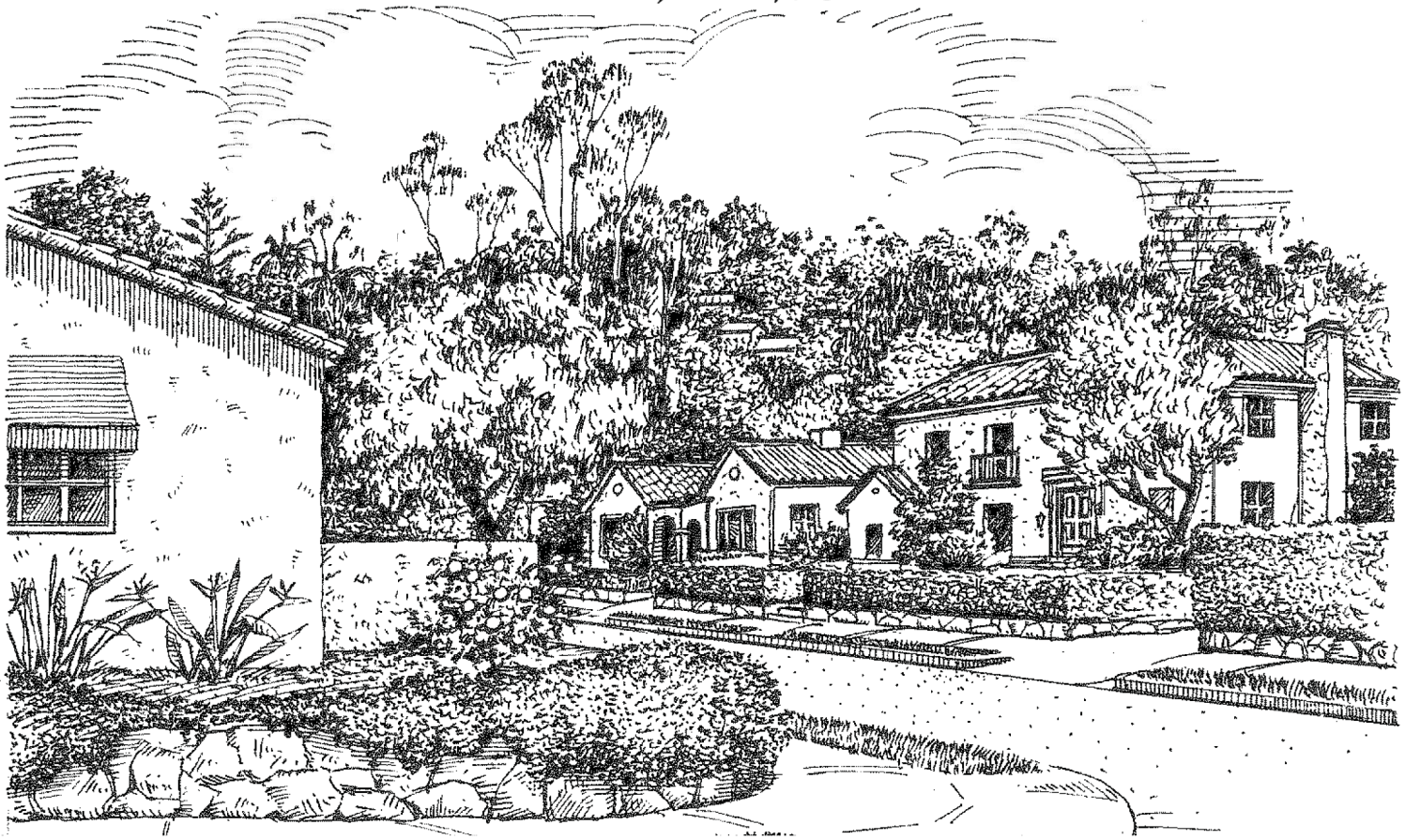
Updated
Single Family Residence Design Guidelines
City of Santa Barbara

Revised June 17, 2011



ATTACHMENT 3

Introduction

Introduction

According to the City of Santa Barbara General Plan, "Santa Barbara has, as its primary… [goal], the provision of a particularly desirable living environment." Single family homes have long contributed to the character of many neighborhoods in the City. Home designs which achieve the following contribute to a desirable living environment:

- compatible with the surrounding neighborhood
- preserve the City's visual resources
- promote long-term sustainability

Neighborhood Compatibility

In recent decades, changes in the various neighborhoods throughout the City have raised quality-of-life concerns. Homes are built or remodeled in order to suit the changing needs and lifestyles of new and existing residents. As a result, neighborhood character gradually changes over time. When a change is made in an established neighborhood, it is essential to properly balance that change with a respect for the design features and characteristics of surrounding properties. Homes are more likely to be compatible when their volume and bulk are at an appropriate scale with their neighbors. This is the concept of neighborhood compatibility. New and remodeled houses can maintain a desirable living environment when they:

- have an appropriate volume, bulk, massing and scale
- have a size that is not significantly larger than the immediate neighborhood
- use materials and designs that are compatible with their surroundings
- are sited such that they do not block light and views for other existing homes
- minimize privacy impacts to surrounding properties

Hillside Neighborhoods

The City's hillsides are a unique resource and pose additional design considerations. The General Plan Conservation Element states:

> "Hillside developments provide vistas for residents who inhabit those structures. Yet, residential developments render hillsides less natural as topography and vegetation are modified."

Appropriately designed residential development in hillside areas can avoid threats to visual resources recognized by the Conservation Element, including:

- excessive grading
- views blocked by new structures or overly tall planted trees and hedges
- ridgeline development
- the loss of important trees

Applicants for hillside development projects need to follow the Compatibility, Two-Story Design Guidelines (if applicable) and Good Neighbor Guidelines, as well as the Hillside Design Guidelines.

SUSTAINABILITY

Good design can help ensure that meeting the needs of the current generation does not compromise the ability of future generations to meet their needs. This is the "sustainability" concept. It is important that neighborhoods change in a way that promotes the long-term economic, environmental and social sustainability of the City. Homes help contribute to sustainability when they are at a size that is compatible with the surrounding neighborhood. Smaller, well-designed homes are often more sustainable because they tend to:

- require fewer natural resources in construction
- consume less electricity and natural gas
- require less grading
- provide more affordable housing opportunities

For more information, see the City's Sustainable Santa Barbara Builder's Packet, available at 630 Garden Street.

DESIGN REVIEW

The City Charter gives direction to consider "…the preservation and protection as nearly as practicable of the natural charm and beauty of the area in which the City is located and the historical style, qualities and characteristics of the buildings, structures and architectural features associated with and established by its long, illustrious and distinguished past." The Single Family Design Board (SFDB) Guidelines ensure high design standards are maintained in development and construction.

Within the landmark districts, design review is handled primarily by the Historic Landmarks Commission (HLC), which reviews designs for consistency with the architectural styles allowed within the districts. See the Lower Riviera Special Design District or El Pueblo Viejo District Design Guidelines for more information.

City Staff reviews designs for adherence to the City's Municipal Code and relevant guidelines. Staff forwards designs to the SFDB or HLC for further review if required by the Municipal Code.

PURPOSE

The Guidelines are primarily a guide for the homeowner, architect, designer, developer and builder who are designing new single family homes or changing existing houses. These Guidelines are intended to help design homes that are compatible with the surrounding neighborhood, preserve visual resources and promote sustainability. The Guidelines help homeowners design projects that are compatible in both size and design. While Floor to Lot Area Ratio (FAR) regulations inform homeowners of the maximum allowed home size, homes designed smaller than the maximum FAR can still be incompatible, depending on design. Therefore, design is just as important as size.

These Guidelines also provide a framework for the design review process and a foundation for public, City staff, SFDB, HLC, Planning Commission and City Council project evaluation. Whenever SFDB is referenced, the information generally applies to other hearing body reviews. These Guidelines are not meant to discourage unique and inventive design solutions. Rather, these guidelines serve as a tool to help decision makers determine if appropriate findings and approvals can be made for projects.

Additional Submittal Requirements

Projects 85% or Less Than Maximum Square Footage

These projects are subject to standard application and processing requirements. Applicants are encouraged to design homes under 85% of the maximum square footage for their lot size whenever possible to help ensure neighborhood compatibility. (See pages 21-C - 25-C for more information).

Projects Over 85% of a Maximum Square Footage

These projects are more likely to pose neighborhood compatibility issues and are generally discouraged. However, careful design and review can sometimes produce projects that are still compatible with the surrounding neighborhood. Due to the special nature of these larger, potentially incompatible projects, special additional processing requirements apply for lots under 15,000 square feet.*

- 20 closest homes County Assessor's report copy
- Panoramic streetscape photo presentation
- Story poles likely to be required
- Street elevation showing building outline silhouettes
- Landscape plans
- Perspective drawing or model

Applications for projects over 85% of a maximum square footage on lots under 15,000 square feet require a Planning Commission modification request if any of the following apply:

** The SFDB may require some project proposals on properties over 15,000 sq. ft. to include this information if needed.*

- Average property or building site slope is greater than 30%; or
- Height is greater than 25'; or
- In the Hillside Design District & site grading outside the main building footprint is greater than 500 cubic yards.

Projects Over a Maximum Square Footage

Projects proposing square footage over the maximum specified for a property are strongly discouraged in most cases. However, there may be some project sites with special physical features, which when combined with exceptional design, can accommodate an over maximum home compatible with the neighborhood. A Planning Commission modification is required for over maximum square footage proposals. Also, a super majority (five out of seven) of the SFDB members must vote in support of the project approval. The following "findings" must be made for approval of projects proposing to exceed a maximum required square footage.

- The subject lot exhibits a physical condition (such as the location, surroundings, topography, or the size of the lot re lative to the other lots in the neighborhood) that does not generally exist on the other lots in the neighborhood
- The physical condition of the lot allows the project to be compatible with existing development within the neighborhood that complies with the net floor area standard

Projects proposing over 100% of a required maximum square footage must submit the following items in addition to normal submittal requirements:

- 20 closest homes analysis of current available data

SUBMITTAL REQUIREMENTS CONT.

- Panoramic streetscape photo presentation which includes a simulation of the proposed project superimposed on the streetscape panoramic photographs
- Full level of story poles
- Street elevation showing building outline silhouettes, including window and door details
- Landscape plans
- Model or three-dimensional computer graphic
- A neighbor workshop is required prior to the first SFDB hearing

See page 21-C for information regarding legal non-conforming as to maximum floor area properties with a project proposal of up to 100 additional square feet.

NEIGHBORHOOD PRESERVATION ORDINANCE FINDINGS

All Neighborhood Preservation Ordinance (NPO) single family projects subject to review and approval by the Single Family Design Board or Historic Landmarks Commission must be consistent with the following set of findings.

GENERAL REQUIRED FINDINGS

(Apply to all NPO projects subject to Design Review.)

1. **Consistency & Appearance:** The proposed development will be consistent with the scenic character of the City and will enhance the appearance of the neighborhood.
2. **Compatibility:** The proposed development will be compatible with the neighborhood, and its size, bulk and scale will be appropriate to the site and neighborhood.
3. **Quality Architecture & Materials:** The development, including proposed structures and grading, is designed with quality architectural details and quality materials. Proposed materials and colors will maintain the natural appearance of the ridgeline or hillside.
4. **Trees:** The proposed project will not remove or significantly impact any designated Specimen, Historic and Landmark trees. Also, the proposed project, to the maximum extent feasible, preserves and protects healthy, non-invasive mature trees with a minimum trunk diameter of four inches (4") measured four feet (4') above natural grade. The project includes a plan to mitigate the impact of the removal of any healthy, non-invasive mature tree with a diameter of four inches (4") or more at four feet (4') above natural grade in compliance with applicable tree replacement ratios.
5. **Health, Safety and Welfare:** The public health, safety and welfare will be protected.
6. **Good Neighbor Guidelines:** The project generally complies with applicable privacy, landscaping, noise, and lighting Good Neighbor Guidelines.
7. **Public Views:** The development, including proposed structures and grading, will preserve any existing significant public scenic views of and from the hillside.

Hillside Findings

(Apply to all NPO projects in the Hillside Design District or on lots in other parts of the City with a slope of 15% or greater.)

1. **Appropriate Grading & Natural Topography Protection:** The development, including proposed structures and grading, is appropriate to the site, is designed to avoid visible scarring, and will not significantly modify the natural topography of the site or the natural appearance of any ridgeline or hillside.
2. **Appropriate Development Scale:** The development, including proposed structures and grading, will maintain a scale and form that blends with the hillside area by minimizing the visual appearance of structure(s) and the overall height of structure(s).

Special Design District Grading and Vegetation Removal Projects Required Findings

(Apply to all NPO projects in a Special Design District requiring a grading or vegetation removal permit.)

1. The proposed vegetation removal will not significantly increase siltation in or decrease the water quality of streams, drainages or water storage facilities to which the property drains; and
2. The proposed vegetation removal will not cause a substantial loss of southern oak woodland habitat; and
3. The proposed vegetation removal is in compliance with all applicable provisions of Chapter 22.10, Vegetation Removal, of the City Municipal Code.

Projects Proposing Square Footage Exceeding A Required Maximum FAR

(Apply only where lot size is under 15,000 square feet in single family zones and either taller than 17' in height or two or more stories.)

1. Not less than five (5) members of the Single Family Design Board or six (6) members of the Historic Landmarks Commission (on projects referred to the Commission pursuant to Section 22.69.030) have voted in support of the modification following a concept review of the project; and
2. The subject lot has a physical condition (such as the location, surroundings, topography, or the size of the lot relative to other lots in the neighborhood) that does not generally exist on other lots in the neighborhood; and
3. The physical condition of the lot allows the project to be compatible with existing development within the neighborhood that complies with the net floor area standard.

Compatibility Guidelines Summary

6. Neighborhood

Design a project to be compatible with the immediate neighborhood, and carefully consider the neighborhood study area for a project. p. 15-C

7. Volume, Bulk, Massing, and Scale

Design structures to be compatible with neighboring houses in terms of volume, bulk, massing, and scale. p. 17-C

8. Floor to Lot Area Ratio (FAR)

Strive for a project which falls in the "less than 85% of maximum FAR" range for the project lot size. p. 21C

9. Height

Design building heights to be compatible with the neighborhood. p. 26-C

10. Façade Articulation

Use façade articulation to create appropriate scale and add visual interest. p. 27-C

11. Architectural Style

Choose a style compatible with the surrounding neighborhood and use architectural features to create a consistent architectural style. p. 28-C

12. Openings

Use openings such as doors and windows in a manner compatible with the neighborhood. p. 30-C

13. Entries

Main entries should be visible from the street and contribute towards a friendly neighborhood experience. p. 31-C

14. Roof Design

Carefully plan roof forms on a home for a well-designed structure compatible with the neighborhood. p. 32-C

15. Roof Materials

Roofing material and color should be consistent with the building architectural style. Eave closures, a.k.a. bird stops, if any are proposed, shall be mortared with natural cement. p. 34-C

16. Exterior Materials and Colors

Exterior materials and colors should complement the style of the house and neighborhood, as well as blend with surrounding natural features when viewed from a distance. p. 35-C

17. Fences, Walls, and Hedges

Integrate fences, walls and hedges with structures and setting. p. 36-C

18. Partial Basement Design

Carefully design partial basements to not create a bulky appearance, or contribute to inappropriate apparent height. p. 37-C

Compatibility Guidelines

6. Neighborhood

Design a project to be compatible with the immediate neighborhood, and carefully consider the neighborhood study area for a project.

People think of their "neighborhood" in different ways. There are large areas of the City sometimes referred to as neighborhoods. There are also smaller, immediate neighborhoods. The Neighborhood Preservation Ordinance requires homes to be "compatible with their neighborhood." To help determine project compatibility with a neighborhood, the Single Family Design Board (SFDB) will generally refer to a "Neighborhood Study Area" defined below. A Neighborhood Study Area allows the SFDB to efficiently review homes for compatibility. Following are three levels of "neighborhood" recognized by the SFDB.

General Plan Neighborhood: Neighborhoods as delineated in the Land Use Element of the City's General Plan (see next page).

Immediate Neighborhood: Generally, an area smaller than a General Plan neighborhood that has a combination of the following characteristics in common:

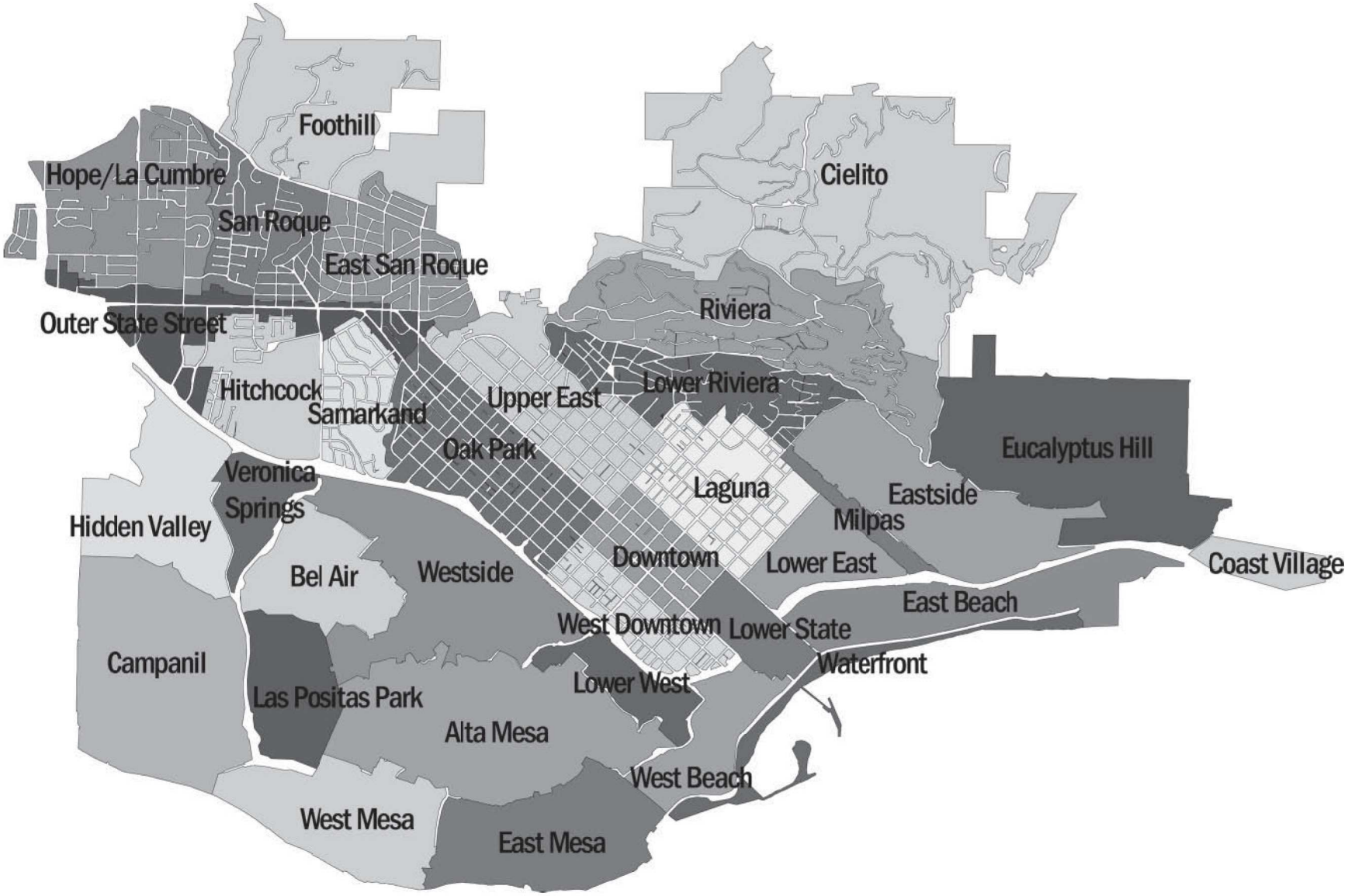
- Similar zoning
- Properties built as part of the same original subdivision
- Common access routes
- Walkable radius (15 minutes; usually quarter mile radius)
- Similar architectural styles
- Similar tree and landscaping patterns
- Main streets, bridges, or railroad corridors as a boundary

Also, it should be noted that highly visible properties, such as those in hillside areas, can have an impact beyond their immediate neighborhood.

Neighborhood Study Area: The twenty (20) closest lots to a proposed project (see example below). Additional lots may be considered to make a compatibility determination depending on the predominant streetscape, patterns of development, or parcel sizes.

Neighborhood Study Area: 20 Closest Homes Example

General Plan Neighborhoods



7. VOLUME, BULK, MASSING AND SCALE

Design structures to be compatible with neighboring houses in terms of volume, size, massing, scale and bulk.

QUANTITATIVE DEFINITIONS

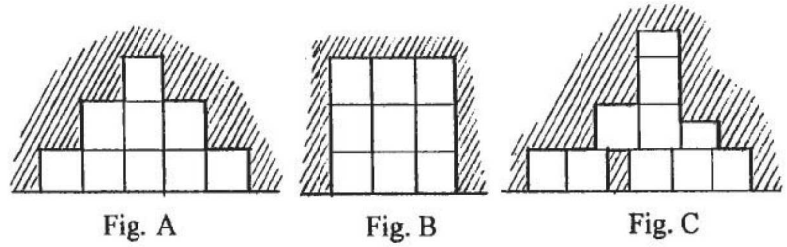
Volume: The quantitative three-dimensional measurement of a structure's height, width and depth combined.
Size: The quantitative two-dimensional measurement of a structure's length and width combined (i.e. "square feet").

QUALITATIVE DEFINITIONS

Massing: The qualitative arrangement of a structure's bulk, including relative openness and solidity.
Proportion: The quantitative relative sizes and dimensions of architectural elements and details, as they relate to each other and to the entire structure.
Scale: The qualitative proportional relationship of a structure and its architectural elements and details to human beings. [Note: To compare scale to other structures, use the words "compatibility" and "neighborhood".]
Bulk: The qualitative visual perception of the composition and shape of a structure's massing. Bulk is affected by variations in height, setbacks and stepbacks of upper stories.

VOLUME VS. BULK

Volume is a structure's quantitative height, width and depth measurement. Bulk, on the other hand, is the qualitative perception of a structure's volumes. These measurements, when compared to a measurement of a lot and measurements in its neighborhood, can provide a guide to a structure's appropriate size. Bulk, on the other hand, is the qualitative, readily visible composition and perceived shape of the structure's volume, i.e. the design of its architectural composition, shape and scale, including stepbacks and setbacks. For example, imagine the nine squares in Figures A through C are actually three-dimensional cubes. The nine squares in Figure B appear bulkier than Figure A even though Figure A is wider. Figure B also appears bulkier than Figure C, even though Figure C is both higher and wider than Figure B. *(See page 19-C for addtl. illustrations.)*



SCALE VS. PROPORTION

Proportion describes how building parts relate to each other and to a whole structure, as measured by size and dimensions. Scale, on the other hand, is the relationship of a structure or its parts to a definite unit of measure. For most Santa Barbara Infill neighborhoods, the definite unit of measure is a human being's height, i.e. "human scale." A common problem with larger homes is that the architectural elements of a structure should be in proportion to the overall structure size. As a structure gets bigger, its elements such as doors, windows, archways, and towers may need to get bigger as well. As a result, human scale can be lost, leading to neighborhood incompatibility. Another point is that a human scale structure may still lack proportion between its elements. For example, even a small home may have windows or doors so different in size or shape relative to each other or to the home that they detract from the home's appearance.
(Continued on page 19-C)

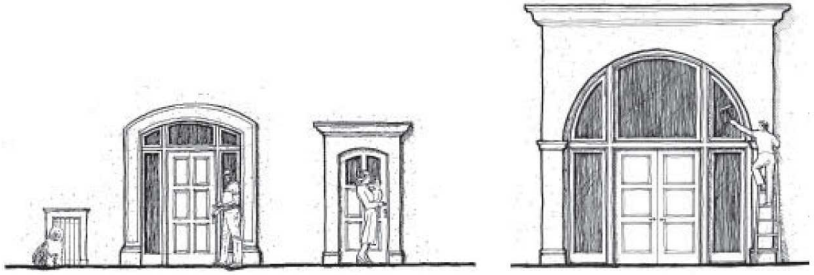
Volume: A Quantitative Measurement

The home above has significantly less measured volume than the home below.

Bulk: A Qualitative Visual Component

Although these homes have very similar square footages, the picture below may appear "bulkier," in part because of the volume's massing.

7. VOLUME, BULK, MASSING AND SCALE CONTINUED.



Door openings (areas containing the door, frame, side lights, fan windows, transom, and any recessed or significant feature associated with the door) designed for a human scale should not exceed a width of 8' or a height of 12'.

Visible front door entries, traditional porch features, decorative pedestrian gates, small and medium-sized windows, short fences, minimization of large "blank" architectural features (such as through the use of small garage doors or decorative garage doors) can help provide a sense of "human scale."

Example Architectural Elements that Can Affect a Home's "Scale":

Windows: size, proportion, number, placement
Doors: single or double, height
Entrances: monumental height over 10' or human scale
Garages: number of bays, type of door
Roof Slopes: towers, windows, dormers
Roof Styles: hip, gable, mansard, gambrel, flat
Roof Pitches: slope rise to run, e.g. 4:12
Columns: 1 story, 2 story, appropriate to style
Stairs: exterior stair quantity and widths
Pedestal Treatment: raised house or entrance
Blank Walls: major or minor part of structure faces

SCALE

This home relates well to human scale in part because of the appropriately sized and proportioned garage door, chimney and windows, in addition to elements such as the trellis on the upper story deck and modest front porch.

A home illustrating a "monumental scale," usually inappropriate on small lots. In particular, the size and proportions of the entry stairs, columns, front door, porch, and the significant pedestal (raised house) reflect a monumental scale.

VOLUME, BULK, MASSING AND SCALE ISSUES

Issues that the SFDB considers related to volume, mass, bulk, size and scale include the following:

- **Compatibility:** How compatible is the structure's **volume, bulk,** and **scale** with the **volume, bulk,** and **scale** of the existing neighborhood homes and structures?
- **Floor to Lot Area Ratios:** Is a structure's **size** appropriate for its lot size?
- **Second Story Decks:** Do wall elements, guardrails, furniture, or outdoor fireplaces contribute to the bulk or scale of the project?
- **Covered Porches, Loggias, and Covered Decks:** Do the covered porches, loggias, and/or covered decks enhance the building's design, appearance, and function? Do they contribute to excessive mass, scale and bulk? Careful consideration should be given to projects that propose greater than 250 square feet of these areas, or when they are greater than 10% of the total net square footage of the structure. Because they include roof structures these areas might easily be enclosed in the future, possibly without design review. Future enclosure of existing covered areas may contribute to unacceptable size, bulk, and scale, eliminate a desirable architectural feature, or exceed FAR limits.
- **Garage Door Design and Placement:** Does the garage design minimize an appearance of **bulk**? Is the **scale** of the garage appropriate in comparison to the portion of the house visible from the street?
- **Second-Story Setbacks:** How does the second-story **volume** affect the streetscape or neighboring backyards? How **bulky** does a structure appear from the front or the back of a house because of how the **massing** of a building is composed?
- **Canyon Effect:** How close is the **volume** of a proposed second-story structure to the **volume** of any adjacent property's existing second-story **volume**?
- **Wall Size:** How does a large expanse of wall contribute to a structure's appearance of **bulk**? How can a structure's **volume** be articulated consistent with an architectural style? Do building wall heights allow proportional **human scale** window and door details?
- **Roof Size:** How does a large expanse of roof contribute to a structure's appearance of **bulk**? How can a structure's **massing** be changed to avoid large expanses of roof?
- **Plate Height:** Do building plate heights allow for appropriately scaled wall, window and door details?

8. Floor to Lot Area Ratio (FAR)

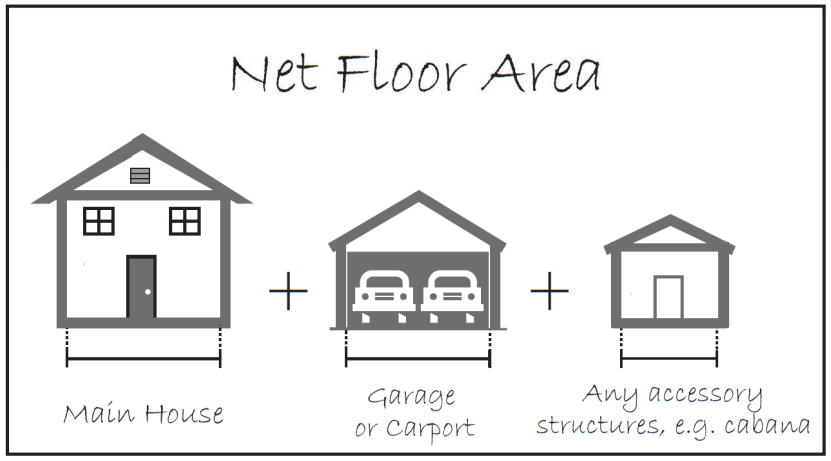
Strive for a project which falls in the "less than 85% of maximum FAR" range for the project lot size.

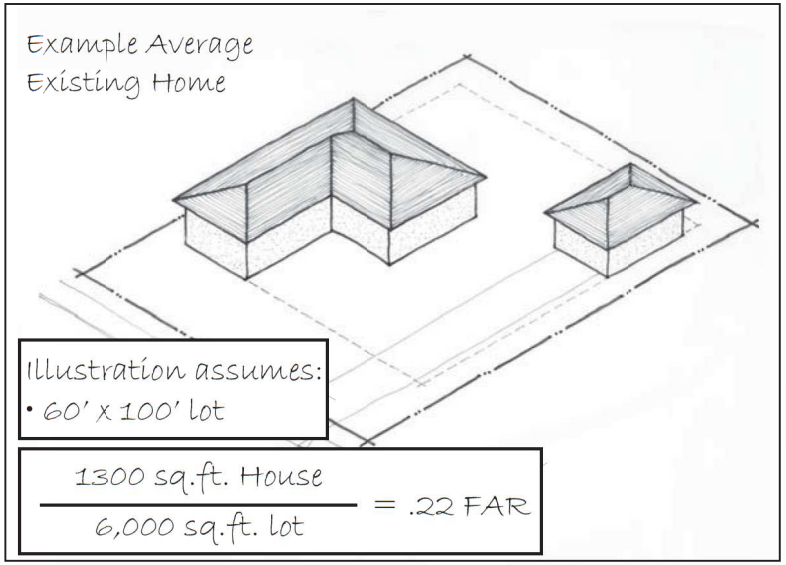
$$FAR = \frac{\text{Net Floor Area of all Site Structures}}{\text{Lot Area}}$$

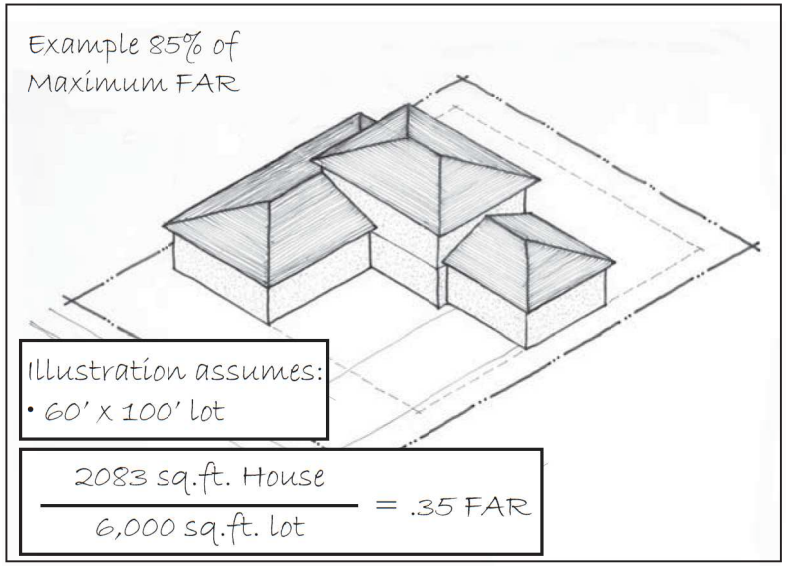
FAR is defined as the net square footage of a structure (or structures) divided by the net lot area. Net lot area excludes public road easements and public road rights-of-way.

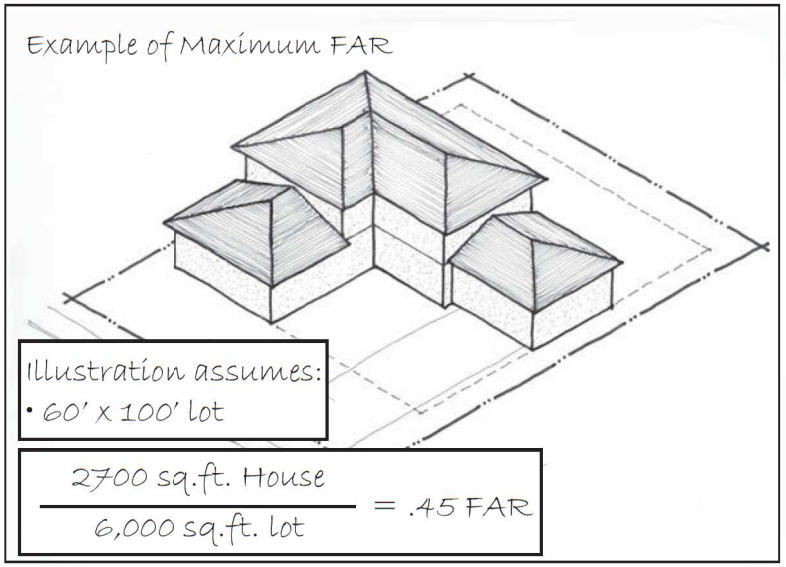
FARs measure and limit a structure's size based on lot size. FARs do not translate to an accurate measure of volume because plate heights and roof slopes for homes vary. However, they are a useful indication of a structure's bulk relative to its site. Architectural features such as covered porches, loggias, and covered decks contribute to the mass and bulk of a building. While they are not included in the FAR, they are considered as part of the project's mass and bulk. FARs provide general parameters of reasonable lot build-out according to lot size. FARs are often used to analyze a proposed project's potential for neighborhood compatibility. Many communities have implemented FARs to better control size, bulk and scale of development. Ideally FARs can help prevent sudden dramatic incompatible neighborhood changes.

Applicants seeking SFDB or HLC approval are required to provide the proposed project's floor to lot area ratio. Covered parking is included in the square footage calculations for FAR. For full details of what is included in FAR calculations, see the Project Statistics Form directions and square footage measurements table available at the Community Development Department website and office.




Example Average
Existing Home
Illustration assumes:
• 60' x 100' lot
1300 sq.ft. House
6,000 sq.ft. lot
= .22 FAR


Example 85% of
Maximum FAR
Illustration assumes:
• 60' x 100' lot
2083 sq.ft. House
6,000 sq.ft. lot
= .35 FAR


Example of Maximum FAR
Illustration assumes:
• 60' x 100' lot
2700 sq.ft. House
6,000 sq.ft. lot
= .45 FAR

APPLICABILITY

Maximum FARs as requirements apply to a home taller than one story and a basement on lots smaller than 15,000 square feet in size in single-family zones. The maximum requirements also apply to homes taller than 17' from natural or finished grade, whichver is lower on lots smaller than 15,000 square feet in single-family zones. Other properties, such as those 15,000 square foot lots or larger, or properties in multi-family zones, the FARs are applied as guidelines, rather than requirements.

The only way to exceed a required maximum FAR for most projects would be to request a "Planning Commission Modification" (see page 21-C for exception). However, for any project, no matter the location or height, a review board can request a smaller size if it is necessary in order for an approval to be made, for example to ensure the NPO Findings on page 5-D or other findings on page 6-D can be made.

Table 1: Formula Table

Lot Size Range in Sq. Ft	Max. Home Size (in sq. ft.) incl. garage/carport
≤4000 sq. ft.	2200
4000 - 10000 sq. ft.	1200 + (0.25 x lot size)
10000 - 14999 sq. ft.	2500 + (0.125 x lot size)
15000 - 19999 sq. ft.	4180 + (0.013 x lot size)
≥ 20000 sq. ft.	4430 + (0.013 x lot size)

Garage/Carport Allowance*	
Lot Size	*Allowance*
< 20000	500
> 20000	750*
≥ 20000	750*

*Where zone district allows, see Municipal Code 28.87.160.4

**Garage/carport allowance does not need to be used only for garage/carport space for maximum square footage calculations. Max. sq. ft. can be distributed anywhere if consistent with Zoning regulations. Ex.: two-car covered parking minimum space requirement is 400 sq. ft. and 100 sq. ft. of remaining "allowance" could be used in the home instead of in the garage/carport.

Table 2: Example FAR Calculations Table

		Proposal			
	Lot Size	***100% Maximum Home Size including garage/carport***	*Maximum Home Size excluding garage/carport allowance ** *	***85% of Maximun Home Size including garage/carport***	*Maximum FAR including garage/carport*
REQUIRED	4000	2200	1700	1870	0.55
	5000	2450	1950	2083	0.49
	6000	2700	2200	2295	0.45
	7000	2950	2450	2508	0.42
	7499	3075	2575	2614	0.41
	7500	3075	2575	2614	0.41
	8000	3200	2700	2720	0.40
	9000	3450	2950	2933	0.38
	10000	3750	3250	3188	0.38
	11000	3875	3375	3294	0.35
	12000	4000	3500	3400	0.33
	13000	4125	3625	3506	0.32
	14000	4250	3750	3613	0.30
	14999	4375	3875	3719	0.29
GUIDELINES	15000	4375	3875	3719	0.29
	20000	4690	3940	3987	0.23
	1/2 acre	4713	3963	4006	0.22
	3/4 acres	4855	4105	4127	0.15
	1 acre	4996	4246	4247	0.11
	1.5 acres	5279	4529	4488	0.08
	2 acres	5563	4813	4728	0.06
	2.5 acres	5846	5096	4969	0.05
	3 acres	6129	5379	5210	0.05
	3.5 acres	6412	5662	5450	0.04
	4 acres	6695	5945	5691	0.04
	4.5 acres	6978	6228	5932	0.04
	5 acres	7261	6511	6172	0.03
	5.5 acres	7545	6795	6413	0.03
	6 acres	7828	7078	6654	0.03

To determine maximum allowed net square footage for a property, follow these steps:

1. Find the lot size range that includes the project lot size on the Formula Table, Table 1, see page 20-C.
2. Complete the formula using the lot size.
3. If you would like to check your work with some example FAR calculations, see Table 2 on page 20-C.

Projects Under 85% of Maximum FARs Are Encouraged

Project applications under 85% of the maximum FAR are generally easier to design, prepare, process and review because they are more likely to be compatible with the surrounding neighborhood than projects over 85% of the maximum FAR. Projects under 85% of the maximum FAR are generally subject to the simpler standard Design Review submittal requirements listed on page 3-D and described in Planning and Zoning Counter handouts. Design Review fees for projects under 85% of the maximum FAR are lower than fees for larger projects. Projects over 85% of the maximum FAR are more likely to pose neighborhood compatibility issues and are generally discouraged. However, careful design and review can sometimes produce projects that are still compatible with the surrounding neighborhood.

Due to the special nature of these larger, potentially incompatible projects, additional submittal information is required for these projects, described briefly on page 4-D and in detail in Planning and Zoning Counter handouts. Projects proposing square footage over the maximum FAR are strongly discouraged in most cases. However, there may be some project sites with special physical features, which when combined with exceptional design, can accommodate an over FAR maximum home compatible with the neighborhood. A Planning Commission modification and additional submittal requirements, described breifly on page 4-D and in detail in Planning and Zoning Counter handouts, are required for over maximum FAR proposals.

Applicability of FARs as Guidelines

Maximum FARs are applied as guidelines rather than requirements on lots that are 15,000 square feet or larger, or located in multi family or non-residential zones. Site and zoning variables might contribute to less reliability in the use of the 20 closest FAR Study.

Some situations may support higher FARs and projects that approach or exceed guideline FARs might not pose a problem and FAR compatibility may be less critical. Larger lots may allow more space between structures and in some cases may allow the project to be less visible to the public and to neighbors. In multi-family or non-residential zones where density of development is usually higher, single-family residential projects will likely have lower FARs than other types of development. These zones are likely to have more variety of development.

Other situations may support lower FARs. When the buildable portion of a site is small in relationship to the lot size, an FAR lower than what would normally be indicated for the lot size may be more appropriate. On some large lots not all of the lot

area may be developable due to steep slopes or creek or ocean bluff setbacks. These site constraints can push development on a site closer to the street, or closer to neighbors. In the Riviera there are examples where development on larger lots is clustered close together around cul-de-sacs or built close to the public streets. The configuration of the lot may reduce its developable area, for example flag lots. Corner lots or other lots with multiple street frontages have increased area within the front setbacks and development on these lots may be more visible. In situations like these, compatibility with neighboring FARs may be more pertinent. As a general rule, where the development is closer to property boundaries or more visible to the public and to neighbors, the proposed FAR should be reduced.

Properties Legal Non-Conforming as to a Required Maximum Size

Some "legal non-conforming as to FAR" properties can have a one-time addition of up to 100 square feet without a Planning Commission modification being required. Municipal Code 28.87.030.D.1.c allows such additions to reasonably accommodate minor changes in floor plans such as bathroom or closet additions to provide some flexibility for structures legal non-conforming as to a required maximum floor area (FAR standards) without the need for a Planning Commission modification. Consult the Municipal Code and City Staff for more information.

20 Closest FAR Study

When a project proposes to exceed 85% of a maximum required FAR, the applicant must provide a study of the FARs of the 20 closest lots. Using a geographic information system, the 20 closest lots are selected for the project's neighborhood. This information is a tool used by the review board to assist in determining the compatibility of a project's size within its neighborhood. Data on square footages and lot sizes are obtained from the County Assessor's Office or from City records and plan archives. The information is assumed to be approximate due to variations in calculation methods and because many County records reflect original home sizes, but the data allows a general sense of the project's size and FAR compatibility with nearby development. Factors to consider when using the 20 Closest FAR Study include:

- Variability of square footages in the neighborhood
- Variability of lot sizes and FARs in the neighborhood
- Site constraints; how much of the lot area is developable?
- Is the project near the average for the neighborhood?
- Is the project among the largest in the neighborhood?
- The project's volume, bulk, scale, height, and massing relative to its square footage
- Closer proximity to neighboring structures and/or denser development in the neighborhood suggests closer adherence to the size of adjacent structures and to the average size of structures in the study.

Good Neighbor Guidelines & Tips

The following guidelines and tips can help you remain friends with your neighbors after the completion of your new or remodeled house. They are based on the Golden Rule: "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you."

Think about what your concerns would be if your next door neighbor were proposing to either build a new house or add on to an existing house. Incorporate those concerns into your thinking as you design your own new or remodeled house.

It is the intent of these guidelines and tips to advance sound planning in building homes and additions with scrutiny of neighborhood compatibility, views and privacy. While it is not the intent to create a right to privacy or views, a compromise that advances these goals is highly desirable.

Before Completing Your Design

- Design your addition or your new house as if you were going to live next door to it.
- Talk with your neighbors and show them your proposed design.
- Consider organizing a meeting with your neighbors to encourage neighbor discussions.
- Read the article regarding "Tips for Managing Conflict with Comfort" provided in this section which can help provide guidance for successful discussions.

In General

When your project is reviewed by the Single Family Design Board (SFDB), the SFDB will be looking for general compliance with these Good Neighbor Guidelines (See Finding 6 on page 5-D) along with other Neighborhood Compatibility Findings. The SFDB understands that, in some cases, strong compliance with privacy, landscaping, noise and lighting guidelines may not be possible or necessary. However, in cases where there appear to be significant potential issues raised by a project design that would not be posed with a suitable alternative design more sensitive to neighboring properties, the SFDB may deny the project. It is necessary that you communicate to the SFDB how your project is generally consistent with the Good Neighbor Guidelines. The techniques below will help when you appear before the SFDB:

- Discuss how you have designed your project with your neighbors in mind
- Summarize for the SFDB the results of any discussions you have had with neighbors about your project.

Using these techniques can help the SFDB to see how you have made a "good faith effort" to be generally consistent with the Good Neighbor Guidelines.

This chapter covers the following guideline and tip topics.

Guidelines	Tips
1. Privacy	• Private Views
2. Landscaping	• Construction Impacts
3. Noise	• Managing Conflict with Comfort
4. Lighting	

GOOD NEIGHBOR GUIDELINES

36. PRIVACY GUIDELINES

36.1 **Visual Distance**

Locate structures and additions to increase visual distance between buildings. Avoiding large two-story building masses at the sides and rear of adjacent single family rear yards can help preserve privacy and sunlight access for your home and for neighboring properties.

Rather than simply following Municipal Code minimum setback standards, consider what a comfortable distance between a proposed addition and an existing neighbor's structure would be. Also consider the pattern of building separation in the immediate neighborhood and design a project compatible with this pattern. Locate areas that require more privacy away from your neighbors. Orient active outdoor areas away from neighbors.

36.2 **Upper-Story Decks and Balconies**

Avoid or minimize the number of decks that overlook neighboring properties. Locate upper-story balconies and decks to minimize the loss of privacy for neighboring properties. Upper-story balconies or decks facing the street are usually preferable to upper-story balconies or decks facing a yard area adjacent to a neighbor. Techniques to lessen impacts to neighboring property privacy include the following:

36.2.1 Meeting with neighbors adjacent to proposed upper-story balconies and decks prior to beginning the City application process is strongly encouraged.

36.2.2 Screen second-story balconies and decks from neighboring property by incorporating architectural screening elements such as enclosing walls, trellises, or awnings. For example, effective enclosures might include walls over 4' and perimeter planters facing neighbor's side or rear yards.

36.2.3 Locate second-story balconies and decks to avoid direct sight lines from the deck or balcony to neighbors' windows, open yard, patio, deck, and/or loggia areas.

36.2.4 Set back upper-story decks or balconies over 20 square feet at least 15' from interior lot lines when possible.

36.2.5 Avoid siting any "free-standing" chimneys on upper-story decks or balconies. Such chimneys look "out of place" architecturally and are better sited adjacent to a structure. Also, such chimney might block neighbors' views. If Building and Safety minimum clearance standards can be met, chimneys are generally recommended to be less than 8' in height.

36.2.6 In Hillside areas, special consideration is needed for decks and outdoor courtyard placement. Depending on topography, these features have the potential to greatly affect downhill neighbors' privacy and noise levels. Often, keeping decks and outdoor courtyards within the Municipal Code setbacks listed for a zone district, even when not required, can help to maintain good neighbor relations.

Positive Neighborhood Amenity	Front Porch
Least Privacy Impact to Neighbors (Preferred)	First-floor patios & decks inside setback lines 2nd-Story decks and balconies on front property line
	2nd-story decks and balconies on side or rear of house, more than 15' from a neighbor's property line
	2nd-story decks and balconies on side or rear of house, less than 15' from property line, less than 3' x 7' in size
Most Privacy Impact to Neighbors (Discouraged)	2nd-story decks and balconies on side or rear of house, less than 15' from property line, larger than 3' x 7' in size

Balcony: A platform cantilevered from the wall of a building, usually resting on brackets or consoles, and enclosed with a railing.

Deck: A flat open platform, typically with a railing, either attached to a building or free-standing and supported by pillars, posts, or walls.

Note: The focus of these photos are the deck privacy features only. Please refer to Compatibility Guidelines and Infill Guideline for information regarding designing compatible two-story homes.

Front yard deck in the East Mesa neighborhood is set forward from neighbors' front building lines and it also features deeply recessed privacy sidewalls. (36.2.2, 36.2.3, 36.2.5)

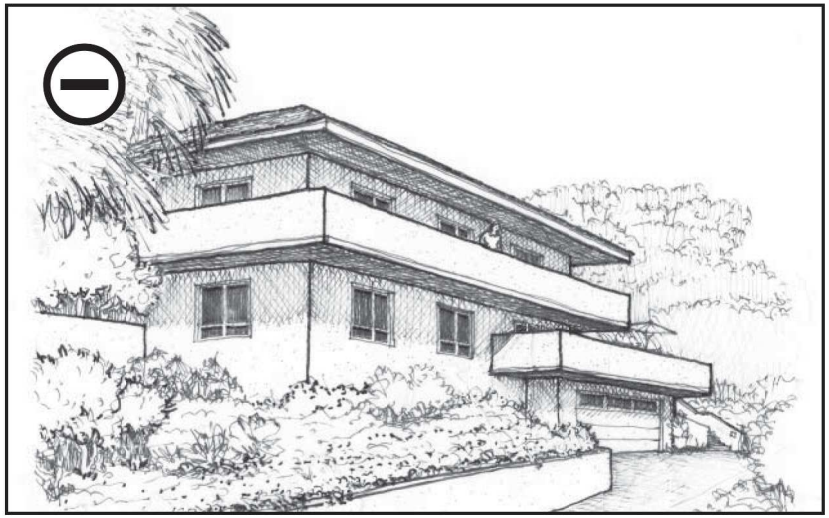
This front yard deck in the East Mesa neighborhood features a privacy screening wall on the edge of the deck closest to an adjacent neighbor. (36.2.2, 36.2.3, 36.2.5)

This front yard deck in the Alta Mesa neighborhood is set closer to the street than the adjacent neighbor's home, resulting in less privacy impacts to the neighbor's side yard windows and living space. (36.2.3, 36.2.5)

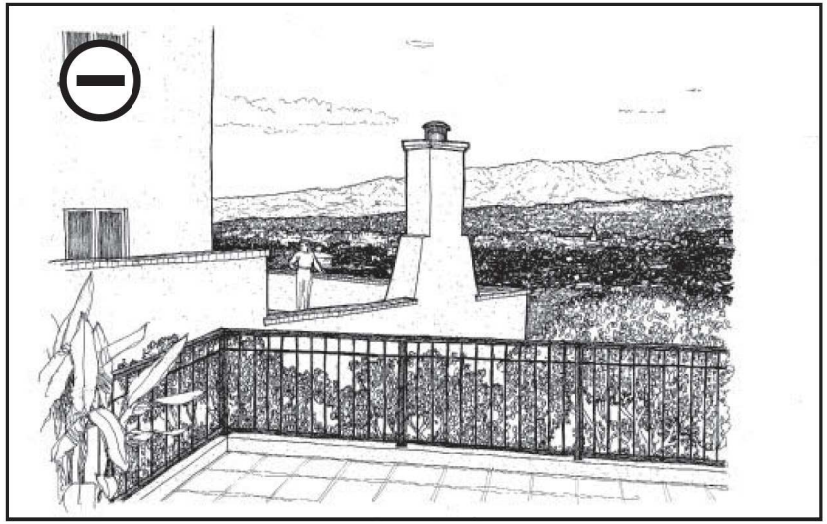
A second floor uncovered deck set into the roof of the first floor maintains the apparent volume of the structure and avoids a "looming" effect in the Samarkand neighborhood. (36.2, 36.2.3, 36.2.5)

Side yard decks invade privacy. More attention to guidelines 36.2.2 and 36.2.3 is needed for projects and below.

Free-standing decks supported by pillars rather than building elements are less attractive.



This deck appears to "wrap around" the house, creating the ability for occupants to look over neighboring properties from every point, which can create privacy issues for neighbors.



Avoid placing fireplaces with chimneys on outdoor decks separated from the main structure. (36.2.5)

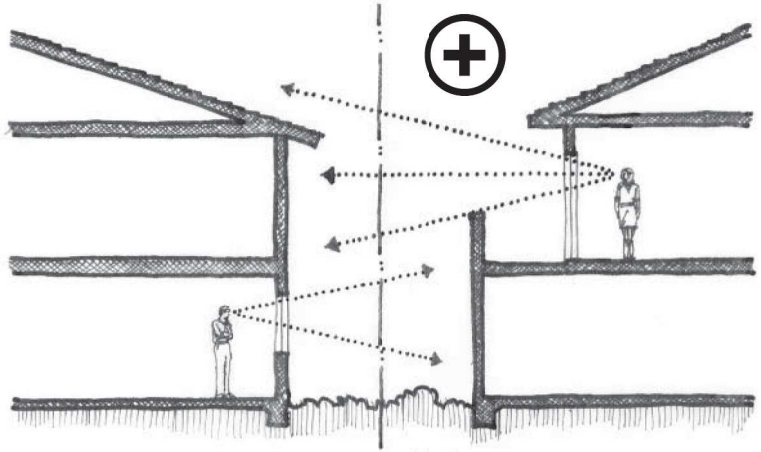
36.3 **Upper-Story Windows:** Minimize the number of windows on proposed buildings that overlook neighboring properties. Orient your upper-story windows to protect your neighbor's privacy. You may not want to see them any more than they want to be seen by you.

36.3.1 Place windows to avoid direct views into existing neighboring windows by offsetting or staggering windows facing neighbors' windows.

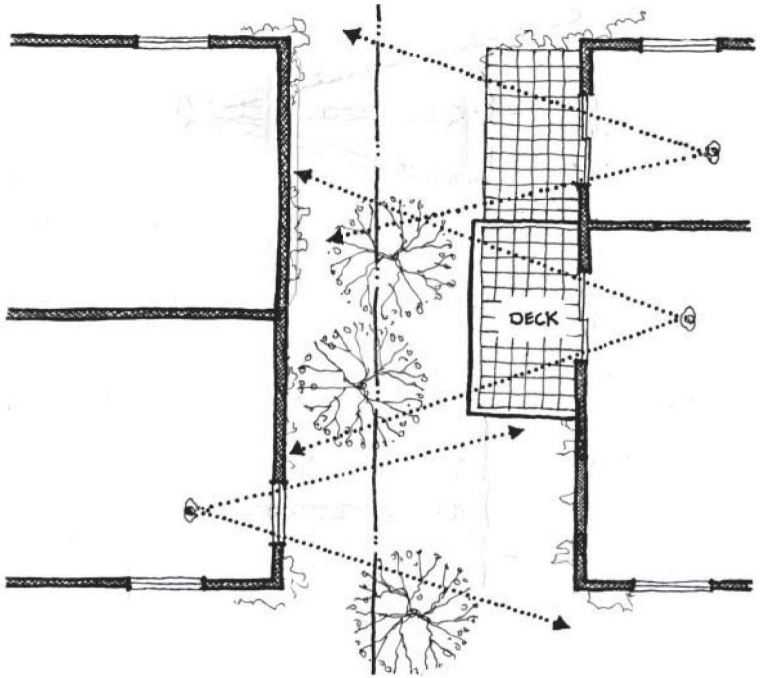
36.3.2 Avoid large upper-story windows overlooking adjacent rear yards.

36.3.3 Use translucent window glass or high windows to allow illumination while protecting privacy.

36.3.4 Set back upper floors or increase side and rear setbacks to pull windows farther away from neighboring residences.

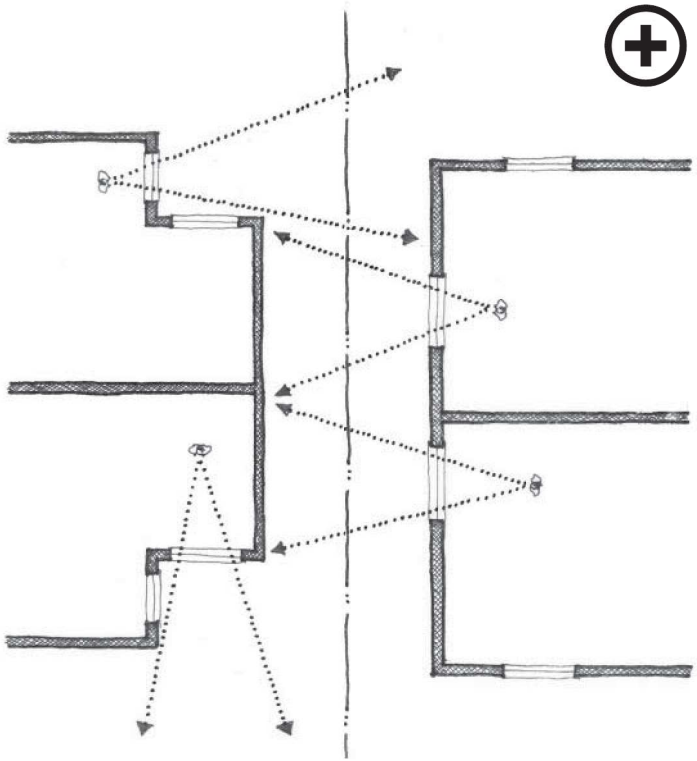


Privacy Views: Setting second stories back further than the first-story requirement will help screen views between adjacent houses. (36.3.1, 36.3.2, 36.3.4)

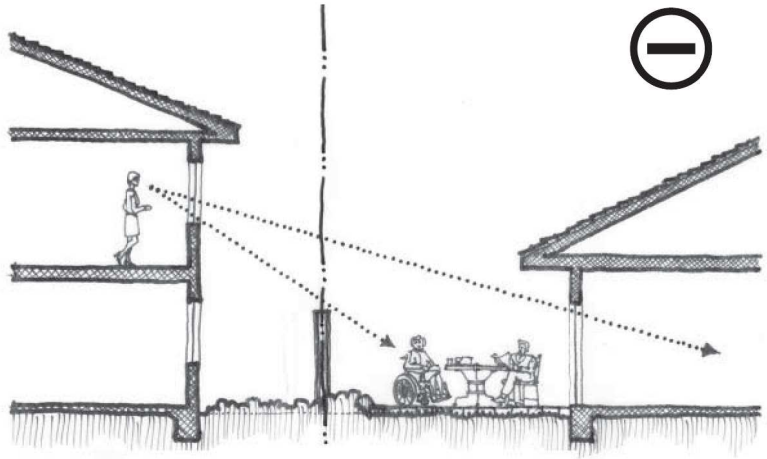


Privacy Views: Offset window location or strategically placed trellises will help prevent views into adjacent houses. (36.3.1)

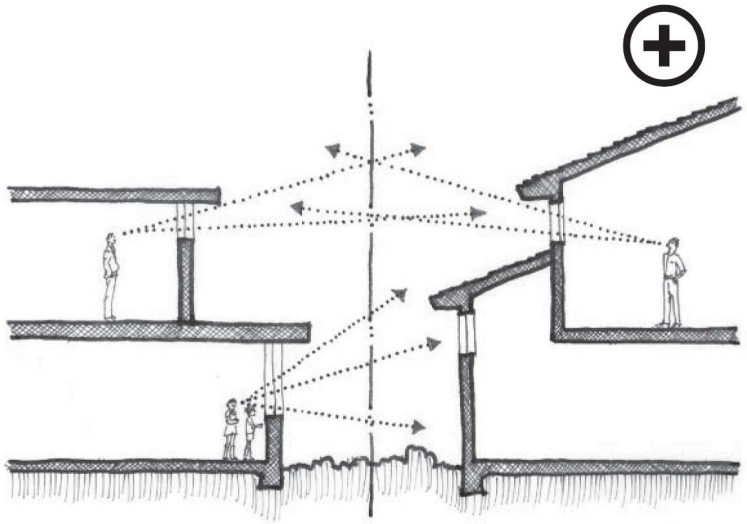
Orient second-story windows to protect neighbor's privacy.



Inset corner windows can help avoid direct alignment with neighbor's windows. (36.3.1, 36.3.4)



Privacy Views: Avoid placing windows in locations that would look into adjacent windows or active yard spaces, where possible.



High window placement helps prevent views into adjacent houses. (36.3.1,36.3.2, 36.3.3, 36.3.4)