



The Community Design Element focuses on enhancing the image and everyday livability of Pacifica. It presents a vision for the City's overall form and image, and provides guidance for preserving and enhancing the qualities that support that urban structure. Specifically, the Community Design Element discusses compatible infill development; pedestrian-oriented, mixed use districts; views to hillsides, coastal bluffs and the ocean; and sustainable design. This chapter identifies certain areas where additional standards and guidelines may be needed, and provides policies at a citywide scale, as well as key goals defining distinct areas within the City.

3.1 URBAN STRUCTURE

Pacifica has a strong physical identity as a stretch of dramatic coastline punctuated by ridges. Its boundaries are very distinct on three sides, with the Ocean on the west, the crest of Sweeney Ridge and Skyline Boulevard on the east, and San Pedro Mountain on the south. The northern edge narrows almost to a gateway entered along Highway 1. As an urban place, Pacifica presents itself as a collection of valley and coastal neighborhoods nestled in the topography.

As envisioned here, the basic components of Pacifica's existing structure—its open spaces, neighborhoods, activity centers, and transportation corridors—are built upon to establish a more coherent overall form, pictured in Figure 3-1: Urban Structure. Key features are described below.

Balance of Urban and Undeveloped Land

Pacifica is striking for its high proportion of both parks and undeveloped land, which comprises two-thirds of the Planning Area, and for the way its neighborhoods and rugged, open ridges alternate along the length of the City.

Hillsides and Ridges

The crest of the Coast Range forms Pacifica's eastern boundary. This crest rises toward the south as Sweeney Ridge. Five lateral ridges extend westward from Sweeney Ridge to the ocean. From north to south, these are Milagra Ridge, Gypsy Hill, Mori Ridge, Cattle Hill, and Fassler Ridge. At the south end, San Pedro Mountain extends to the coast at Pedro Point Headlands. This dramatic terrain is a defining feature of the city.

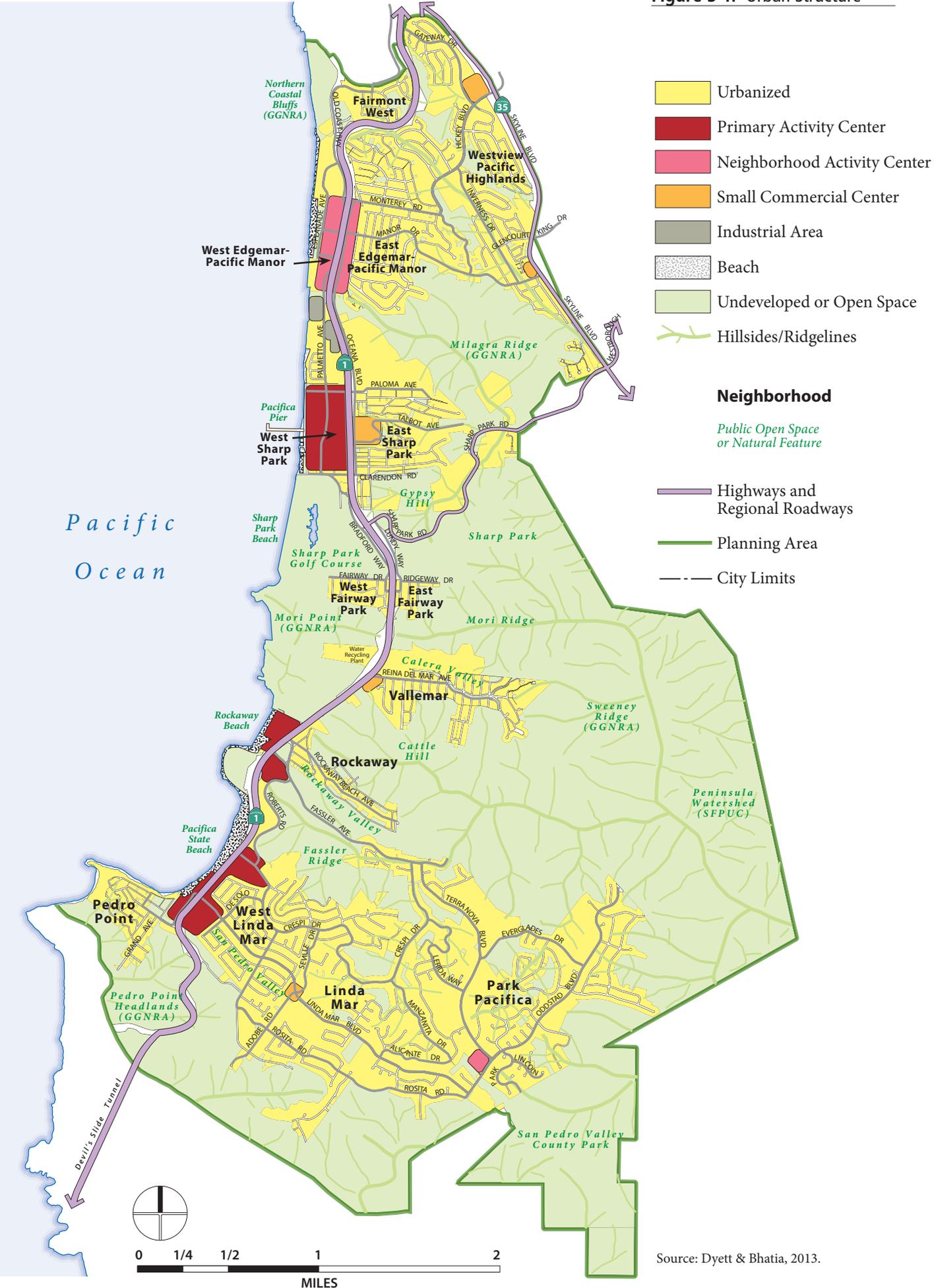
Neighborhoods

Pacifica's neighborhoods lie in valleys between the ridges, and along hillsides.

- **Fairmont, Fairmont West, and Westview-Pacific Highlands.** In this northernmost section of the city, the coastal neighborhoods are linked with urbanized uplands: the Fairmont West, Fairmont and Westview-Pacific Highlands neighborhoods to the north and east.
- **Edgemar-Pacific Manor.** The Pacific Manor shopping district is the hub of the West and East Edgemar-Pacific Manor neighborhoods, north of Milagra Ridge.
- **Sharp Park.** The East and West Sharp Park neighborhoods lie in the bowl between Gypsy Hill and Milagra Ridge, north of Sharp Park (the park).
- **Vallemar.** Near the geographical center of the city, the Vallemar neighborhood is located in a narrow valley along upper Calera Creek. The stream's western end travels through the quarry site at the base of Mori Point.
- **Rockaway and Rockaway Beach.** The Rockaway neighborhood extends down the narrow valley between Fassler Ridge and Cattle Hill, and culminates in the seaside Rockaway Beach district.
- **San Pedro Valley and Pedro Point.** The San Pedro Valley, in the far south, includes the neighborhoods of Linda Mar, West Linda Mar, Park Pacifica, and the coastal Pedro Point neighborhood.

Pacifica developed first as a string of coastal communities and later as a suburban extension of San Francisco; this has created unusual patterns. Development in the newer neighborhoods has occurred on a larger scale, often with significant grading to provide access and construction pads, whereas older development was generally one or a few houses at a time with minimal change to the existing terrain. This quality will lessen over time as context-sensitive infill housing is developed, older housing is replaced, and vegetation matures.

Figure 3-1: Urban Structure



Source: Dyett & Bhatia, 2013.

Balance of Activity Centers

Unlike many cities, Pacifica has no single downtown, but rather an assortment of activity centers. West Sharp Park has a concentration of public uses and a small business district. However, it is balanced by the shopping hubs of West Linda Mar to the south and Pacific Manor to the north, while a tourist atmosphere is captured more clearly at Rockaway Beach. Other small activity centers are at Fairmont Shopping Center, Park Mall, Eureka Square, and small business districts at Crespi Drive, Adobe Drive, and Vallemar.

Pacifica's multi-centered quality will continue to be part of its identity, but each activity center will become more distinct and more vibrant. The three primary activity centers will be at West Sharp Park, Rockaway Beach, and Linda Mar, associated with Pacifica's three accessible beaches. Smaller mixed-use activity centers will grow at Pacific Manor and Park Mall. Each activity center will be distinguished by its land use mix, built form, and public realm enhancements, as well as by district-specific signage.

Highway 1

Highway 1 is a unifying element for the city, connecting all of its neighborhoods and key sites to one another and to the region. The sequential experience created by the Highway will be strengthened as each activity center becomes more distinct, and as coastal and hillside views are enhanced. The highway also divides neighborhoods and influences access to and use of various commercial centers.

POLICIES

Policies included in both the General Plan and Local Coastal Land Use Plan are indicated with a .

Guiding Policies

- CD-G-1 Identifiable City Structure.** Reinforce a clear city structure, characterized by a progression of ridges, neighborhoods, and activity centers.
- CD-G-2 Distinct Activity Centers.** Create primary activity centers at West Sharp Park, Rockaway Beach, and Linda Mar, and neighborhood centers in Pacific Manor and Park Pacifica (at and around the Park Mall site).

Implementing Policies

- CD-I-1 Primary Activity Centers.** Create primary activity centers, each distinguished through land use, built form, public realm enhancements, and signage.
 - **West Sharp Park will be the City's civic and cultural core.** Palmetto Avenue between Paloma Avenue and Clarendon Road is a vibrant, mixed use main street, and the grid provides regular view corridors to the Ocean. Sharp Park's character will be signaled by higher-intensity buildings along the Highway 1 corridor, including at the Eureka Square site.
 - **Rockaway Beach will be the visitor-oriented center.** Its charming coastal character will be strengthened by new development and the district will be extended with a connective street pattern onto the flat portion of the Quarry site. It may gain a new, defining feature such as a destination hotel or conference center.

- **Linda Mar will be a center for recreation and community.** Crespi Drive, in particular, will become a more diverse center of activity, including visitors to the beaches and trail system; seniors, youth, and families at an expanded community center park; and mixed-use, transit-oriented development. Linda Mar and Pedro Point Shopping Centers are also part of this center.

CD-I-2 Neighborhood Activity Centers. Support smaller-scale neighborhood centers at Pacific Manor and at and around the Park Mall site, enabling them to become walkable, mixed use districts catering primarily to Pacifica residents.

3.2 NEIGHBORHOODS AND DISTRICTS

This section explores the characteristics of Pacifica’s residential, mixed-use and commercial neighborhoods, and the community design considerations for each type. Residential districts and commercial areas are treated separately.

Historical Development

Pacifica’s earliest development occurred with the construction of the Ocean Shore Railroad in 1905, as land speculators subdivided and developed a series of coastside communities. These communities grew out in the 1920s and 1930s, primarily with small, one-story houses, often with detached one-car garages, on narrow lots. Sharp Park Golf Course was developed during this time. After World War II, larger housing tract development began to take place in the northern uplands and the San Pedro Valley.

The most notable residential developments in recent years have occurred on former school sites and on hillside parcels. School sites have tended to yield compact neighborhoods including a mix of detached and attached housing. Development of hillside sites has been clustered, and resulted in areas of permanently preserved open space.

Residential Neighborhoods

The various stages of Pacifica’s development produced different street patterns, lot dimensions, typical housing types and densities. In West Sharp Park, single-family houses on narrow lots and multi-family housing are intermixed, and a grid street pattern prevails. Other early communities, including Pedro Point, Vallemar, and Rockaway/Rockaway Beach, developed in narrow valleys and on hillsides, with a mixture of lot sizes and irregular street patterns.



In West Sharp Park, single-family houses on narrow lots and multi-family housing are intermixed, on a grid pattern (top). The early postwar neighborhoods are typified by 5,000 square foot single-family lots, and curvilinear street patterns (middle). Multi-family development accounts predominates in West Edgemar-Pacific Manor (bottom).

The early postwar neighborhoods of Fairmont, Fairmont West, Westview-Pacific Highlands, Fairway Park, and West Linda Mar, are typified by 5,000 square foot single-family lots, and curvilinear street patterns. A suburban street pattern with larger lots and lower densities is typical in the later development of Linda Mar and Park Pacifica.

West Edgemar-Pacific Manor has evolved to contain a high concentration of multi-family housing along Esplanade Avenue. Multi-family housing is also clustered around Hickey Boulevard and Gateway Drive; along Oddstad and Terra Nova Boulevards; and mixed in with single-family houses in West Sharp Park.

At community forums held during the General Plan Update, participants expressed the desire to preserve neighborhood character. Pacifica’s neighborhoods are largely built out, with a scattering of vacant lots providing limited opportunities for infill development. The General Plan supports continued investment in existing neighborhoods and development of a greater variety of housing types, while ensuring that new development is compatible in scale and density and respectful of neighbors.

Commercial and Mixed Use Districts

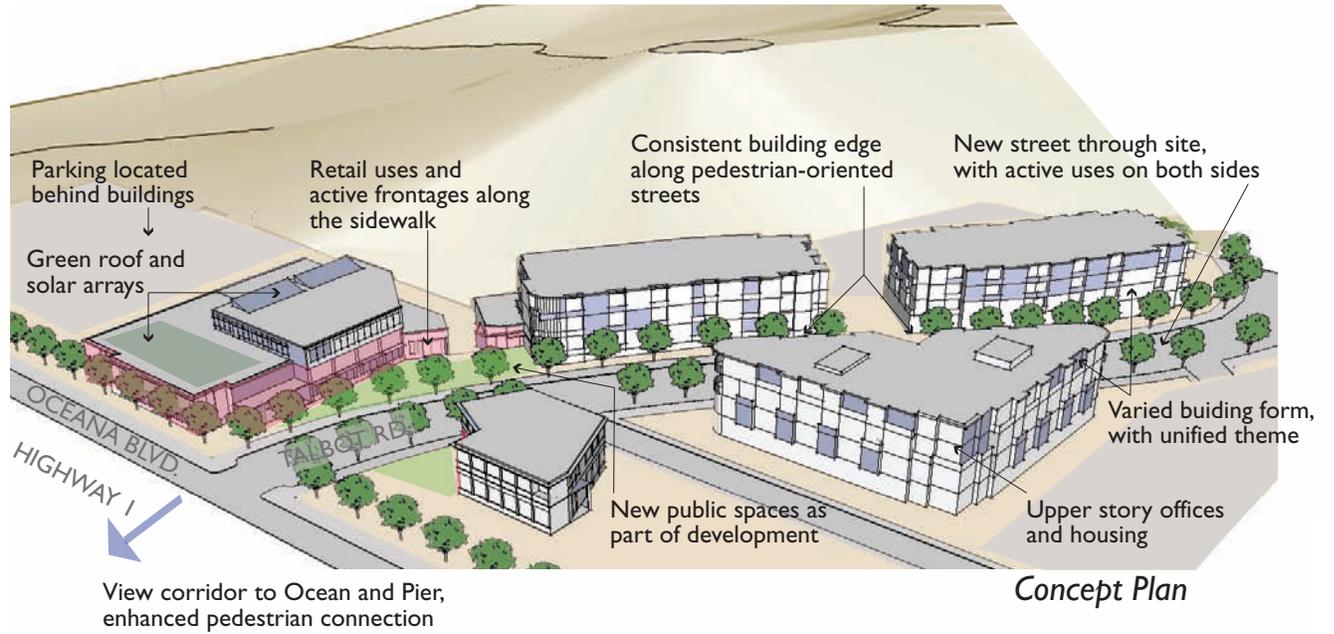
Pacifica has a variety of shopping centers and small mixed-use business districts. Upgrading the appeal of existing shopping centers and providing new opportunities for mixed use development were high priorities expressed by community members during the General Plan Update. The General Plan seeks to guide future development so that each commercial area becomes more distinct and more vibrant. Figure 3-2 illustrates how new mixed-use development on a shopping center site could be done with attention to the building form and to the relationship between buildings, parking areas, streets, and public spaces.

Figure 3-2: Illustrative Urban Form: Eureka Square

Existing View West



Illustrative View Northeast



This diagram illustrates the idea of a higher-intensity, mixed-use development with varied building form, pedestrian-oriented streets and public spaces, at the Eureka Square site.

Source: Dyett & Bhatia, 2013.



Compatible new houses help to preserve neighborhood character (top). Larger buildings should be varied in form, setback, height, color, and materials (middle). Fine-grained development that engages the pedestrian is essential in mixed use and commercial districts (bottom).

POLICIES

Policies included in both the General Plan and Local Coastal Land Use Plan are indicated with a .

Guiding Policies

CD-G-3 Neighborhood Conservation. Preserve the unique qualities of each of Pacifica’s residential neighborhoods.

CD-G-4 Enhanced Mixed Use Areas. Create distinctive mixed-use areas by ensuring good building form and building-sidewalk interface, and providing pedestrian-oriented streets and public spaces.

Implementing Policies

CD-I-3 Support Infill and Redevelopment. Support compatible residential infill on vacant lots, and redevelopment of under-utilized commercial properties, and . continue to use the Design Guidelines in evaluation of proposals that don’t meet all development standards in residential districts.

Pacifica’s Design Guidelines identify building form strategies including locating higher portions of the house to be less visible, “stepping down” the house toward adjoining lots, and breaking up the building mass into smaller sections. Good site planning should accommodate necessary parking without allowing parking to dominate the house frontage or front yard.

CD-I-4 High-Quality Multi-Family and Senior Housing. Support attached, multi-family, and senior housing that relates positively to the street and surrounding areas, is accessible on foot to community amenities including transit, shopping and services, and offers residents a range of amenities, and provide updated, illustrated Design Guidelines.

Larger buildings should vary in form, setback, height, color, and materials. Landscaping plays a role in defining spaces, creating interplay with building forms, and screening parking and utilities. Access and parking should be designed to minimize traffic impacts on residential streets. Buildings and open spaces should be oriented to maximize sunlight.

CD-I-5 Second Units. Facilitate the creation of second units that contribute to the variety of available housing and do not disrupt neighborhood character. Update the Zoning Ordinance and Design Guidelines to address the integration of second units into the neighborhood fabric.

CD-I-6 Commercial and Mixed Use Building Form. Seek to ensure that new commercial and mixed use development creates an attractive and human-scaled built environment. Update the Zoning Ordinance and Design Guidelines to address mixed use access, building form, the building-sidewalk relationship.

- Buildings should be varied to provide visual interest, while having a unified theme within each project.
- Building form should be responsive to context, including stepping down to adjacent, lower-scale uses, and establishing a fine-grained scale at street level.
- Commercial buildings and ground-floor commercial uses in mixed-use areas should have active frontages characterized by building windows and entrances supporting activity on the sidewalk.

Illustrated Design Guidelines should show how a fine grain of development offers more opportunities for public spaces, greater visual interest at the street level, a feeling of safety, and a diverse character. Chapter 4: Land Use discusses the need to update the zoning



Redevelopment of certain sites should incorporate small new plazas or public gathering spaces (top). Require pedestrian-oriented amenities and design in mixed use areas, including wider sidewalks, curb bulb-outs at key intersections, outdoor seating, and public art (middle). For new development at the Quarry site or Park Mall site, streets should be designed to maximize connectivity, including mid-block pedestrian connections (bottom).

code to create new zoning districts and provide development standards corresponding to each commercial and mixed use General Plan land use classification.

- CD-I-7 Parking in Higher-Intensity Mixed Use Areas.** Update parking standards to require parking areas to be located behind buildings, in the center of blocks, or tucked under development, and update the Design Guidelines to cover parking issues in higher-intensity, mixed-use areas.

If development of above-grade structures is economically viable, the interaction of the parking structure with the street is a key element of design. The design and location of parking directly affects the viability of commercial areas, safety for all road users, and the quality and character of the street and pedestrian environment.

- CD-I-8 New Public Spaces as Part of Redevelopment.** Incorporate into the redevelopment of the City’s Beach Boulevard property; Eureka Square Shopping Center; and Park Mall and/or the Sanchez Branch Library site small new plazas or public gathering spaces.

The role and character of public spaces in new development should be addressed in updated Design Guidelines.

3.3 HILLSIDE AND COASTAL DEVELOPMENT

Hillside Preservation

To protect important views from public areas and the sensitive terrain of hillside areas, the City has special development regulations for the Hillside Preservation District (HPD), which requires submission of development plans, grading plans, and other documentation. Hillside development also receives special consideration in the Design Guidelines, which are used to evaluate proposed projects. The key issues for hillside development are slope stability, grading, and visual impact.

Prominent ridgelines are identified based on their visual importance or scenic quality. Owners must focus development on suitable portions of their property off the ridges, to protect the scenic quality of ridgelines, except where ridgelines are the only buildable portions of the property. Prominent ridgelines are shown on Figure 3-3.

Coastal Development

The sensitive natural and visual resources of hillsides also apply to the undeveloped coastal bluffs and promontories, including the Northern Coastal Bluffs, the Quarry site uplands, and Rockaway Headlands. Developed coastal areas also require special attention, not only because of their natural features but also for their potential as visitor destinations. The City’s Coastal Zone Combining District (CZ) ensures that the goals and policies of the California Coastal Act are followed. These goals include the protection and enhancement of the coastal environment, including its visual resources. Coastal development is also among the special issues treated by Pacifica’s Design Guidelines.

Three promontories dominate Pacifica’s Coastal Zone and visually represent the coastal character of Pacifica. These landforms—Pedro Point Headlands, Rockaway Headlands, and Mori Point (including the Quarry site uplands)—are shown on Figure 3-3.

Figure 3-3: Visual Resources



Source: US Geological Survey, 2009; City of Pacifica, 2008; San Mateo County, 2009; Dyett & Bhatia, 2012.

While much of this area has been permanently preserved, development may occur on the Rockaway Headlands or the Quarry site.

Views to the ocean and along the panoramic coastline are an integral part of Pacifica's character, and a part that must be preserved for the future. Of primary importance are views of the ocean, landforms, and special coastal communities from public roadways, trails, and vista points. Important coastal view corridors are identified on Figure 3-3.

POLICIES

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Guiding Policies

CD-G-5  Hillsides and Prominent Ridgelines. Maintain development standards that ensure that new development does not detract from the visual qualities of Pacifica's hillsides and visually prominent ridgelines.

CD-G-6  Scenic and Visual Amenities of the Coastal Zone. Protect the City's irreplaceable scenic and visual amenities in the Coastal Zone by protecting landforms, vegetation, special communities, and important viewsheds.

Implementing Policies

Hillside Development

CD-I-9  Minimize Visual Impacts of Hillside Development. Require new development to employ innovative site planning, engineering and design techniques that:

- Seek first to avoid impacts to scenic resources through site planning and design;
- Minimize grading and conform with natural landforms to the greatest extent possible;
- Design structures so that they follow contours and limit their downslope exposure; and
- Use landscaping to screen and integrate buildings with the natural environment.

CD-I-10  Protection of Ridgelines. Protect visually prominent ridgelines from residential and commercial development.

Local access roads and trails may be allowed on visually prominent ridgelines provided

they follow contours, minimize grading, and are unobtrusive in their design.

CD-I-11  **Hillside Preservation District Requirements.** Continue to implement the requirements of the Hillside Preservation District (HPD), including submission of siting and grading plans. Update the HPD to ensure that all steep slopes are covered and that sites on other terrain are not included.

CD-I-12  **Design Review.** Continue to use Design Guidelines to evaluate proposed projects in Planned Development, Hillside Development, and Special districts.

Coastal Development

CD-I-13  **Minimize Impacts of Coastal Development on Landforms.** Ensure that negative visual impacts resulting from new development in the Coastal Zone are minimized. In areas characterized by bluffs and landforms. Strategies to implement this policy include:

- Prohibiting development on slopes in excess of 35 percent and highly visible tops of prominent landforms;
- Requiring blufftop development to minimize impacts on the view from the ocean and beach below by implementing a setback from the bluff edge;
- Requiring that development be clustered and contoured into the existing slope; and
- Requiring that new development be scaled and designed to be subordinate to landforms in the Coastal Zone.

CD-I-14  **Minimize Impacts of Coastal Development on Vegetation.** Continue to require that disturbance to vegetation be minimized in new development and that graded areas be promptly replanted with native vegetation.



Unlike the example of Oceana High School, future hillside development is required to conform with natural landforms and design structures into the landscape (top). New development at the Quarry site should enhance the visual character of the Coastal Zone (middle). Protect coastal viewsheds characterized by natural landforms and coastal bluffs (bottom).

CD-I-15  **Headlands Special Area.** In the zoning code, update the Headlands Special Area for the Rockaway Headlands, to specify very low-intensity visitor-serving use such as hikers' huts and kiosks. A view restaurant may be appropriate if access can be created without harming biological or scenic resources.

CD-I-16  **Rockaway Quarry Special Area.** In the zoning code, update and rename the Mori Point Special Area to facilitate visitor-serving development on the portion of the Quarry site determined to be appropriate for development.

Visitor-oriented development on the Quarry site "flats" should be connected with the adjacent Rockaway Beach district. If a hotel is built, it must be designed to sensitively blend with the landscape and convey a high-quality image for Pacifica.

CD-I-17  **Trail Design on Coastal Headlands and Bluffs.** Develop new trails on Pedro Point Headlands, the Rockaway Headlands, the Quarry site uplands, and the Northern Coastal Bluffs in such a way that native vegetation is protected by limiting pedestrians to designated trails and preventing access by motorized vehicles.

CD-I-18  **Underground Utilities.** Continue to require underground utilities in all new development. Within scenic corridors, place lines underground or located there so they do not break the viewline of a roadway vista.

3.4 SCENIC ROUTES

The State and County have identified Highway 1 and Sharp Park Road in Pacifica as eligible for scenic highway designation. Local scenic roadway designation requires a corridor study, a program to enhance the scenic qualities, and adoption of the scenic roadway designation and its protection plan. Such a plan may be prepared in the future. For the purpose of this General Plan, what is important is that the scenic qualities of these roadways are preserved and enhanced.

Viewsheds

Highway 1 plays an important role in defining the image of Pacifica, creating a visual narrative for the traveler from one end of the City to the other. Sharp Park Road also represents an important visual summary of Pacifica, drawing travelers from the ridge-line at Skyline Boulevard to the coast, with views out to the Ocean and over the Sharp Park neighborhood and Golf Course. Several specific viewsheds from Highway 1 and Sharp Park Road are shown on Figure 3-3. Other defining views include the view over the West Sharp Park district and Pacifica Pier from Highway 1; views toward Cattle Hill and Fassler Ridge from Highway 1; and the view to the ocean from Grace McCarthy Vista Point on Sharp Park Road.

Roadway Enhancements

In addition to viewsheds from these roads, the character of the roadways themselves shapes visitors' and residents' experience of Pacifica. The appearance of the Coast Highway right-of-way in central Pacifica can be improved as part of the Calera Parkway project. Other future improvements to the visual character of the Highway can include new and improved pedestrian over-crossings, and multi-use trails leading to the Devil's Slide area. On Sharp Park Road, completion of bicycle improvements will improve the character of this roadway and make its scenic quality available to cyclists.

Development Character in the Highway 1 Corridor

Future development along Highway 1 will also influence the scenic qualities of the corridor. Development can create a strong presence along the Highway and harmonious transitions to adjacent neighborhoods. All new commercial development requires site development review, assisted by the Design Guidelines. The Guidelines will provide direction on how buildings should relate to Highway 1 at different segments of the Highway.

Gateways

Pacifica is introduced to southbound travelers with the experience of coming over the hill and seeing the expansive coastal vista. Northbound travelers come through the Devils Slide Tunnel, wind around the forested Pedro Point Headlands, and arrive at the active intersection with Linda Mar Boulevard. Skyline Boulevard acts as a coherent eastern boundary for the City, as it travels along the crest of the ridge with mature trees along its edges. From Skyline, Pacifica is entered via Sharp Park Road, Manor Drive, and Hickey Boulevard. While the “gateways” into Pacifica are strong, entry points from the east can be made stronger, and all entries treated with a consistent signage theme. Gateway locations are shown on Figure 3-3.



The Grace McCarthy Vista Point on Sharp Park Road helps to define Pacifica’s image (top). An improved pedestrian overcrossing between West and East Sharp Park would enhance the character of the Highway 1 corridor (middle). Pacifica is introduced to southbound travelers with an expansive coastal vista (bottom).

POLICIES

Policies included in both the General Plan and Local Coastal Land Use Plan are indicated with a .

Guiding Policies

- CD-G-7**  **Views from Scenic Routes.** Ensure that viewsheds from Highway 1 and Sharp Park Road are preserved and enhanced. These views are an essential part of Pacifica's identity.
- CD-G-8** **Gateways.** Create strong entrances and preserve the quality of experience of movement along primary travel routes, in particular along the coast.

Implementing Policies

- CD-I-19**  **Roadway Enhancements.** Coordinate with Caltrans in an effort to ensure that future changes to the Coast Highway will also upgrade the appearance of the right-of-way.

Improvements should include landscaping and roadway design, as well as trails and visually-appealing pedestrian over-crossings.

- CD-I-20**  **Scenic Corridor Plans.** Seek grant funding to develop local scenic corridor plans for Highway 1 and Sharp Park Road.
- CD-I-21**  **Parallel Trails for Non-Motorized Travel.** Improve walking, riding, and biking trails along roadways with the State scenic highway designation.
- CD-I-22**  **Other Scenic Trails.** Improve pedestrian routes along corridors that provide access to locations of significant scenic quality, recreation, historic and cultural importance in Pacifica.
- CD-I-23**  **Vehicle Access Points.** Maintain and improve existing scenic turnouts, public parking areas, access to regional parks, beaches and other recreation areas.

- CD-I-24**  **Roadway Design.** Ensure that any proposed new roads or modification to existing roads which traverse scenic areas minimize visual impacts to views from scenic routes.

Where possible, the physical form of structures, grading and alignment should be integrated into the natural setting. Views to and from ridges should be protected.

- CD-I-25**  **High-Quality Design at Key Points.** Ensure that new development directly adjacent to Highway 1 in West and East Sharp Park helps to create a strong image of Pacifica's cultural and civic core, and that new development in the Rockaway Quarry site has a visual quality that enhances the natural setting and draws travelers in from the highway.

- CD-I-26**  **Highway Frontage Design Guidelines.** Update the Design Guidelines to provide direction on how new buildings relate to Highway 1, both in its freeway and highway configuration.

- CD-I-27**  **Gateway Signage.** Create unified gateway signage, for entrances along Highway 1, Sharp Park Road, Manor Drive, and Hickey Boulevard.