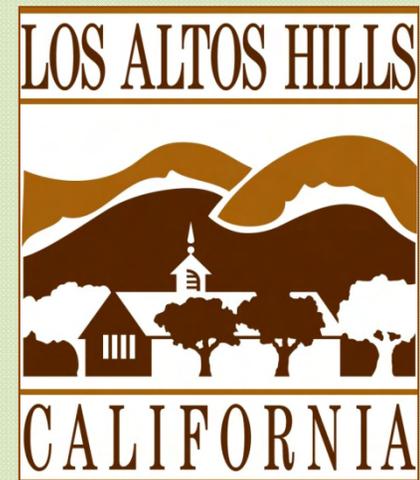


# Fast Track Guide for New Residences



# FAST TRACK GUIDE COMMITTEE

**City Council:**

Jean Mordo  
Ginger Summit

**Planning Commission:**

Eric Clow  
John Harpootlian

**Design Community:**

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Shawn Owen, Owen Homes

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Carl Cahill

**Staff:**

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Nicole Horvitz, Assistant Planner  
Cynthia Richardson, Consultant Planner

Timeline

Committee Established	May 2009
Final Committee Review	January 2010
Planning Commission Review	June 2010
City Council Adoption	July 15, 2010

**Illustration and Graphics:** Peter Duxbury, Architect  
Robert Frank Associates

## Welcome to Los Altos Hills

Los Altos Hills is a residential community nestled in the scenic foothills of the Santa Cruz Mountains. Once a rural agricultural area, the community has become one of the premier residential areas in Silicon Valley. Over the years, the population has grown and land use patterns have changed. The farmhouses, cattle ranches, and orchards of the past have become today's private homes, riding stables, and vineyards. The community has gradually urbanized over time but still retains a semi-rural atmosphere, with large lots and expanses of open space, as envisioned by the Town's founders.

The Town is characterized by rolling hills, valleys, creeks, woods, and wildlife. Many properties have sweeping views of the San Francisco Bay, Santa Clara Valley, and the coastal mountains to the west. Most well established properties fit into the immediate environment and harmoniously blend with the overall neighborhood.

The Town's Zoning Ordinances and General Plan require that every effort be made to preserve the Town's semi-rural character, natural atmosphere, and rustic appearance. Thus, a newcomer who buys an undeveloped lot with the intent of building an entirely new home is faced with a special challenge, and a resident who wishes to rebuild an existing residence must be careful to see these requirements are met.

The purpose of this guide and the checklist is to help those who are planning to build new homes to understand the basic philosophy behind the Zoning Ordinances and the General Plan. Such an understanding will help them arrive, more rapidly, at a home design which will be consistent with the demands of the environment, and also assist in avoiding the delay and costs of redesigns.

Building of homes in the Town is regulated by the Town's Zoning Ordinances and the General Plan. This handbook is meant to familiarize the homeowner and/or designer with the spirit of these legal documents and is not meant to replace them. If this guide appears in any detail to conflict with them, the Zoning Ordinances and the General Plan take precedence.

If you need any additional clarification of these guidelines, the Town staff will always be ready and pleased to provide it.

## Things to Keep in Mind When You Use This Guide

1. This guide has been developed to be consistent with the Town's ordinances, policies, and regulations. Ordinances and policies are modified from time to time, so it is advisable to check with the Town Planning Department to determine whether there have been any significant changes since the guidelines were published.
2. The Fast Track checklist that accompanies this document will be used to determine how closely a proposed new residence complies with the development philosophy of the Town. A new residence project that scores 14 points or less is eligible for a Fast Track hearing. A project that scores between 15 to 21 points may be forwarded to the Planning Commission. A project that scores 22 points or greater must be reviewed by the Planning Commission.
3. This guide is intended to set the framework for appropriate design, but not inhibit creativity in design. If your plans substantially deviate from the guide there must be adequate justification.
4. Every lot in the Town of Los Altos Hills is unique. Not all aspects of this guide will be applicable to every lot.
5. If you have not yet purchased a home site, and have a particular style of house in mind, you should look for a lot that will accommodate your chosen style. If you have already acquired a lot, be sure to design a home appropriate for that specific lot, taking into consideration these guidelines.
6. On a visible lot, both the good and bad points of the design of a home tend to show up more obviously than on a more secluded lot. Therefore, it is important when planning a home on an exposed lot, to observe this guidebook more rigorously.
7. A pre-application meeting is extremely helpful to the prospective home owner and design professional. The planning staff can help point out the characteristics of the site and alert the owner to important factors which may not be obvious. Such factors may include: on and off site views, configuration of the lot, privacy issues, existing or potential future pathway requirements, and potential for the requirement of an open space easement. The planning staff can also advise you as to whether the project would be subject to Fast Track or Planning Commission review.
8. In addition to the required public notice procedure, it is also important to perform neighborhood outreach. Often times it is possible to work with your neighbors to come to a design solution without compromising your intended design, or stifling your own creativity. Establishing good relations with your future neighbors can often make the entire planning review process smoother.

## Some of the Town's Key Development Regulations

- Basements:** Under certain conditions, basements may not count as floor area.
- Conservation Easement:** A portion of land reserve for the purpose of protection the natural vegetation, terrain, watercourses, and wildlife. A conservation easement is voluntarily created and is perpetual in duration.
- Fencing:** Fencing is restricted in height and openness on certain areas of a lot.
- Green Building:** All new residences must achieve a minimum rating under either Build It Green or LEED for Homes rating systems.
- Grading:** No grading is allowed within 10 feet of the property line.
- Height:** Maximum permitted building height is 27 feet measured from natural or finished grade, whichever is lower. The maximum height from the building's lowest point to the highest roof elevation is 35 feet.
- Min. Lot Size:** The minimum size of a lot required for home construction increases with the slope of the land. It is one net acre if the slope is 10% or less, about 1.5 acres for lots with slopes of 25%, and about 2 acres for lots with 33% slopes.
- Open Space Easement:** Dedication of open space easements may be required where appropriate as a condition of approval for new development. Each parcel will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis during the site development review process to determine whether an open space easement should be required, based on the extent of steep slopes (generally in excess of 30%), the presence of heritage oak trees, and/or creek corridors. Other considerations include the size of the proposed open space easement, its contiguity with existing open space easements, and whether the property is located within an Open Space Conservation Area.
- Parking:** All residences must have at least four off-street parking spaces.

**Pathways:** If the Town's Master Pathway Plan calls for a path on the property, the path is required to be constructed and complete when the new residence is completed. Where driveways cross a path, they must have a non-slip surface. (Title 10, Chapter 2, Article 6 of the Los Altos Hills Municipal Code)

**Setbacks:** Minimum required setbacks are as follows: front yard-40 feet from road right of way or access easement, side and rear yard-30 feet from property line, road right of way or access easement.

**Slope Density:** The Town has created slope density requirements as a way to equalize the intensity of development on both steep and flat lots. In general, the steeper the lot, the larger it needs to be to hold the same amount of development as a flatter lot with equal impact. When implementing this "slope density" concept, the Town considers two aspects of a building site: the floor area of a building and the amount of land covered by development. The Town imposes a maximum floor area (MFA) and a maximum development area (MDA). Two characteristics of the lot affect these numbers: the average slope (steepness) and the net area (acreage) of the site. These limits are designed to keep the overall impact of developing steeper lots no greater than the impact of the traditional one (1) acre flat lots.

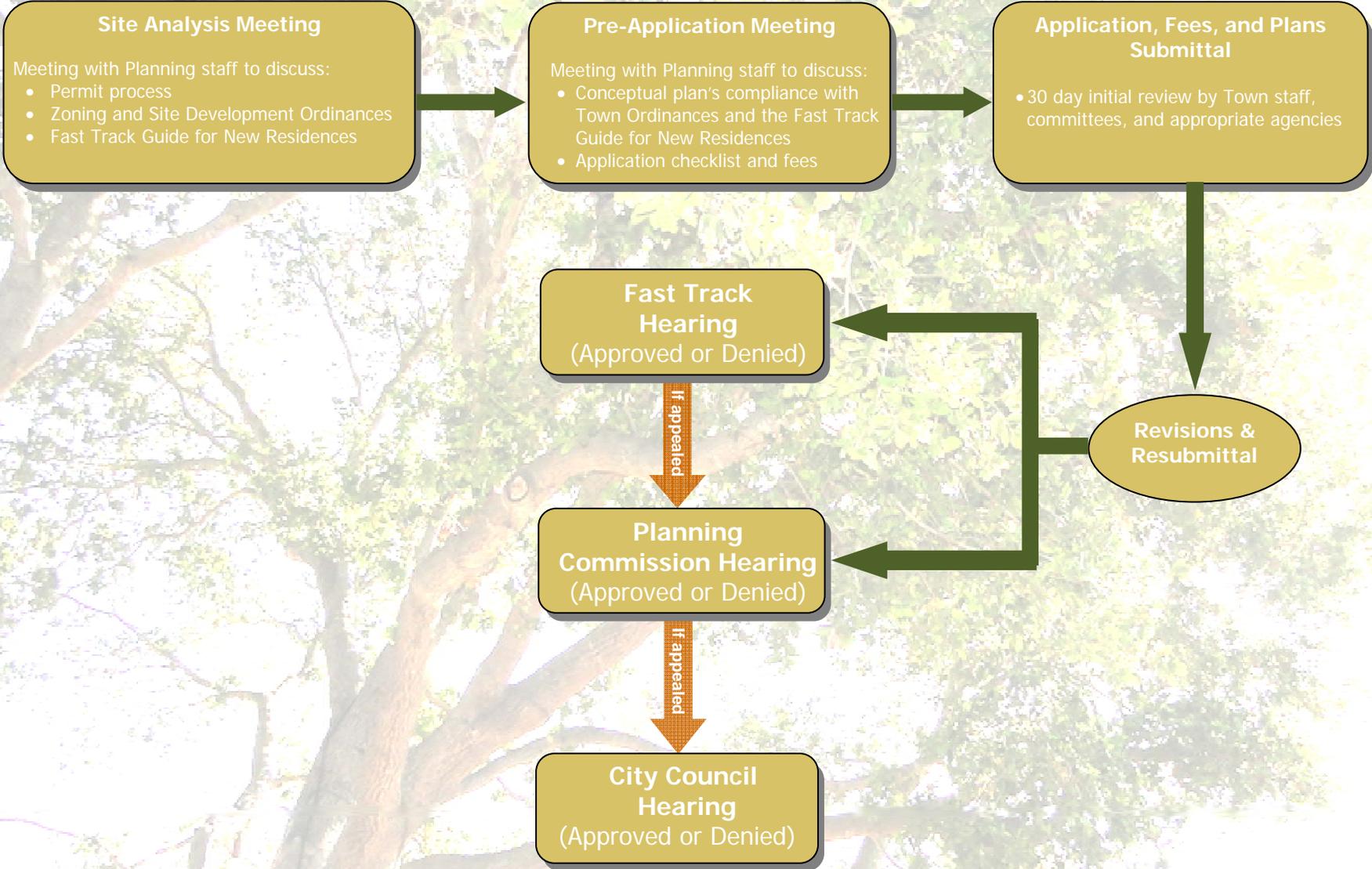
	Lot Size 1 Net Acre	Lot Size 2 Net Acres
 Slope=1-10%	MDA=15,000 MFA=6,000	MDA=30,000 MFA=12,000
 Slope=20%	MDA=8,843 MFA=5,000	MDA=17,670 MFA=8,641
 Slope=40% <small>*This lot is so constrained that it would require a Conditional Development Permit</small>	MDA=5,670 MFA=3,570	MDA=7,500 MFA=5,000

**Stories:** Three (3) story building facades are strongly discouraged, and two (2) story houses may not be permitted on hilltops and ridges.

**Trees:** The Town has a Tree Ordinance that protects heritage oak trees.

# Town of Los Altos Hills

## Planning Review Process for New Residences



# Town of Los Altos Hills

## Fast Track Guide for New Residences Checklist

Points range from 1 to 5, 5=Very Important to 1=Recommended, R=Required 0-14 points = Fast Track Hearing 15+ points = Planning Commission Hearing		Points	Project
<b>Goal I Retain and Enhance the Open Natural Atmosphere of Los Altos Hills</b>			
A.1	Build with the contour of the land.	5	
B.1	Retain the natural character of creeks, vegetation, and natural drainage swales on your property.	R	-
C.1	An open space easement may be required where appropriate, based on the extent of steep slopes (generally in excess of 30%), the presence of heritage oak trees, and/or creek corridors.	R	-
D.1	Place roads and driveways on existing contours to minimize grading. Driveways should have a slope of 15% or less	4	
D.2	Sharing driveways with neighbors may be mutually beneficial, especially on long hillside slopes.	1	
E.1	Minimize the use of fencing to allow the natural landforms to flow together. Open fencing is encouraged.	R	-
E.2	Fences should be constructed of a non-reflective material and use natural or dark colors.	1	
E.3	Entry columns and gates are discouraged as they create a barrier to the flow of open space.	3	
E.4	The closer a fence is to the roadway, the lower the fence is required to be.	R	-
<b>Goal II Design your Home to Fit the Site and to be Unobtrusive in the Neighborhood</b>			
A.1	Houses on prominent hilltops or ridgelines may be required to be one story.	R	-
A.2	Hilltops or ridgelines shall not be cut down, flattened, or similarly graded to create a building pad in excess of the actual area covered by the principal residence.	R	-
A.3	On a sloping site, the structure should be stepped down the hill utilizing one story building elements. Avoid stilts over downhill slopes. Cut foundations should be used instead on a hilly terrain.	5	
B.1	Minimize obstruction of on and off site views by considerate placement of structures.	4	
B.2	Incorporate passive solar design with south or southwest-facing roof areas to accommodate a solar energy system.	1	
B.3	Provide shading for south facing windows.	1	

## Town of Los Altos Hills Fast Track Guide for New Residences Checklist

Points range from 1 to 5, 5=Very Important to 1=Recommended, R=Required 0-14 points = Fast Track Hearing 15+ points = Planning Commission Hearing		Points	Project
<b>Goal III Design your House to Minimize the Appearance of Bulk</b>			
A.1	Increasing setbacks may help to mitigate mass and bulk.	3	
B.1	Longer roof eaves and rakes are encouraged for shade.	2	
B.2	Roof slopes should be consistent and complementary with the topography of the site.	3	
B.3	The house should be keyed/cut in slopes to reduce fill.	4	
B.4	Trellises are encouraged for shade instead of solid roofs (on patios and breezeways) to minimize bulk.	3	
B.5	The use of architectural devices such as verandas, balconies, arcades, trellises, building materials, etc...are encouraged to soften the building bulk.	3	
B.6	Vertical and horizontal articulation of building facades should be used to avoid long, uninterrupted exterior walls. Appropriate scale and proportions should be incorporated into the design to avoid improper balance of the structure.	4	
C.1	For exterior building materials, darker or natural colors are encouraged.	3	
D.1	Two story walls which increase perception of mass can be mitigated by introducing detail, setting back the second story, lowering the second story plate height, or using a combination of one and two story elements.	5	
E.1	On a sloping lot, a basement underneath a two story home should not be daylighted to avoid the appearance of a three story facade.	5	
E.2	The appearance of a stacked three story facade should be avoided. When building on a sloped lot, stepping with the hillside is strongly encouraged.	5	

# Town of Los Altos Hills

## Fast Track Guide for New Residences Checklist

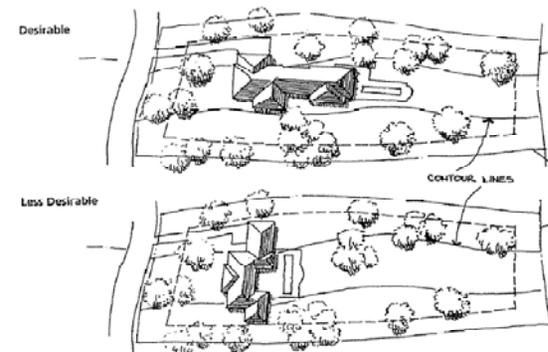
Points range from 1 to 5, 5=Very Important to 1=Recommended, R=Required 0-14 points = Fast Track Hearing 15+ points = Planning Commission Hearing		Points	Project
<b>Goal IV Design for Your Needs and the Needs of the Town and Those of Your Neighbors</b>			
A.1	Minimize fire danger. Class A roofs and sprinkler system are required. Use fire resistant landscape w/in 30' of the house.	R	-
A.2	Design site plan to allow for adequate access and turnaround for emergency vehicles.	R	-
A.3	Avoid all geotechnical hazards such as landslides, debris flow, and earthquake faults.	R	-
A.4	Structures shall be set back a minimum of 25 feet from the top of bank of all creeks, to protect the riparian habitat.	R	-
A.5	Design for adequate drainage. Disperse water runoff on your own property or direct to an adequate drainage facility. Don't increase runoff into adjacent properties.	R	-
A.6	Reduce soil erosion by minimizing discing, and by using hydro seeding and finished landscaping. Avoid excessive grading. No grading is allowed within 10 feet of the property line.	R	-
B.1	Plan for adequate outdoor living when planning your total DA. Cluster structures to maximize open space.	2	
B.2	Make landscaping an integral part of your site plan. Existing mature landscaping screening should be maintained and integrated with new landscape.	3	
B.3	Plan for the required four off-street parking places and adequate emergency fire truck turnaround.	R	-
C.1	Respect your neighbor's privacy and views. Avoid locating your house too close to your neighbors or to their private outdoor or indoor living areas. Landscape to minimize obstructing off site views.	4	
C.2	Observe Town pathway system standards and ordinances. When driveway entrances cross pathways, the driveway surface must be "non-slip" and be maintained to Town standards.	R	-
C.3	Place exterior lights carefully to prevent light from shining into neighboring houses ("spill" lights). Uplights are generally not allowed. Light source must not be visible from off-site.	R	-
C.4	Locate all noise producing equipment, i.e. pool pumps and ac units outside required setbacks.	R	-
0-14 points = Fast Track Hearing. 15+ points= Planning Commission Hearing		<b>TOTAL</b>	

# Goal I: Retain and Enhance the Open Natural Atmosphere of Los Altos Hills

## *Philosophy*

A. Residential design should be compatible with the terrain of the land. Integrate your design and new landscaping with the surrounding environment. Retain the rural countryside feeling and openness of the Town's setting. Create a site design that is compatible with the terrain and blends into the surroundings. The surrounding natural environment should dominate the visual character of your lot.

1. All new construction should be built following the contours of the land in order to create a proper balance, unity, and harmonious appearance with the site.



### **General Plan Land Use Element Goal #1:**

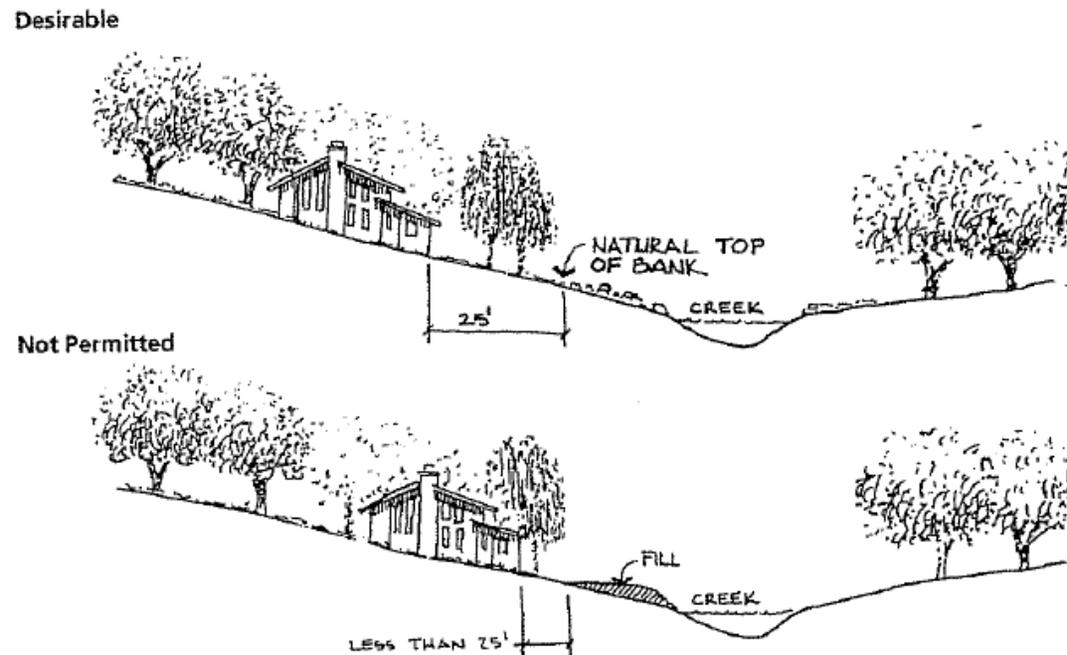
*“Maintain the semi-rural character of the community while providing for residential uses, open space, and the minimum public and private facilities and services needed to serve residents on a continuing basis.” (LU-4)*

# Goal I: Retain and Enhance the Open Natural Atmosphere of Los Altos Hills

## *Philosophy*

**B. Natural features of the land and significant existing vegetation should be preserved. Select compatible new plant materials when designing your landscape plan. Make use of native and existing trees and vegetation, indigenous grasses, riparian habitat, chaparral, orchards, and oaks. Avoid the introduction of incompatible or invasive plant species. Plan the outdoor areas and site the house so that existing trees and vegetation can be preserved. Trees are valued and protected in Los Altos Hills.**

1. Retain the natural character of creeks, vegetation, and natural drainage swales on your property, which can ensure that the existing natural wildlife passageways are not blocked.



# Goal I: Retain and Enhance the Open Natural Atmosphere of Los Altos Hills

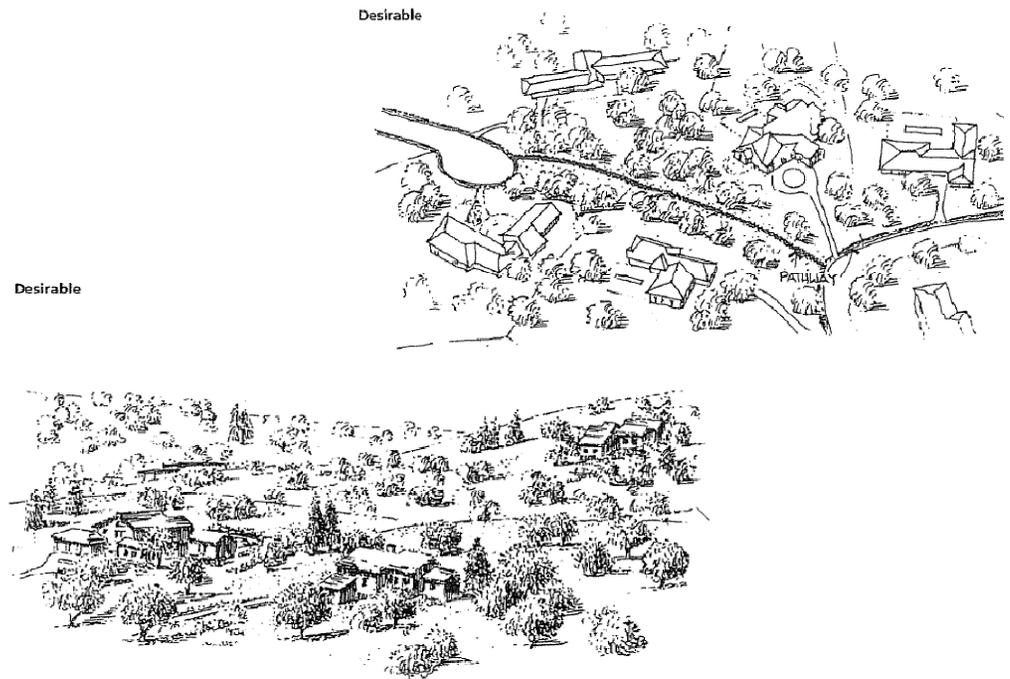
## Philosophy

C. Open space and pathways easements may be required to preserve an open and rural atmosphere. Pathways are one of the aspects of open space in Town and link neighborhoods together. Check the Master Path Plan for the location of planned or existing pathways that may affect your property.

1. An open space easement may be required where appropriate as a condition of approval for new development, based on the extent of steep slopes (generally in excess of 30%), the presence of heritage oak trees, and/or creek corridors. Other considerations shall include the size of the proposed open space easement, its contiguity with existing open space easements, and whether the property is located within an Open Space Conservation Area.

### General Plan Open Space Element Goal #1, Policy 1.2:

*“Protect and maintain those areas necessary to the integrity of natural resources and processes, with special emphasis on, but not limited to, the groundwater recharge and drainage system, open spaces vital for wildlife habitat, open spaces suitable for agriculture, and other areas of major or unique ecological significance.”  
(OS-9)*



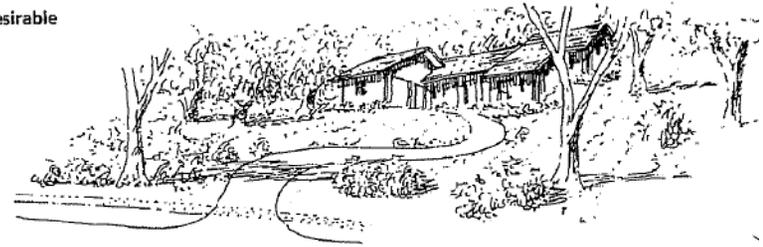
# Goal I: Retain and Enhance the Open Natural Atmosphere of Los Altos Hills

## *Philosophy*

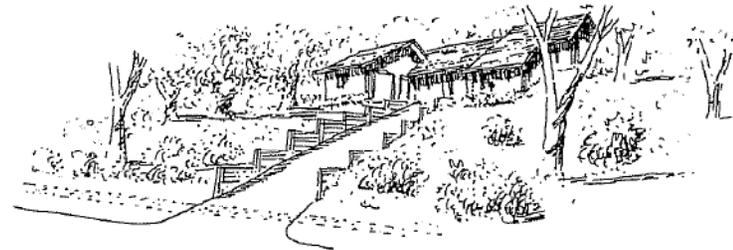
### D. Roads and driveways should be integrated into the natural landscape.

1. Place roads and driveways into existing contours to minimize the amount of grading. Driveways should have a slope of less than 15%.

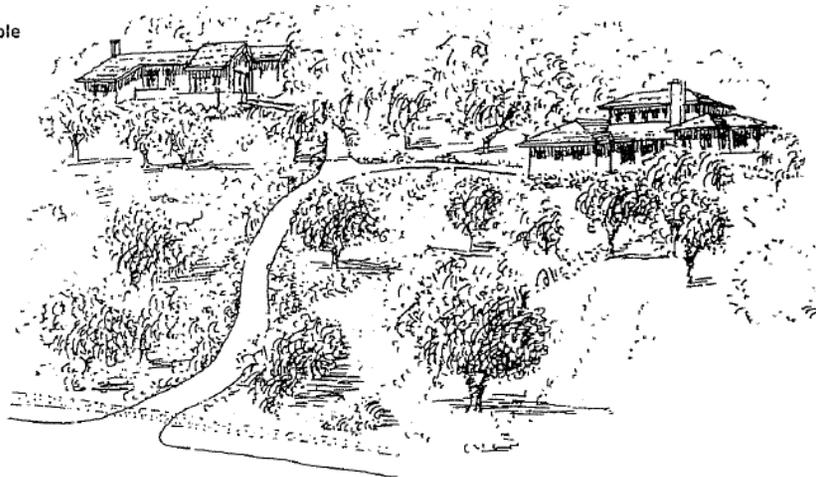
Desirable



Less Desirable



Desirable



2. Sharing driveways with neighbors may be mutually beneficial, especially on long hillside slopes

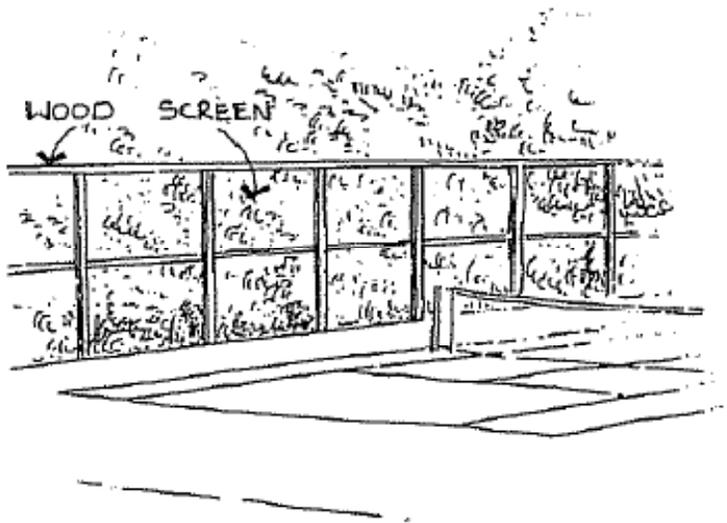
# Goal I: Retain and Enhance the Open Natural Atmosphere of Los Altos Hills

## *Philosophy*

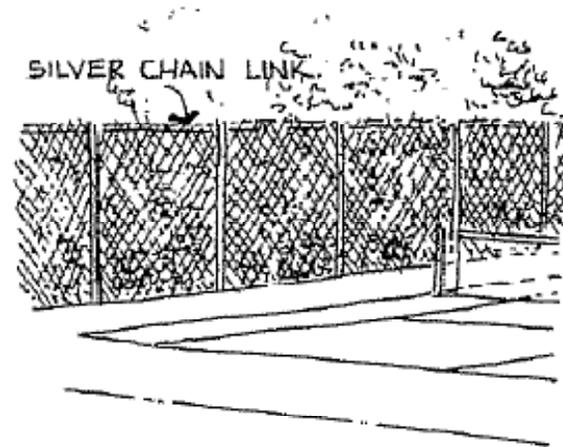
### **E. Fences and entrances should create an open feeling and blend into the landscape.**

1. Minimize the use of fencing to allow the natural landforms to flow together.
2. Fences should be constructed of a non-reflective material and use natural or dark colors.

Desirable



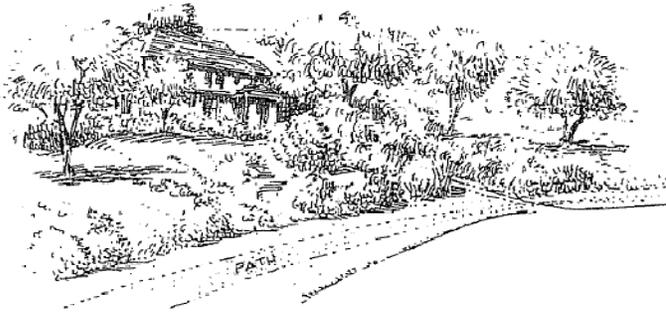
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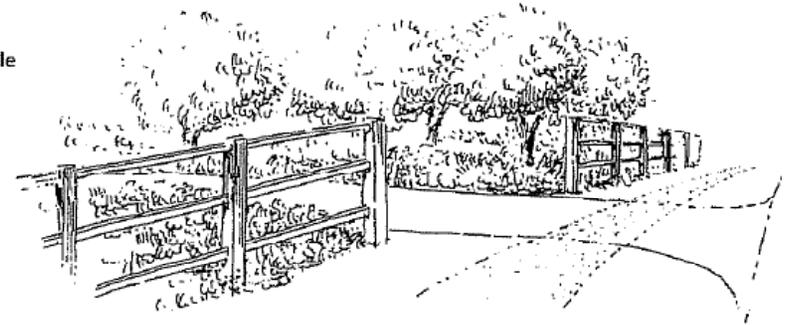
# Goal I: Retain and Enhance the Open Natural Atmosphere of Los Altos Hills

- 3. Entry columns, gates, and porticos are discouraged as they create a barrier to the flow of open space.
- 4. The closer a fence is to the roadway or access easement, the lower the fence is required to be.

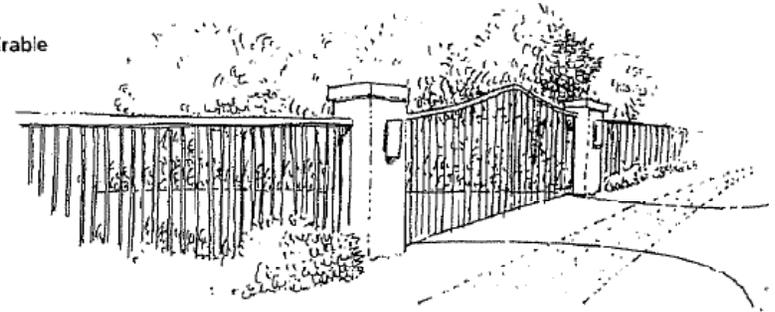
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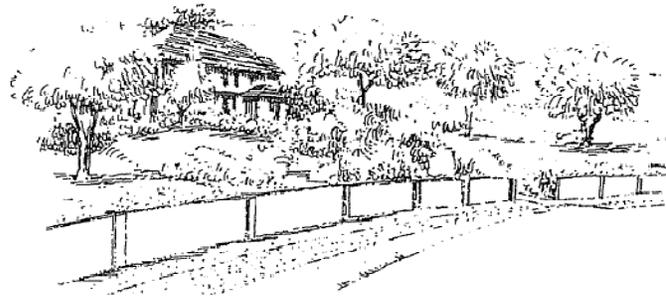
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Less Desirable



Less Desirable



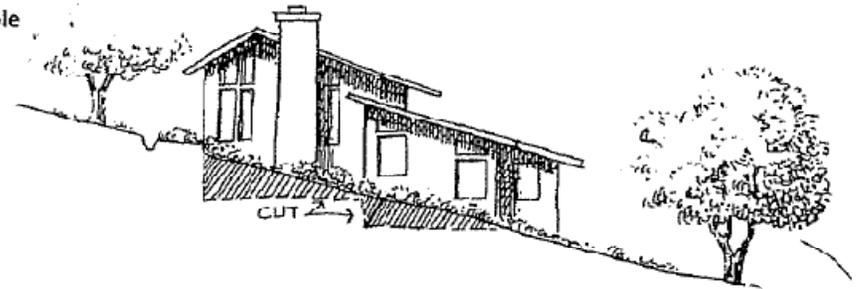
## Goal II: Design Your Home to Fit the Site and to be Unobtrusive in the Neighborhood

### *Philosophy*

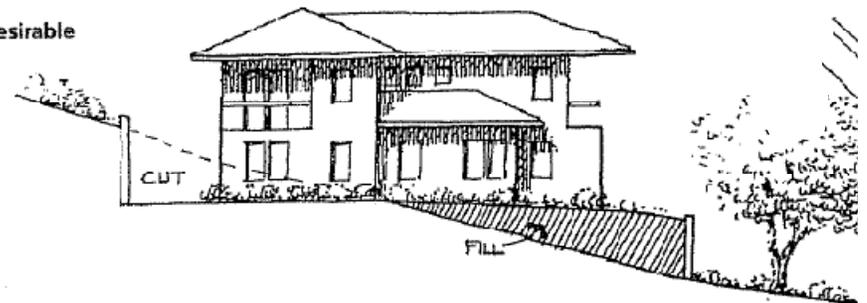
A. Fit the design of the house to the character of the site. The character of the site and its surroundings should determine the design of the structures and their placement on the lot. Ultimately, the landscaping will be the finishing touch that will blend the home with its surroundings.

1. Houses on prominent hilltops or ridgelines may be required to be one story.
2. Hilltops or ridgelines shall not be cut down, flattened, or similarly graded to create a building pad in excess of the actual area covered by the principal residence.
3. On a sloping site, the structure should be stepped down the hill utilizing one story building elements. Avoid stilts over downhill slopes. Cut foundations should be used instead on a hill terrain.

Desirable



Less Desirable



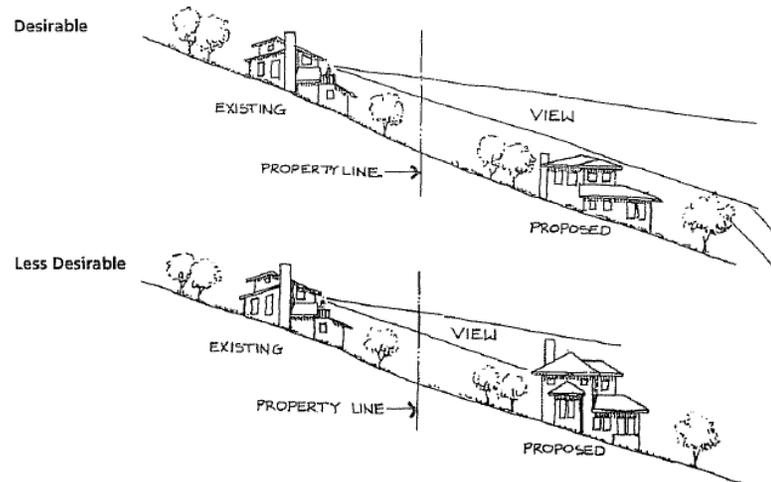
**General Plan Land Use Element Policy 1.1:** “Uses of land shall be consistent with the semi-rural atmosphere of the community, minimize disturbance to natural terrain, minimize removal of the natural vegetation, and create the maximum compatibility of development with the natural environment through site design and landscaping.” (LU-4)

## Goal II: Design Your Home to Fit the Site and to be Unobtrusive in the Neighborhood

### *Philosophy*

#### **B. Carefully site the house on the lot.**

1. Minimize obstruction of on and off site views by the considerate placement of structures. Site structures to minimize adverse visual impacts when viewed from off the site. Prevent the obstruction of views of adjacent property owners by structures. Consider the future height of trees and shrubs, so that you and your neighbor's views on and off site will not become obstructed.



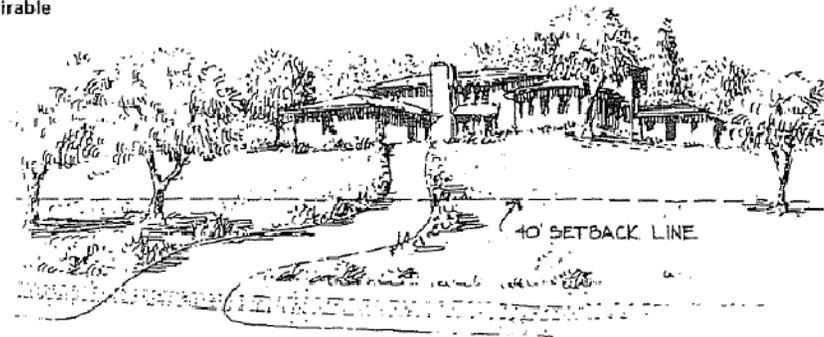
2. Incorporate passive solar design with south or southwest-facing roof areas to accommodate a solar energy system.
3. Provide shading for south-facing windows.

## Goal III: Design Your House to Minimize the Appearance of Bulk

### *Philosophy*

- A. The appearance of bulk and mass should be minimized when designing a new residence. Techniques include: greater setbacks for visual separation, avoidance of large massing, implementation of architectural details, use of texture and color, varied rooflines, and landscaping screening. Siting can mitigate bulk. Whenever possible, place the house on the lot so that it is framed by the land or existing vegetation.
1. Increasing the setbacks may help mitigate mass and bulk of structures.

Desirable



Less Desirable



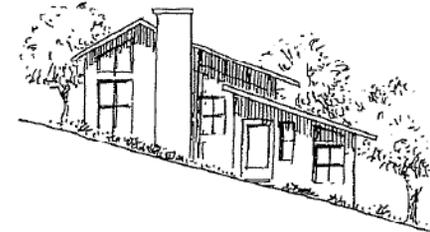
## Goal III: Design Your House to Minimize the Appearance of Bulk

### *Philosophy*

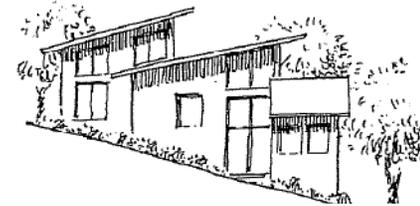
#### **B. Architectural details can mitigate size and bulk.**

1. Longer roof eaves and rakes are encouraged for shade.
2. Roof slopes should be consistent and complementary with the topography of the site.
3. House should be keyed/cut into slopes to reduce fill.
4. Trellises are encouraged for shade instead of solid roofs (on patios, balconies, and breezeways) to minimize bulk.
5. The use of architectural devices such as verandas, balconies, arcades, trellises, building materials, etc...are encouraged to soften the building bulk.
6. Vertical and horizontal articulation of building facades should be used to avoid long, uninterrupted exterior walls. Appropriate scale and proportions should be incorporated into the design to avoid improper balance of the structure.

Desirable



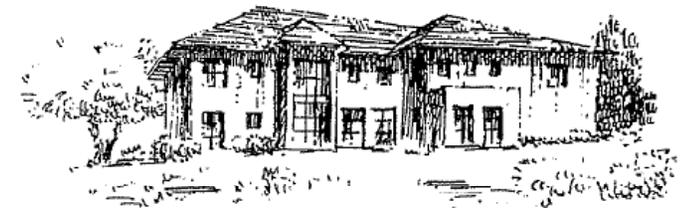
Less Desirable



Desirable



Less Desirable



## Goal III: Design Your House to Minimize the Appearance of Bulk

### *Philosophy*

C. Exterior materials and colors should blend your house into its surroundings. Utilize colors which occur naturally in the landscape of your site. Darker or natural colors blend with surroundings. Roofs should be a dark color if possible and have a variety of shades of that color. A mixture of materials can create interest and detail. Wood and stone can help to soften the appearance of stucco and blend it with the natural setting. The use of texture and well designed detail added to wall surfaces can distract from large blank wall areas and minimize their perceived impact.

1. For exterior building materials, darker or natural colors are encouraged. Energy efficient "cool roofs" are available in darker colors.



## Goal III: Design Your House to Minimize the Appearance of Bulk

### *Philosophy*

**D. Building to less than the maximum height can decrease the perception of bulk.**



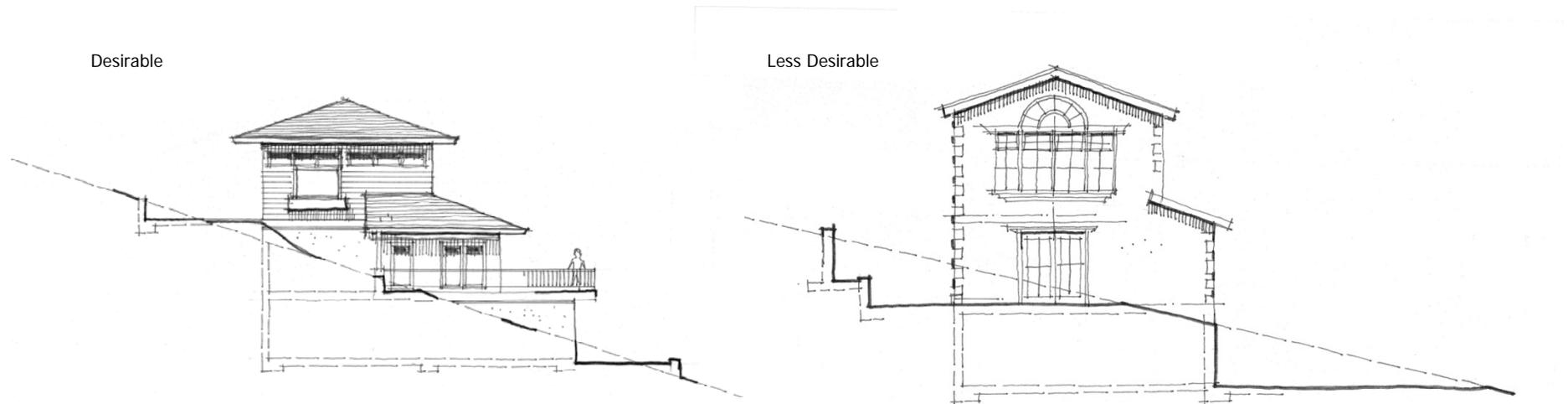
1. Two story walls which increase perception of mass can be mitigated by introducing detail, setting back the second story, lowering the second story plate height, or using a combination of one and two story elements in the design.

## Goal III: Design Your House to Minimize the Appearance of Bulk

### *Philosophy*

#### **E. Basements can reduce bulk by putting portions of the house underground.**

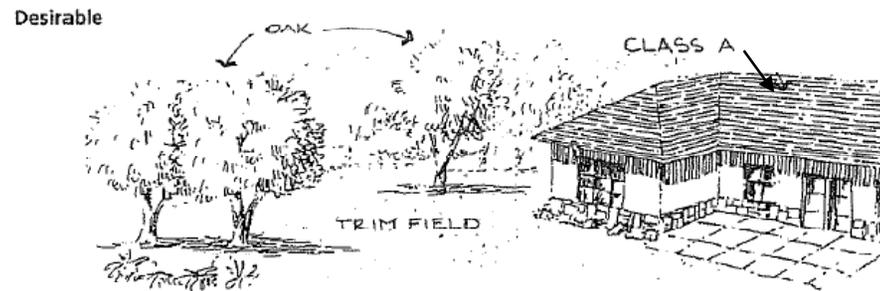
1. On a sloping lot, basements below a two story home should not be daylighted, to avoid the appearance of a three story facade.
2. The appearance of a stacked three story facade should be avoided. When building on a sloping lot, stepping with the hillside is encouraged.



## Goal IV: Design for Your Needs, the Needs of the Town and Those of Your Neighbors

### *Philosophy*

A. Design for safety. Reduce fire hazards by using site design and fire resistant landscaping, as well as carefully selected building materials to minimize fire danger.



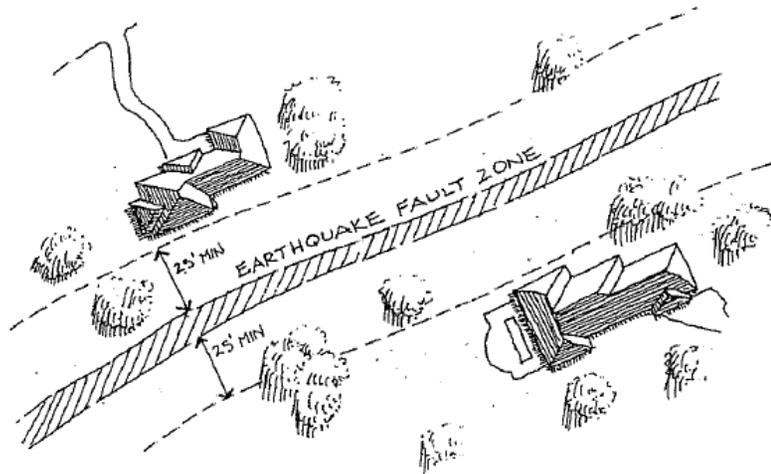
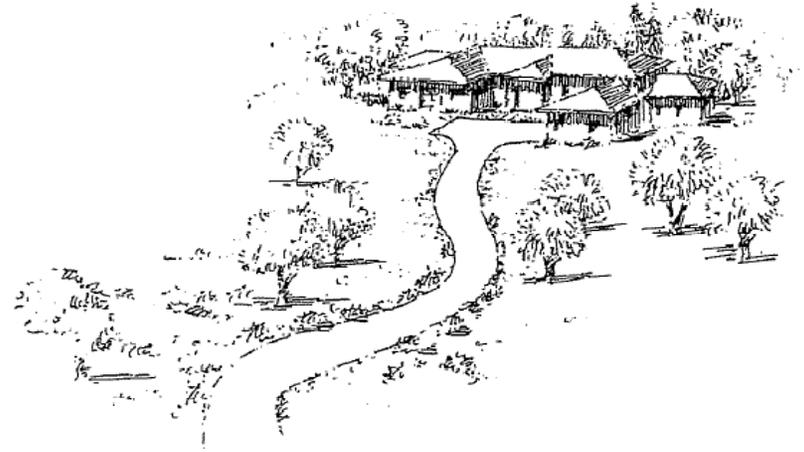
Not Permitted



1. Class A roofs and fire sprinklers are required. Use fire resistant landscape within 30 feet of the house.

## Goal IV: Design for Your Needs, the Needs of the Town and Those of Your Neighbors

2. Design a site plan to allow for adequate access and turnaround for emergency vehicles.

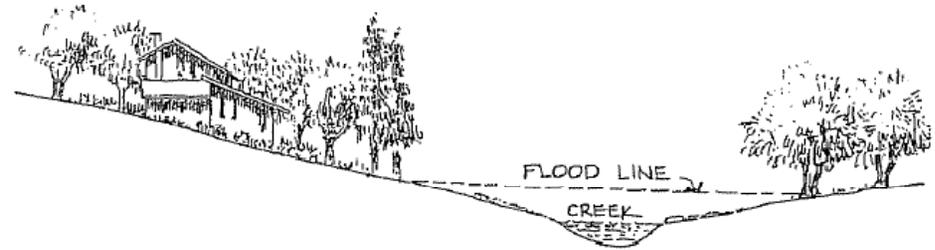
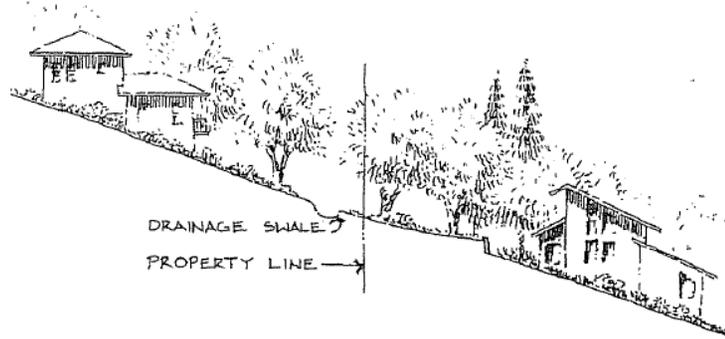


3. Avoid all geotechnical hazards such as landslides, debris flow, and earthquake faults.

## Goal IV: Design for Your Needs, the Needs of the Town and Those of Your Neighbors

4. Structures shall be set back a minimum of 25 feet from the top of creek banks. Greater setbacks may be required along major creeks in the Town.

Desirable



5. Design for adequate drainage. Disperse water runoff on your own property or direct to an adequate drainage facility. Don't increase runoff into adjacent properties.

**General Plan Land Use Element: Development Standards, Hillside Protection** *"...It is important to provide safe residential development while preserving the natural features, environmental integrity, and scenic character of the hills."* (LU-7)

6. Reduce soil erosion by minimizing discing, using hydro seeding, and finished landscaping. Deeper rooted landscaping may help control the erosion. Avoid excessive grading. No grading is allowed within ten feet of the property line.

Los Altos Hills Municipal Code Sections 10-2.407, 10-2.502, and 10-2.702 (e)

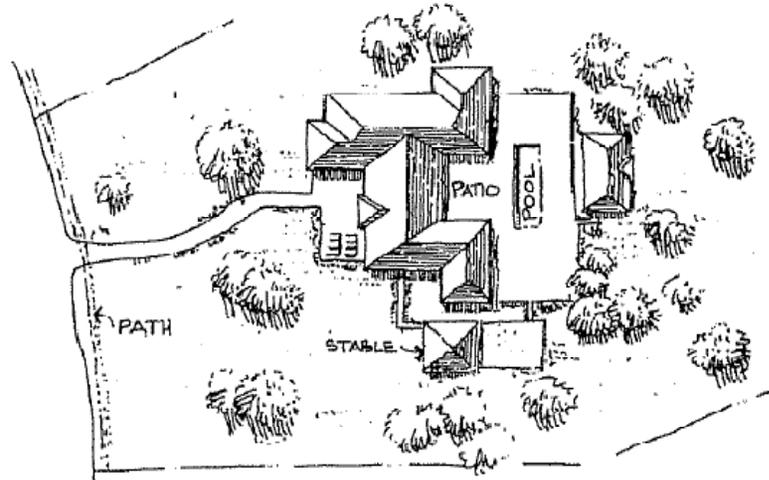
## Goal IV: Design for Your Needs, the Needs of the Town and Those of Your Neighbors

### *Philosophy*

#### B. Design for livability

1. Plan for adequate outdoor living when planning your total development area. Cluster structures to maximize open space.

Desirable



2. Make landscaping an integral part of your site plan. Existing mature landscaping should be maintained and integrated with new landscape screening.
3. Plan for the required four (4) off-street parking spaces and adequate space for the fire truck turnaround.

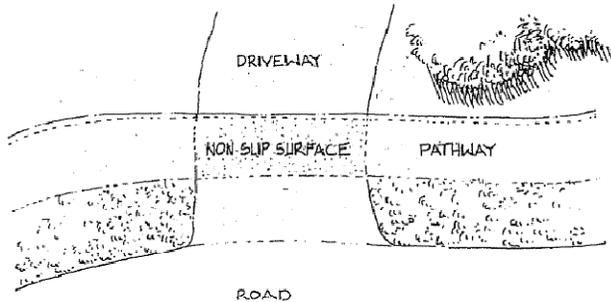
# Goal IV: Design for Your Needs, the Needs of the Town and Those of Your Neighbors

## Philosophy

### C. Design to be neighbor friendly

1. Respect your neighbor's privacy and views. Avoid locating your house too close to your neighbors or their private outdoor or indoor living areas. Landscape in such a way to minimize obstructing off site views.

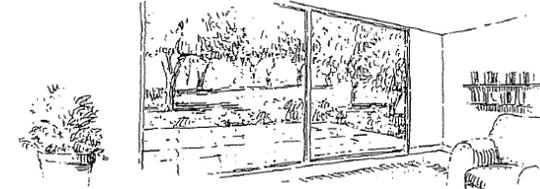
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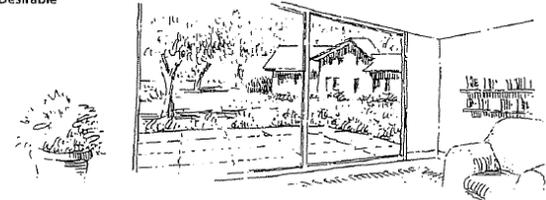
2. Observe the Town pathway system standards and ordinances. When driveway entrances cross pathways, the driveway surface must be "non-slip" and be maintained to Town standards.

3. Place exterior lights carefully to prevent light from shining into neighboring houses ("spill" lights). Uplights are generally not allowed. The light source must not be visible from off site. High intensity discharge lighting, such as mercury vapor, sodium, and metal halide lights are prohibited.

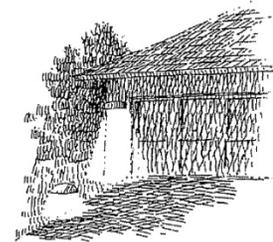
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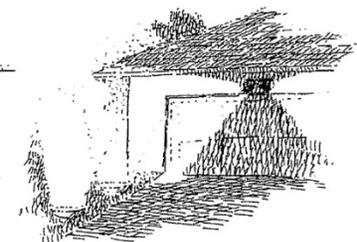
Less Desirable



Desirable



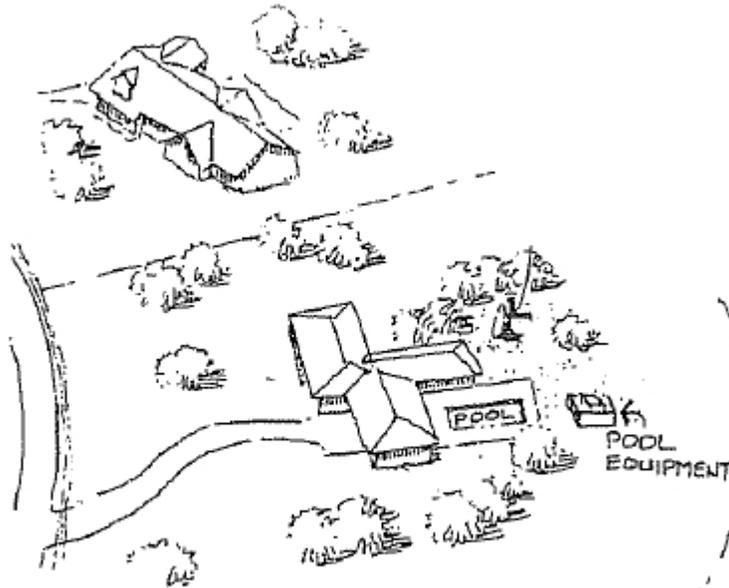
Less Desirable



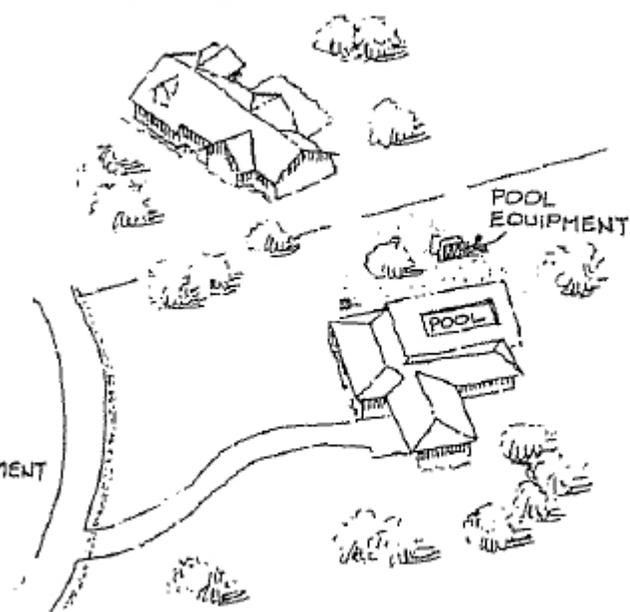
## Goal IV: Design for Your Needs, the Needs of the Town and Those of Your Neighbors

4. Locate all noise producing equipment, such as pool pumps and ac units outside required setbacks. All equipment shall comply with the Town's noise ordinance.

Desirable



Less Desirable



# Glossary

## **Appeals**

*Los Altos Hills Municipal Code  
Section 10-1.1002*

Any party dissatisfied with a decision of an administrative body may appeal that decision to the next higher body. Staff decisions are appealed to the Planning Commission, Planning Commission decisions are appealed to the Council.

## **Average Slope**

*Los Altos Hills Municipal Code  
Section 10-1.202*

Average slope describes the steepness of a lot and is important for determining how much development will be allowed. Lots with average slope exceeding 10% have greater restrictions regarding amount of development permitted.

## **Basement**

*Los Altos Hills Municipal Code  
Section 10-1.202*

A basement is space partly or wholly underground. Under some circumstances it may not be counted as floor area.

## **Building Circle**

*Los Altos Hills Municipal Code  
Section 9-1.603 (a)*

For a new lot to be created, it must be able to contain within its net area a circle of 160' in diameter. This is called the building circle. The ultimate building site does not necessarily have to be in the circle, but there must be a buildable site in the building circle that is accessible by a driveway.

## **Conditional Development Permit**

*Los Altos Hills Municipal Code  
Section 10-1.007 (3)*

A conditional development permit (CDP) is a permit with special conditions to mitigate problems on substandard or severely constrained lots granted by the Planning Commission or the City Council. Among those lots that require CDP's are those that have a lot unit factor (LUF) less than 0.5 and some lots constrained by habitation setback for geologic hazard or noise.

## **Conditional Use Permit**

*Los Altos Hills Municipal Code  
Section 10-1.1007 (1)*

A conditional use permit (CUP) is a permit granted by the Planning Commission or City Council for a use other than residential use. Other uses, as specified in the codes, may be permitted with conditions.

## **Development Area**

*Los Altos Hills Municipal Code  
Section 10-1.502*

Development area is the total floor area plus the total area of land covered by structures and hardscape not included in floor area. Areas exempted from being counted as development area are described in code section 10-1.502. The maximum development area (MDA) is the largest amount of development area allowed on the lot. It is a function of the net acreage and average slope (steepness) of the site. Some lots may be so constrained that they may never be able to use their full MDA.

## **Findings**

Findings are a set of circumstances which will make the granting of special privilege such as a variance, a CUP, or a CDP acceptable under the law.

**Floor Area**

*Los Altos Hills Municipal Code  
Section 10-1.503*

Floor area is the sum of the area of all floors including the garage and any attic (or similar space) which exceeds seven feet. In addition, any areas over 17 feet from floor to ceiling count double. Some basements are exempt from being counted as floor area (see definition of basement). The maximum floor area (MFA) allowed depends on both the net acreage and slope of the lot. Because floor area is part of development area, the greater the floor area the less development area available outside.

**Hardscape**

Hardscape includes all artificially produced impervious and semi-permeable surfaces, such as concrete, asphalt, pools, sports courts, permeable pavers, permeable concrete, grasscrete pavers, artificial turf, and wooden decks.

**Height of a Structure**

*Los Altos Hills Municipal Code  
Section 10-1.504*

The height of a structure is the distance from natural or finished grade (whichever is lower) to the top of the structure. The maximum height allowed for any vertical section of a structure is 27 feet, and 35 feet measured between the lowest natural grade elevation of the structure along the building line and the highest elevation of the roof of the structure, including appurtenances. An increased vertical building height of up to 32' may be allowed with increased setbacks.

**Heritage Oak**

*Los Altos Hills Municipal Code  
Section 12-2.101*

A heritage oak is an oak tree with a diameter of 12" or more when measured at least four feet above the root crown.

**Human Habitation Setback**

A human habitation setback (HHS) is an area of a lot on which no habitable structure may be placed because of a seismic hazard. Such setbacks are typically 25 feet on either side of a fault line.

**Lot Unit**

A lot unit is the minimum acreage required for a lot with a given slope. A three acre parcel will contain three lot units if its slope is 10% or less, two lot units if its slope is 25%, but only one lot with slope of 42%.

**Lot Unit Factor**

*Los Altos Hills Municipal Code  
Section 10-1.202*

The lot unit factor (LUF) is the number of lot units in a given parcel. Some lots with a LUF less than one were created early in the Town's history. These lots are considered non-conforming and their development is restricted accordingly. Lots with LUF less than one may not be created today.

**MDA**

*Los Altos Hills Municipal Code  
Section 10-1.502*

Maximum development area (see development area).

**MFA**

*Los Altos Hills Municipal Code  
Section 10-1.503*

Maximum floor area (see floor area).

**Net Area of Lot**

*Los Altos Hills Municipal Code  
Section 10-1.202*

The net area of a lot is equal to the gross area less panhandles and all public and private easements for vehicular access within the parcel.

**Non-Conforming Lot**

*Los Altos Hills Municipal Code  
Section 10-1.1007 (3)*

An existing lot that does not meet the Town's current standards is considered non-conforming. Among the reasons a lot may non-conforming are: a LUF less than one or a lot unable to hold a 160' diameter building circle.

**Off Road Paths**

*Los Altos Hills Municipal Code  
Section 10-1.202*

A major recreation amenity of the Town is our off road pathway system. Paths usually run along easements located on the property lines of many parcels.

**On Road Paths**

*Los Altos Hills Municipal Code  
Section 10-1.202*

Pathways that run along or within a road right of way are call on-road paths.

**Open Space Easement**

Open space easements exist to protect the land and such natural features as slopes over 30%, oak tree coverage, and creeks. There may be additional restrictions depending on the nature of the easement.

**Ridgeline**

*Los Altos Hills Municipal Code  
Section 10-2.702 (b)*

Lots deemed to be on a ridgeline may be subject to design restrictions aimed at making the structures less conspicuous.

**Road Right of Way**

The full width of the road is the road right of way. Usually only a portion of it is paved.

**Secondary Unit**

*Los Altos Hills Municipal Code  
Section 10- 1.702 (1)*

A secondary unit is an attached or detached dwelling unit which has facilities for eating, sleeping, cooking, and sanitation located on the same parcel as the primary unit. A secondary unit may not exceed 1,000 square feet in floor area. No more than one secondary unit is allowed per parcel. One net acre is required.

**Setback**

*Los Altos Hills Municipal Code  
Section 10-1.505*

The setback is a line defining an area adjacent to the property line in which no structures may be built. There is a 30 foot setback for the rear and side property lines and a 40 foot setback for the front.

**Site Analysis**

Site analysis is a process by which a homeowner meets with staff before development plans have progressed substantially to learn about potential constraints, design considerations, and general guidelines in designing a home.

**Variance**

*Los Altos Hills Municipal Code  
Section 10- 1.1007 (2)*

A variance is an exemption to a law or standard granted to resolve a difficulty or inequity (not of the applicant's own making) which may result from exceptional circumstances of a property.

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