on the privacy of surrounding properties. Use judicious window placement and appropriate landscaping to help minimize the potential for loss of privacy.
7. Screening. All exposed mechanical and electrical equipment must be screened from public view. The design of such screening should be an integral part of the building design.
8. Consistency. There should be architectural consistency among all building elevations. All elevations need not be identical, but a sense of overall design continuity must occur. Window treatment and trim, for example, should be carried out around the entire building, not just on the most visible sides.
9. Supports. Structures should be designed to avoid use of exposed guy wires, struts, braces, etc.

#### C. Landscaping

Landscaping is an important aspect of site design and as such, requires as much care and consideration as other site improvements. Landscaping is more than just an arrangement of plant materials with irrigation. It can help to define spatial organization, provide privacy, contribute to energy conservation, and create atmosphere. However, consideration should be given to security and safety in the choice and placement of landscaping. A landscape architect should be consulted as necessary.

The climate of Pacifica is typical of a coastal community in Northern California. There is some fog year round, but the heaviest concentration is during the summer months. The temperature is mild all year round, and the rainfall occurs during the winter months. Fog, wind, salt air, and sandy soils are important climate factors to be designed for in both architectural and landscape solutions. The following guidelines

are provided to help increase the effectiveness of landscape design.

1. Purpose. Landscaping should not be used to screen or hide an otherwise unacceptable building. Building architecture should stand on its own, with landscaping incorporated as an integral element of overall project design.
2. Amount and Variety. Applicants are encouraged to exceed the minimum amount of landscaping required by the Zoning Ordinance and landscape plans should incorporate a variety of plant species. The amount, scale, and nature of landscape materials should be appropriate to the site and/or structure. Large-scale buildings should be complemented by large-scale landscaping. Development along major streets should also include large-scale trees.
3. Size. Landscaping should be sized so that a mature appearance will be attained within a reasonable time after planting, depending on species and usage. Five gallon sizes for shrubs and 5 to 15 gallon sizes for trees, as appropriate, are considered minimum container sizes. Larger projects may be required to have larger sizes.
4. Staking. Because of climatic conditions, all 15 gallon trees should be double staked; for 24" and above box specimens, trees should be triple wired.
5. Grouping. Tree and shrub planting should be grouped together, unless circumstances dictate otherwise, in order to create strong accent points. Formal, linear designs should generally be avoided.
6. Parking Areas. All parking areas should be landscaped with fast-growing trees and/or shrubs in order to screen vehicles from view and minimize the visual impact of expansive areas of asphalt. Such landscaping should not obscure views necessary for traffic safety.
7. Existing Landscape Elements. Where possible, existing landscape elements, such as native and heritage trees, should be retained and incorporated into landscape plans. The City of Pacifica defines a heritage tree as a tree, excluding Eucalyptus, which has a trunk with a circumference of fifty (50") inches (approximately 16 inches in diameter) or more, measured at 24 inches above the natural grade. Removal of heritage trees requires a permit from the City. Mature trees and tree groupings, as well as rock outcroppings should be considered design determinants.
8. Screening. Dense landscaping should be used to screen unattractive features such as storage areas, trash enclosures, transformers and generators, vacuum breakers,

and elements which do not contribute to the visual enhancement of the surroundings.

9. Street Trees. Street trees should be planted in accordance with City standards. (See Engineering Standards Nos. 113 and 114).
10. Guarantees. A bond may be required to ensure installation and maintenance of landscaping.

D. Water Conservation Policy and Landscape Design Guidelines for New Development

In an effort to conserve water, the City of Pacifica has adopted these policies and guidelines for all new development in the City of Pacifica with the exception of single-family residential projects which have no common landscaped area. The City Council intends that these measures are to be used by developers in designing landscaping for new developments and for the City Planning Division to use in reviewing applications for new developments. Exceptions from these policies may be granted on a case-by-case basis by the Planning Commission concurrent with discretionary review. The City Council feels that these policies will not increase the cost of landscaping over the life of the project and will not detrimentally affect aesthetic values of developments. There is a wide variety of attractive, low water-using plants available that are suitable for use.

Planning Design

1. The combined turf and water area shall be limited to 25 percent of landscaped areas for landscapes over 1,000 square feet. The limit is intended to allow larger turf grass areas in small backyards typical of townhouse types of residential developments. This will reduce water needs and evaporation losses. If turf is an essential part of development, such as playing fields for schools, a higher percentage may be allowed. Long narrow strips of turf grass, such as traffic medians and between curbs and sidewalks, are prohibited. Groundcover other than turf shall be used on all slopes exceeding 10 percent. Model homes shall demonstrate low water-using plants and a maximum of 25 percent turf area.
2. Plants and turf grass shall be selected which are best suited to the climate of the region and which require minimal water. A small percentage of the planted area (up to five percent) can be used for annual color that are not low water-using plants. Water intensive landscape elements should be confined to areas of high visibility and to areas of high use. There should be specific reason for each plant selection, based on the plant's function in the design. The areas of turf grass and annual color may vary within the total 30 percent allowed.

3. The perimeter-to-area ratio, particularly for turf grass areas, should be minimized. A small perimeter-to-area ratio will minimize water waste.
4. The landscape plan should address functional, energy, environmental and aesthetic conditions specific to the site, as well as water conservation. By differentiating the site into watering zones, water can be used where it is most needed and extravagant use can be avoided in areas where it is little used or appreciated.

### Irrigation

1. All parks, median strips, landscaped public areas, landscaped areas surrounding residential and commercial developments and industrial parks shall have separately metered automatic irrigation systems designed by a landscape architect or other competent person. Soils tests shall be performed as part of the design process.
2. Specifications for the irrigation system shall include a watering schedule with amendments for seasonal changes. Water used for irrigation shall be minimized to the amount needed to maintain adequate plant health and growth.
3. If efficiency of water use is improved, low volume irrigation systems shall be required. This includes low volume sprinkler heads, drip emitters, and bubbler emitters. Low volume sprinklers are defined as "emitting less than 0.75 inches per hour of water". Apply water so that it soaks into the soils and is timed to apply the correct amount of water for each type of plant.
4. The application rate should not exceed .25" per cycle and should not exceed .75" per hour. Avoid runoff by learning the characteristics of the soils and irrigation system and turning the water off before runoff occurs.
5. Install separate valves for turf and non-turf areas and to accommodate different water use requirements within the landscaped area. In many cases, mature plants require only infrequent irrigation. Separation of valves can provide more water to shallow-rooted plants or to those in shallow soils which need more frequent watering and less water to deep-rooted, mature shrubs and trees.
6. Set electric controller to water between 7 p.m. and 10 a.m. Early morning is best for turf grass. Drip irrigation systems can operate at any time. Night time and early morning irrigation will reduce evaporation losses.
7. Sprinkler heads should have matched precipitation rates within each control valve circuit. This will help to avoid overwatering or underwatering.

8. If a system is found to have overspray resulting in water wasted on paved or street areas, then system modifications to prevent overspray will be required.

### Soils

1. Add a layer of mulch (1-inch minimum, 2 inches preferred) on the soil surface. This will reduce evaporation, moderate soil temperatures and discourage weeds.
2. Perform soils tests to determine the type of soil, soil depth and uniformity. Soils vary widely in their water-holding capacity from site to site. Soil type and depth, and the uniformity of the soil profile, will determine how much water should be applied.
3. Incorporate decomposed organic matter or polymer products into the soil. This improves infiltration, water retention and soil structure.

### Decorative Use of Water

1. Water bodies that are part of the landscaping for new developments shall be discouraged. Unless the water body is an integral part of the operations of the new development, such as a recreation area, the surface area of the water body shall be counted as turf in the calculations for limitation of turf for the landscaped area.
2. Fountains or other types of decorative water bodies, where water is sprayed into the air, shall be discouraged.

### Maintenance

1. Proper operation and maintenance of the irrigation system and controls must be provided.
2. Apply fertilizer adequately, but do not over fertilize. Plants are less able to tolerate drought when over fertilized.
3. Abate weeds and discourage their invasion. Weeds compete against other plants for available water.

### Miscellaneous

1. Use inert material as appropriate for landscaping needs. Inert material or pavement over a portion of the site with the remainder in drought tolerant groundcover offers an alternative to unbroken expanses of turf. Inert material or paving may be necessary where continual or heavy traffic occurs.

2. Use of porous paving materials is preferred as this improves the percolation of rainwater into the groundwater table. Wood decking is a very water-conserving landscape treatment. It allows infiltration of rainwater into the soil and groundwater table. Loose aggregate paving, mortarless tile pavers, open drainage channels and gravel or bark paving also will permit infiltration of runoff water into the groundwater table.

## II. SPECIAL PROBLEMS AND SUGGESTED SOLUTIONS

The preceding guidelines have been general in nature and should be applied to all development throughout the City. The following guidelines address specific kinds of development and suggest ways in which many of the problems associated with such development can be mitigated or minimized.

### A. Hillside Development

Hillside design demands special consideration because of the visual and geotechnical impacts which are often associated with such development. The Seismic Safety and Safety Element of the General Plan, the Hillside Preservation District section of the Zoning Ordinance, and Table 4 of the Subdivision Ordinance also contain special requirements for hillside development.

1. Slope Stability and Erosion. Many of the hillside areas show signs of instability through creep and slippage. Drainage and erosion potential are also problems associated with hillside development.
  - (a) Obtain input from a geologist or soils engineer early in the design process. A geotechnical report may be required. (See Administrative Policy Nos. 29 and 34.)
  - (b) Avoid construction near geologically fragile or unstable areas.
  - (c) Use engineering techniques, such as drainage swales and channels, catch basins, and French drains to direct runoff. (See Engineering Standards 300 series.)
  - (d) Use landscaping techniques such as netting, hydroseeding, and selection of plants which have root systems which aid in stabilizing the soil.

2. Excavation. Large amounts of cut and/or fill are unattractive on hillsides, and can have a detrimental impact on the immediate and surrounding environment.
- (a) Structures should relate to and follow site topography to work with the slope, not against it.
  - (b) Whenever feasible, buildings and roads should be sited to align with existing contours of the land.
  - (c) Retaining walls should be avoided or, if necessary, their height should be reduced to the minimum feasible.
  - (d) Avoid one-level solutions which would result in excessive lot coverage and more disruption of the site. Multi-level structures which step down the slope can help to minimize cut and fill.
3. Visual Impact. Development on hillsides and ridges is often visible to neighbors and other residents in the vicinity, as well as those at a distance, such as motorists traveling on Highway 1. Hillside development also has the potential to block or impair established views from existing development.
- (a) Locate development below ridges and hill tops so that ridgelines are left open. Avoid linear arrangements of buildings.
  - (b) Building forms, particularly roof forms, should complement the contours and slopes of the hillside to increase structure and site integration.
  - (c) Buildings should be designed with low profiles. In some cases, low-pitched roofs and hip ends may be desirable.
  - (d) Massive roof overhangs and building cantilevers on downhill faces should be avoided where site conditions allow. Terracing into the hillside will help reduce the impact of the bulk of the structure. Long pole supports on downhill faces are to be avoided.
  - (e) Multi-level designs which conform to the hillside are encouraged, but careful planning is required to avoid excessive height. Although generally discouraged,

very low pitched or flat roofs may be considered if no other solution is feasible. The horizontal potential of a site should be fully exploited before increasing building height.

- (f) Landscaping should be used as necessary to help soften building appearance. Place larger trees and shrubs at lower levels of a site to screen views from below, while allowing views from buildings above. Locate fast-growing material near blank walls.
- (g) Where feasible, locate new buildings to minimize view blockage from primary viewing areas, (i.e., living and dining rooms, decks) of existing development. As a tool to minimize view blockage, emphasize the quality of the view (i.e., framed view corridors) from new development, instead of the quantity of the view (i.e., sweeping panorama).

4. Access Difficulty. Vehicular access and circulation in hillside development can often be unsafe or dangerous due to excessive slope and lack of adequate sight distance.

- (a) Driveways and access roads should follow the contours of the hillside rather than cut through them.
- (b) Wherever possible, roads and driveways should be designed with less than the maximum slope allowed by City standards. (See Engineering Standard 102A.)
- (c) While safe ingress and egress must be provided, circulation should depend on a minimum number of roadways.
- (d) On-street parking turnouts should be provided where appropriate. (See Engineering Standard 111.)
- (e) Driveway lengths to accommodate a parked vehicle are encouraged.

B. Substandard Lots

A substandard lot is a lot which does not meet the minimum lot area and/or frontage requirements of the zoning district

in which it is located. With a few exceptions, most standard lots will be less than 50 feet in width. Such a lot, which is often smaller than its surrounding neighbors, presents a number of problems to development.

1. Neighborhood Compatibility. Radical changes from an established neighborhood building style may be unacceptable to the residents and may provide a jarring contrast to existing development.
  - (a) The design, style, material, and color of a structure should complement (not imitate) the positive elements of the neighborhood.
  - (b) The existing pattern of street tree planting should be retained.
2. Height. The small area of substandard lots often makes it difficult to provide a reasonably sized house without utilizing two stories, while the existing neighborhood may be predominantly single story.
  - (a) New structures which tower over existing development should be avoided whenever feasible. Single level solutions are encouraged, when possible.
  - (b) Building height may be minimized by reducing floor to ceiling height and reducing roof pitch and span.
  - (c) If a second story is included, attempt to locate the mass of the building so as to limit its perceived height and bulk.
  - (d) Building height should step down to the edges of the building to minimize contrast with neighboring structures.
3. Bulk. The size of a home on a substandard lot may often present a massive appearance which tends to overwhelm existing homes in the immediate neighborhood.
  - (a) Break up the mass of the buildings by combining horizontal and vertical elements which project or are recessed from the basic building shape.
  - (b) Large expanses of one material in a single plane should be avoided.
  - (c) A single, flat surface on the building facade should be avoided.

- (d) It should be recognized that less lot area may mean less building. A substandard lot probably will not be able to support the same size house as a standard size lot. The overall size of the structure, including the number of bedrooms, may need to be reduced.

4. Privacy. The narrow width of a substandard lot and the additional height which sometimes results may reduce the privacy of neighboring homes.

- (a) The placement of windows in relation to neighboring houses should be carefully reviewed. Avoid lining up windows with those of neighbors.
- (b) Raise the window sill height to a level above that which allows a downward view from a seated position.
- (c) Translucent, opaque, or stained glass should be used in windows where appropriate with the design and function of interior spaces.
- (d) Use landscaping effectively to filter and screen views of neighboring property.

5. Garage Doors at Front Elevation. The combination of the two-car garage requirement and the narrowness of the lot may often result in the front elevation being taken up almost entirely by garage doors.

- (a) Garage doors should be de-emphasized and blended with the rest of the building by using the same materials as house siding.
- (b) Fin walls and overhangs should be used to provide shadow relief next to and over the garage doors.

6. Visibility of Entrance. Because the garage takes up much of the front of the house, the front door is often located to the side or rear, and can result in access confusion.

- (a) Where feasible, the entry way should be defined by use of a path, gate, trellis, or other device.
- (b) Illuminated address numerals should be prominently displayed adjacent to the pedestrian entrance or walkway.

7. Parking. On lots with substandard widths, a two-car driveway can almost fill the entire width of the lot, leaving little room for on-street parking and also reducing the opportunity for landscaping the front yard.
  - (a) Curb cuts should be minimized by narrowing the width of the driveway as it approaches the street, thus providing more room for on-street parking, reducing the amount of paved area, and increasing landscaping.
  - (b) For a one-bedroom house, the number of covered off-street parking spaces may be reduced to one (1), provided adequate on-street parking and other conditions allow, and a parking exception is approved by the Planning Commission. (See Article 28, "Off-Street Parking and Loading," of the Zoning Ordinance.)

C. Infill Development

Almost all of the issues and guidelines discussed under Substandard Lots can be applied to infill development as well. However, two issues associated with infill development deserve special emphasis.

1. Neighborhood Compatibility. Established neighborhoods often have strong design characteristics.
  - (a) Consideration should be given to the context of building design. Relate the height, bulk, style, material, and color of a structure to its surroundings. New development should complement the positive aspects of an existing neighborhood.
  - (b) Landscaping should also be chosen with consideration given to existing vegetation in the area. The use of plants which are similar to those of neighboring properties is encouraged.
  - (c) A design which has the potential to negatively impact a neighbor's view, sunlight, and/or privacy, should be avoided.
2. Parking and Traffic. Older neighborhoods will often have substandard street widths and have problems with on-street parking and circulation.

- (a) More off-street parking than required by the Zoning Ordinance should be provided to allow ample space for guest parking.
- (b) Driveway locations and curb cuts should be planned to provide a maximum number of on-street parking spaces.
- (c) Each single-family dwelling should provide a minimum of one on-street parking space.

D. Coastal Development

The coast is a unique environment with physical elements (i.e., geology, vegetation, wildlife, etc.,) strongly influenced by the ocean. This influence must be recognized in the planning of new development and the rehabilitation of existing structures in the coastal area. New development must also respect the public right of physical and visual access to the ocean, and must be consistent with the City's adopted Local Coastal Program Land Use Plan.

1. Views. One of the primary concerns in the Coastal Act is the preservation of ocean views for the public.

- (a) New development within the coastal view shed should not impair views to the sea from public roads, trails, and vista points. This can be achieved by limiting the height of structures to below the sight line, clustering structures to protect view corridors, careful placement of landscaping to shield structures while leaving the view unobstructed, using natural-appearing materials and colors, limiting outdoor lighting, and undergrounding utilities.
- (b) Development should be subordinate to coastal topography. The height and mass of the structures should be limited, and clustering of structures is encouraged in order to achieve development which is unobtrusive and visually compatible with land forms.

2. Access. There are relatively few public accessways to the beach within the City.

- (a) Public access from the nearest public roadway to the shoreline and along the coast should be provided in new development except as otherwise

specified in the City's adopted Local Coastal Program Land Use Plan. New development should plan for such access early in the design process.

3. Vegetation and Landscaping. Existing vegetation in the coastal area is often fragile and has little resistance to human trampling. New landscaping requires special attention because of the limited plant palette of the coastal environment.
  - (a) Trails and beach accesses across native coastal vegetation should be designed to protect the vegetation from trampling and scarring.
  - (b) Vegetation cover on steep slopes should be left undisturbed.
  - (c) Areas remaining undeveloped should be revegetated with native coastal vegetation.
  - (d) Where necessary, new development should incorporate means to prohibit motorized vehicles from areas covered with native coastal vegetation.
4. Weather. The coastal climate can be severe and must be considered in the site planning and design of coastal development. Wind blown sand can compound weather-related problems.
  - (a) Corrosive resistant materials should be used, with good quality roofing. Use of 25-year asphalt shingles is encouraged. Non-protected metals exposed to elements should be avoided. Tight fitting doors and windows are essential. Use of more than the minimum amount of required insulation is encouraged.
  - (b) Entryways should be located away from direct exposure to wind, or should be protected with screening and overhangs.
  - (c) If built-in planters are part of the design, they should be well secured and located above grade to protect against wind and sand.
5. Geotechnical Hazards. The shoreline is subject to erosion, landslides, and other geotechnical problems of varying intensity. To conserve soil and protect people

and property from such hazards, special design considerations are necessary.

- (a) A geotechnical report shall be prepared for all new coastal development on bluff-tops or steep parcels. (See Administrative Policy Nos. 29 and 34.)
- (b) Buildings shall be set back an adequate distance from bluff edges to ensure the safety of the structures during their design life. (See Pacifica General Plan Seismic Safety Element and Geotechnical Standards.)
- (c) Proper drainage controls shall be incorporated into site design to minimize the potential for runoff and erosion.
- (d) Excessive grading should be avoided. Structures should be designed to work with the natural slope of the site.
- (e) Choice of plant materials should give consideration to the need for erosion control and bluff stability.

#### E. Multi-Unit Development.

For the purpose of these guidelines, multi-unit development includes apartment buildings, townhouses, condominiums, and single-family dwelling subdivisions. Multi-unit developments usually result in either very large structures or in numerous smaller structures concentrated on a single site or in one neighborhood. The design of this type of development is therefore crucial because it can have a large and immediate impact on the character of an area.

1. Building Siting and Orientation. The arrangement and orientation of buildings within a multi-unit development has an important impact on the overall design effect in terms of massing and bulk, and also affects privacy and energy consumption.

- (a) Building orientation should be varied to provide usable exterior spaces between structures and to avoid instances where living spaces of one

structure face living spaces of another and reduce privacy.

- (b) Private outdoor space should be located on the southern building exposure to gain the maximum amount of sunlight wherever feasible.
- (c) Buildings should be oriented to maximize southern exposure to window areas to encourage passive solar heating in winter months.
- (d) Buildings should be oriented to create courtyards and open space areas.
- (e) Linear arrangement of buildings should be avoided and setbacks should be varied. This can be accomplished through the staggering of buildings or clustering in groups of varied numbers.

2. Building Design. Variety is a key ingredient in the appearance of multi-unit developments. Developments which feature a series of identical structures are visually monotonous and are not acceptable.

- (a) Building design should incorporate variety in the type of materials, colors, and heights while maintaining a cohesive style.
- (b) Building design should take into account the existing character of a neighborhood and incorporate its positive elements.
- (c) Building height should be varied by including one and two-story units in the development, by using a variety of complementary roof pitches and angles, or by varying grade.
- (d) Avoid locating buildings with similar facades close together.
- (e) In row-type townhouse or single-family dwelling developments, units should be varied in setback and height to provide visual relief.

3. Parking and Circulation. Multi-unit developments can result in a significant traffic increase in a given area, placing an additional burden on the capacity of existing streets to handle

through traffic and on-street parking. Such developments also often require a large number of on-site parking spaces.

- (a) Access should be planned to have the least impact on existing residential streets.
- (b) Requirements of the City's Fire Services Division regarding driveways and turnarounds should be considered early in the design process.
- (c) Parking areas should be screened with fencing, planting, or berming. Planting islands should be provided in parking areas to provide visual relief and shade.
- (d) Parking spaces should be provided as close to their associated units as possible.

4. Landscaping. Because multi-unit developments are larger than other types of development, landscaping requirements are more demanding. Although the "Landscaping" section of these guidelines applies to multi-unit developments, the following guidelines are of particular importance to such developments.

- (a) Landscaping for multi-unit developments should be chosen not only for aesthetic reasons, but also for the functional aspects of providing screening, appropriate shading, and defining recreation areas.
- (b) A variety of plant sizes should be used, including many trees and shrubs more than the minimum size (i.e., 24-inch or 36-inch box trees).
- (c) Landscape maintenance is crucial in large projects, and a bond or similar guarantee may be required to ensure the continued health of landscaping.
- (d) Where appropriate, street trees should be provided.

#### F. Commercial Development

Many of the guidelines contained in the Multi-Unit Development section will also apply to commercial development. The design of commercial structures is of particular importance for visitors, as well as many residents, because the image of the City will be formed

in large part by commercial development. For projects within the Rockaway Beach Redevelopment Area, the "Rockaway Beach Design Manual" should be consulted. For commercial projects elsewhere in the City, the following guidelines will supplement those set forth in preceding sections of these Guidelines.

1. Design. The emphasis of commercial development is often on function, to the detriment of exterior design.
  - (a) As with other types of development, the height, size, proportion, and shape of commercial development should complement the positive aspects of existing structures in the area, rather than overwhelm them.
  - (b) The facade of commercial structures should be enhanced by the use of projections, recesses, and other architectural details which provide relief and variety.
  - (c) The use of awnings or canopies over building entrances and windows is encouraged, where appropriate.
  - (d) A multi-unit commercial development, (i.e. shopping center) should have a unified design theme. Individual store fronts may vary to reflect the business' character, but the overall theme of the development must be respected.
  
2. Parking and Circulation. Section II-E, 3, of these guidelines addresses many of the issues associated with parking and circulation in commercial developments. The following guidelines apply specifically to such developments.
  - (a) Ingress and egress should be safe, but parking and driveway areas should not dominate the appearance of a development. Screening by use of earth mounds, planting, decorative walls and fences, or lowering below street grade should be used to soften the appearance of parking areas.
  - (b) Internal circulation patterns should be well marked to avoid confusion and delay.
  - (c) Motorcycle parking areas are encouraged.
  - (d) A clearly marked area for bicycle parking should be included in each

commercial development. Where feasible, this area should be protected from the elements.

- (e) Circulation within commercial developments should be designed to accommodate the pedestrian. Covered walkways separated from vehicular traffic are encouraged, along with outside sitting and resting areas. Provision should also be made for pedestrian circulation through automobile parking areas with well marked crosswalks.
- (f) On individual free-standing commercial structures, parking should be provided at the side or rear of the building. In such cases, increasing the front building setback to allow for landscaping and ease of pedestrian movement may be appropriate.

3. Signs. Signs are often an afterthought in the design of a site or building, resulting in signs whose design, material, or placement are out of character or clash with building architecture. The following guidelines are offered to ensure that signs are considered early in the design process for new structures and that new signs for existing buildings maintain the integrity of building design. For regulations regarding the size, location, and content of signs, as well as types of signs permitted and prohibited, see Article 29, "Signs," of the Zoning Ordinance.

- (a) All signs should relate to their surroundings in terms of size, height, shape, color, materials, and lighting so that they are complementary to the overall design of the building and site.
- (b) Signs should be unobtrusive and convey their message clearly and legibly. Sign copy should not be cluttered with nonessential information.
- (c) Where internal illumination is used, signs should be designed to illuminate the letters rather than the background.
- (d) Sign illumination should not be unnecessarily bright, and should not cause glare or light intrusion onto other signs or premises. If external illumination is used, the light source should be screened from direct view and should be located so that the light is

directed against the sign and does not shine into adjacent property or blind motorists or pedestrians. Internal illumination should feature low intensity lamps.

- (e) A free-standing sign should only be used for shopping centers or when deemed the most feasible means by which a business may obtain a reasonable degree of identification.
- (f) The height of a free-standing sign should be no higher than necessary for adequate identification and visibility, but in no case should the height of the free-standing sign exceed the height of the principal structure on the site.
- (g) Monument signs are generally preferred over pole signs. The support or base of a free-standing sign should match or complement the materials and colors of the building or buildings with which it is associated. Planting at the base of a free-standing sign is encouraged.
- (h) A designated sign areas should be part of a shopping center's exterior.
- (i) The use of struts, braces, kickbacks, or guy wires to support signing should be avoided. Such support devices may be used if they are not visible or are completely screened from view.
- (j) Signs should never impede pedestrian or vehicular movement or vision.

#### G. Farallon Avenue

The Farallon Avenue neighborhood constitutes a unique area in the City. Initial development of single-family residences along this street has created neighborhood impacts and has focused attention on the need for special consideration addressing building and site design, parking and traffic circulation. The construction of extremely large structures has exacerbated this problem and contributed to an inappropriate massing of structures.

1. Site Design. The orientation of the structure on the site affects parking availability, grading and retaining wall requirements, and landscaping.

- (a) Extensive use of retaining walls should be avoided or, if necessary, their height should be reduced to the minimum feasible. Generally, retaining walls should be incorporated into the structure to reduce the need for and height of exterior walls.
- (b) Narrow tunnel or cave-like areas created by high retaining walls adjacent to the building should be avoided.
- (c) On upslope lots, private usable open space should be created by cantilevering decks over the hillside as opposed to substantial grading out of the terrain.
- (d) Building siting and associated grading should relate to and follow site topography to work with the slope, not against it.
- (e) Areas for landscaping in the front and side yards should be maximized by restricting paving to only the necessary driveway and walkway areas.
- (f) Sidewalks should be installed for all new development.

2. Building Design. Large multi-story structures built close to the street can create a tunnel-like visual effect. The emphasis of residential design in this area should be to create variety.

- (a) The upper level of any exposed front or rear elevation should step back at least eight feet from the plane of the lower levels, or from the average plane of the lower levels if they are offset from one another.
- (b) Living space, exclusive of the garage, should not exceed 2,450 square feet.
- (c) Break up the mass of the buildings by combining horizontal and vertical elements which project, or are recessed from the basic building shape.
- (d) The height and setback of the residence should vary from adjacent residences to

encourage variety in the overall development of the street.

- (e) Highly visible structural supports, such as poles commonly used for decks, should be avoided. Cantilevered supports should be used as an alternative.
- (f) Special attention should be given to the rear facade of structures built on "downhill" lots to ensure variety when viewed from the neighborhood below.
- (g) Houses with identical designs should not be constructed on adjacent lots.

3. Parking and circulation. The street width of Farallon Avenue restricts traffic circulation and substantial development will contribute to a worsening parking shortfall.

- (a) Driveway location and curb cuts should be planned to provide a maximum number of on-street parking spaces.
- (b) All single-family residences should incorporate an on-street parking turnout. This turnout should be connected with the adjacent lot's turnout where feasible.
- (c) The setback from the garage to the property line should be maximized, and at least a 20' setback should be maintained.
- (d) A construction parking plan shall be submitted for review by the Planning Commission and for final approval and issuance of an encroachment permit by the City Engineer. The plan shall designate an area of the site and/or street for construction parking and storage. It shall be the builder's responsibility to comply with the approved construction parking plan. A forfeitable cash deposit shall be required to mitigate the City's costs in enforcement, inspection, and remedy of any violations of the approved plan and as a forfeiture upon the failure of compliance. If the cash deposit is depleted, an additional deposit may be

required by the Community Development and Services Director as a condition of continued construction.