

COUNTY OF SANTA CRUZ

PLANNING DEPARTMENT

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TOM BURNS, PLANNING DIRECTOR

March 27, 2008

AGENDA DATE: April 9, 2008

ITEM #: 35

TIME: After 9 AM

Planning Commission
County of Santa Cruz
701 Ocean Street
Santa Cruz, CA 95060

Subject: Review of Design Brochure No. 2 Regarding Neighborhood Compatibility

Planning Commissioners:

Over the past several years, the Board of Supervisors, your Commission and staff have dealt with the issue of neighborhood compatibility—both within the context of specific development proposals and in a larger policy context. Several actions have been taken or are in the process to provide tools in addressing neighborhood compatibility. One of these tools is Design Brochure No. 2 which is now before your Commission for review and recommendation.

Background

In 2005, the Board grappled with design issues in coastal neighborhoods including the definition of "neighborhood", large dwellings on coastal bluffs, and the concerns of Pleasure Point and Rio Del Mar citizens that their neighborhoods were changing character in a detrimental manner through new construction. At the same time, design professionals and owner-builders were concerned about the perceived uncertainty and inconsistency of staff recommendations concerning neighborhood compatibility. Your Commission and the Board heard several appeals regarding these issues.

In December 2005, the Board directed that several initiatives be undertaken to address the neighborhood compatibility issues including:

- Ordinance amendments allowing front yard averaging, increasing lot coverage for certain lots and amending the definition of "net site area"; and
- A community planning process to address compatibility issues in the Pleasure Point Community.

The Board also directed that staff begin reviewing pending discretionary residential projects to develop refinements to the compatibility review process with the following goals:

- Clarify, as much as possible, the critical features in achieving compatibility;
- Develop a neighborhood compatibility checklist and/or other tools to identify and quantify compatibility; and
- Identify additional ways to communicate the County's sensibility of compatible development to the public and design community.

An informal staff group (consisting of the Planning Director, several managers, the Urban Designer and project planners) began meeting (and continues to meet) to review pending discretionary residential projects. As the months passed, several themes emerged:

1. The area of concern (the neighborhood) varied depending on what design factor we were discussing;
2. Various design elements (such as size, number of stories and massing) lead to a natural hierarchy of concern in determining compatibility;
3. Placement of an uninterrupted two-story structure adjacent to a one-story structure raised repeated concerns;
4. The placement and prominence of the garage was often a factor in compatibility;
5. The proposed front setback was often a factor of compatibility; and
6. Colors and materials alone could sometimes lead to incompatibility.
7. The architectural style of the structure was not a factor.

Staff came to believe that the best way to address neighborhood compatibility and provide predictable information to users was through the use of written guidelines. The guidelines were developed with input from project review staff and many months of meetings with an informal subcommittee of neighborhood residents and local architects. Thus was born Design Brochure No. 2 (Attachment 1 to Exhibit A).

The Brochure was presented to the Board of Supervisors in March 2007 and was made available to the public in April 2007. Subsequently, a lawsuit was filed claiming that the process for enacting the informational brochure was flawed and required Planning Commission review. Surprisingly, the Court agreed. The Brochure was withdrawn from public access until such time as review by your Commission and the Board is completed.

Discussion

County Code Section 13.11.073—Building Design—of the Design Review regulations (Exhibit B) sets out objectives and standards for compatible building design, rooftop equipment, signage, solar and other factors for residential, commercial and industrial buildings. What it does not do is explain, in a user-friendly way, how to achieve neighborhood compatibility for residential structures.

The Brochure provides an annotated illustration for staff and the public on the steps for reviewing residential neighborhood compatibility including:

- provides an explanation of the affected neighborhood for each compatibility factor;
- ranks the compatibility factors in their general order of importance; and

- o provides visual illustrations to explain compatibility concepts.


It is important to note that the Brochure will also be used for determining neighborhood compatibility for discretionary residential structures that are not subject to Chapter 13.11 such as duplexes and single-family dwellings requiring variances. Compatibility is one of the required findings for Development Permits. Also, the Brochure is not binding on decision makers, unlike Section 13.11.073.

Summary and Recommendation

Design Brochure No. 2 is a tool that provides guidance for the public and staff concerning neighborhood compatibility. It is the result of many months of meetings with staff, members of the public and local architects. It meets the three goals set forth by the Board and provides the transparency and consistency of application requested by our users. While your Commission and the Board do not generally review informational brochures, in this case it is needed due to court action.

Staff, therefore, recommends that your Commission adopt the attached Resolution (Exhibit A) recommending that the Board of Supervisors adopt Design Brochure No. 2.

Sincerely,


Glenda Hill, AICP
Principal Planner
Policy Section

Exhibits:

- A. Planning Commission Resolution including Attachment 1—Design Brochure No. 2
- B. Copy of County Code Section 13.11.073

cc: Mike Guth
Matthew Thompson
Hugh Carter
Architects Association of Santa Cruz County of Santa Cruz
Cove Britton
Patricia E. Curtin
Martin Hess
Burnie Thomason
Susan and Barry Porter
Lauren Greene and Glen Ceresa

BEFORE THE PLANNING COMMISSION
OF THE COUNTY OF SANTA CRUZ, STATE OF CALIFORNIA

RESOLUTION NO. _____

On the Motion of Commissioner
duly seconded by Commissioner
the following Resolution is adopted:

RESOLUTION RECOMMENDING ADOPTION OF DESIGN BROCHURE NO. 2
TO THE SANTA CRUZ COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

WHEREAS, on December 6, 2005, the Board of Supervisors directed Planning staff to develop refinements to the residential compatibility review process to clarify and quantify the critical features in achieving compatibility, develop a checklist or other tools to identify and quantify compatibility and identify ways to communicate the County's sensibility of compatible development to the community; and

WHEREAS, the Board of Supervisors directed Planning staff to return in March 2007 with these refinements; and

WHEREAS, Planning staff met with a subcommittee of neighborhood representatives and architects on several occasions to craft the contents of the brochure on neighborhood compatibility that became known as Design Brochure No. 2; and

WHEREAS, Planning staff brought Design Brochure No. 2 to the Board of Supervisors as part of the directed report back on March 27, 2007; and

WHEREAS, the Board of Supervisors accepted and filed the report; and

WHEREAS, the courts have ruled that the process for enacting the informational brochure was flawed and that Planning Commission review is required; and

WHEREAS, the Planning Commission has held a duly noticed public hearing and has considered Design Brochure No. 2, and all testimony and evidence received at the public hearing.

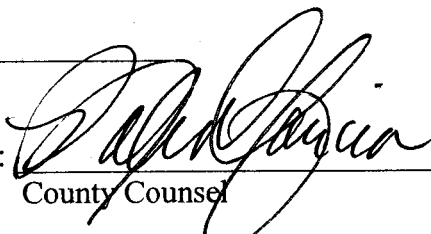
NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Planning Commission recommends that Design Brochure No. 2, as set forth in Attachment 1 to Exhibit A, be adopted by the Board of Supervisors.

PASSED AND ADOPTED by the Planning Commission of the County of Santa Cruz, California, this _____ day of _____, 2008 by the following vote:

AYES: COMMISSIONERS
NOES: COMMISSIONERS
ABSENT: COMMISSIONERS
ABSTAIN: COMMISSIONERS

Chairperson of the Planning Commission

ATTEST: _____
Secretary

APPROVED AS TO FORM: 
County Counsel

DISTRIBUTION: County Counsel
Planning

designing for **NEIGHBORHOOD COMPATIBILITY**



This is one of a series of informational brochures to assist the public and guide Planning staff with issues of concern regarding design in the County of Santa Cruz.

The Zoning Ordinance of the County of Santa Cruz contains required findings for Coastal Permits (13.20.110 c & 13.20.130 b/1) and Development Permits (18.10.230 a/5) that include neighborhood compatibility.

The Planning Department strongly encourages applicants to arrange a pre-application consultation account to discuss neighborhood compatibility with the Urban Designer and the planner for the area.

County of Santa Cruz

**DESIGN
BROCHURE NO:**

2

GOALS / APPLICABILITY



"To achieve functional high quality development through design review policies that recognize the diverse characteristics of the area, maintain design creativity, and preserve and enhance
the visual fabric of the community."

Objective 8.1 Quality Design, County of Santa Cruz General Plan

GOALS -

- Preserve and enhance the character of neighborhoods in the County of Santa Cruz, recognizing the diversity of architectural styles, and evolving neighborhood character while respecting bulk, mass, and scale of nearby residences.
- Promote streetscapes that are varied, while discouraging individual structures that are out of character with the neighborhood.
- Encourage development that balances a diversity of style with respect for the surrounding context.

APPLICABILITY -

- All new residences which require discretionary review, will be reviewed for consistency with these guidelines by planning staff (these guidelines apply primarily in urban neighborhoods, although discretionary projects in rural areas must also meet all applicable ordinance requirements for neighborhood compatibility).
- All additions which require discretionary review in the Coastal Zone will be reviewed for compliance with these guidelines by Planning staff.
- All new residences and additions which **do not** require discretionary review are **encouraged** to address the issues within these guidelines.

County of Santa Cruz

**DESIGN
BROCHURE NO.2**

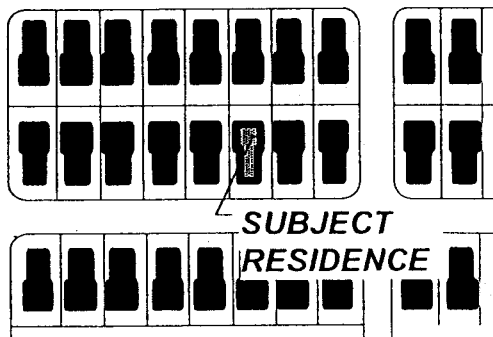
-7- Attachment 1 to **EXHIBIT A**

AFFECTED NEIGHBORHOOD

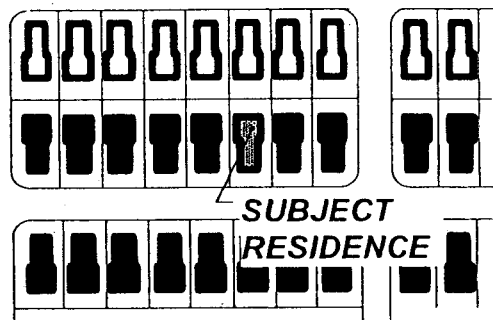


Neighborhoods are geographic areas that are often defined by physical boundaries.

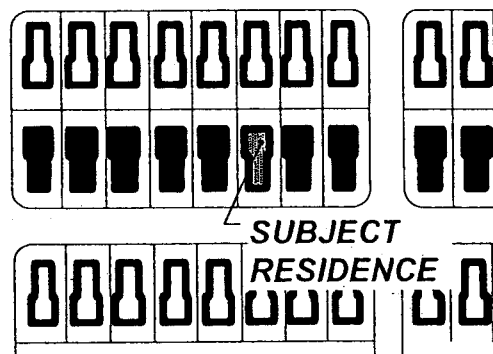
The "*affected neighborhood*" consists of the lots **most influenced** by the residence being considered.



FOR SOME COMPATIBILITY FACTORS:
the adjacent houses
(6 lots in each direction)
on **both** sides of the street,
and to the rear of the
subject residence



FOR MOST COMPATIBILITY FACTORS:
the adjacent houses
(6 lots in each direction)
on **both** sides of the street
of the subject residence

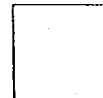


FOR EVERY COMPATIBILITY FACTOR:
the adjacent houses
(6 lots in each direction)
on the **same** side of the street
of the subject residence

County of Santa Cruz

DESIGN
BROCHURE NO.2

COMPATIBILITY FACTORS



The process of **integrating** a design for a new residence with the significant characteristics of a neighborhood occurs at the beginning of the design process. Designers and owners should use the following list to evaluate the **characteristics** of nearby residences.

(NOTE: These are listed in order of importance, however the "art" of designing compatible new buildings is in using all categories skillfully)

1 - what are the **sizes** of the surrounding houses?

While the County establishes floor area ratio standards, those are the upper limits that govern house sizes. The design of a structure and the perception of its size should not overwhelm existing residences in terms of basic volume.

2 - how many **stories** are present?

While the County's maximum height limit allows up to two-story structures, in some cases two-story structures in a predominantly one-story area may be out of character.

3 - how is the **massing** of the house arranged?

In addition to site and stories, the massing and careful articulation of a structure can dramatically impact the perceived size of a building.

4 - where are **parking and garages** located? how much of the front setbacks are covered with paving for driveways? how big are the garages? do the garages have double or single doors?

In some neighborhoods, a critical element to a compatible design is the location and design of off-street parking and garages.

5 - what are the front **setbacks**?

New structures which are significantly out of alignment may not fit into the existing street pattern.

6 - what **materials and colors** are common in the area?

In some cases, the materials and colors of even a well designed residence may be so incongruous with the existing neighborhood that it will result in an incompatible design.

County of Santa Cruz

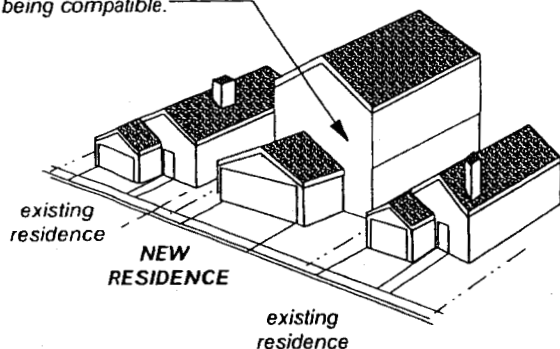
DESIGN
BROCHURE NO. 2

SIZE

1

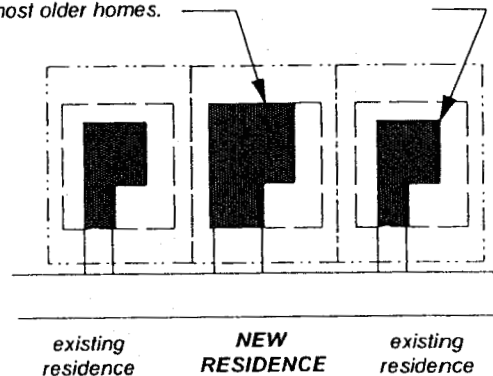
If a residence is far larger in size than the houses in the affected neighborhood, it may appear to **overwhelm** them. There is a range beyond which the new residence can appear **noticeably out of character**.

"Stacking" floors to align upper and lower floors exaggerates the appearance of volume and often contributes to a new residence not being compatible.



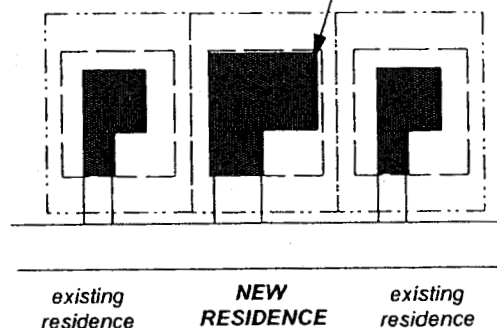
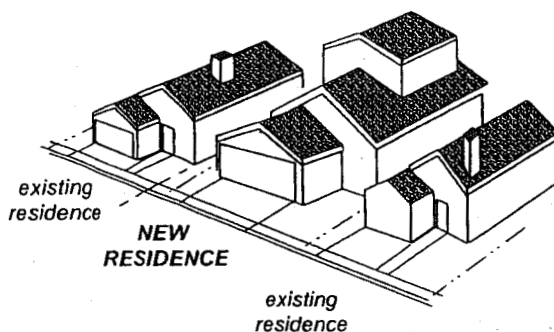
Newer homes in a neighborhood when designed to the current zoning ordinance maximums are typically much larger than most older homes.

Older homes in a neighborhood are typically smaller and predate the current zoning ordinance.



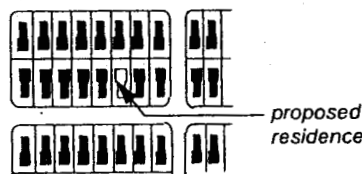
DISCOURAGED

Using the maximum lot coverage is encouraged to keep the lower floor larger than the upper floor.



ENCOURAGED

CONTEXT
for this
Compatibility
Factor -



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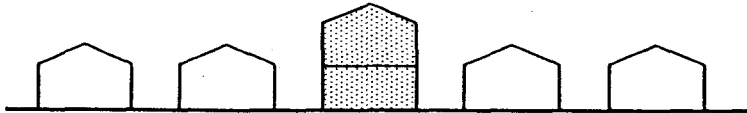
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STORIES

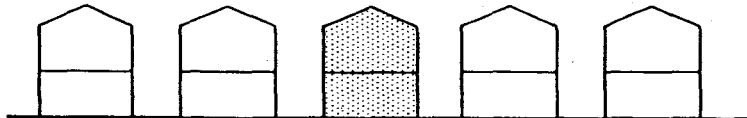
2

Continue or complement the prevalent **patterns** of stories and forms in the neighborhood, paying particular attention to the adjacent neighbors. Seek to reflect or incorporate the basic **building and roof forms** that may be in the neighborhood.

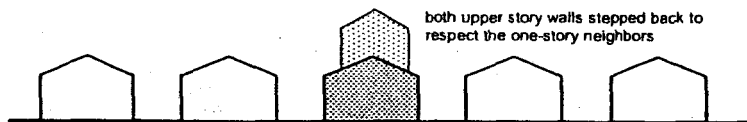
EXAMPLE 1 - New two-story residence in a block of existing one-story residences.
This is probably incompatible with the block.



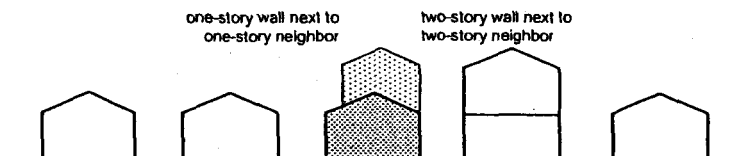
EXAMPLE 2 - New two-story residence in a block of existing two-story residences.
This is probably compatible with the block.



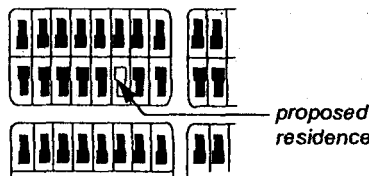
EXAMPLE 3 - New two-story residence in a block of existing one-story residences.
This may be compatible with the block.



EXAMPLE 4 - New two-story residence in a block of existing one and two-story residences.
This may be compatible with the block.



CONTEXT
for this
Compatibility
Factor -



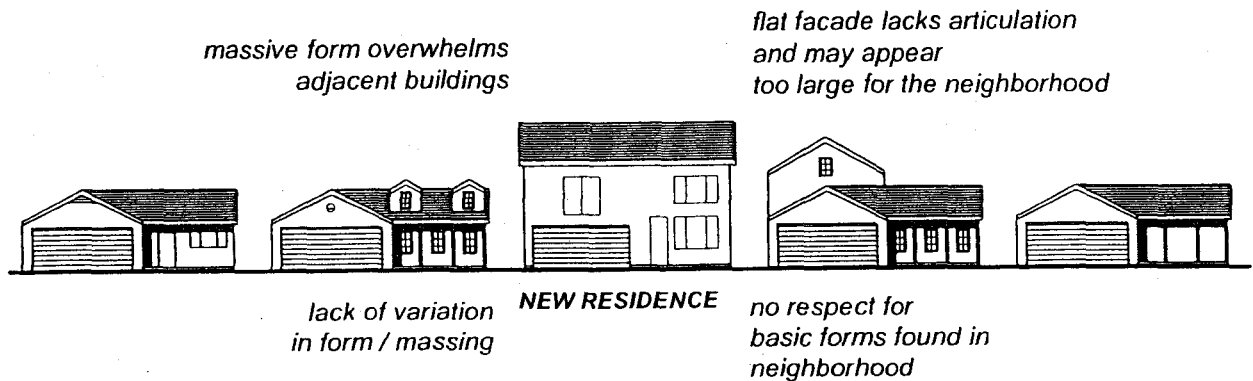
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**DESIGN
BROCHURE NO. 2**

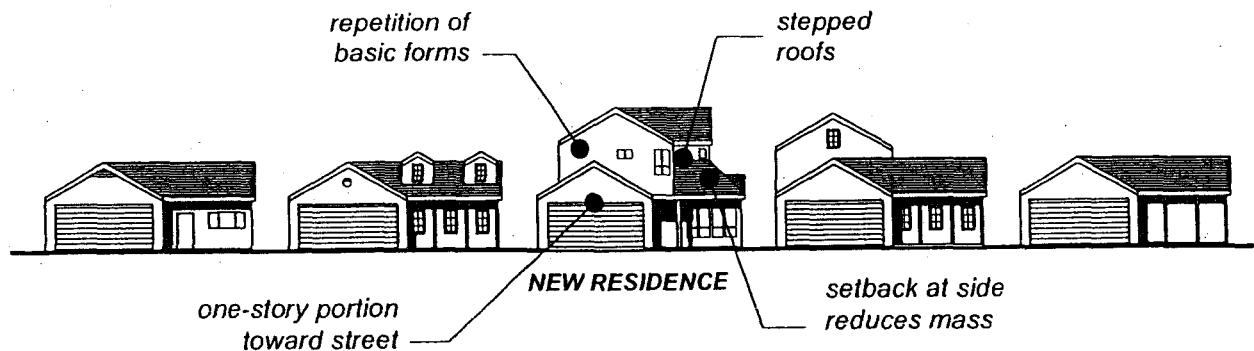
MASSING

3

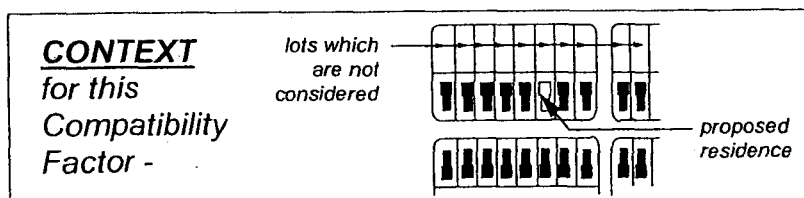
The "massing" of a building will aid or hinder in its compatibility with its neighbors. Massing can be used to break the bulk down into parts which have a **relationship** to each other. A large blocky building elevation may be divided to produce a composition of elements with **scale and rhythm**.



DISCOURAGED



ENCOURAGED



County of Santa Cruz

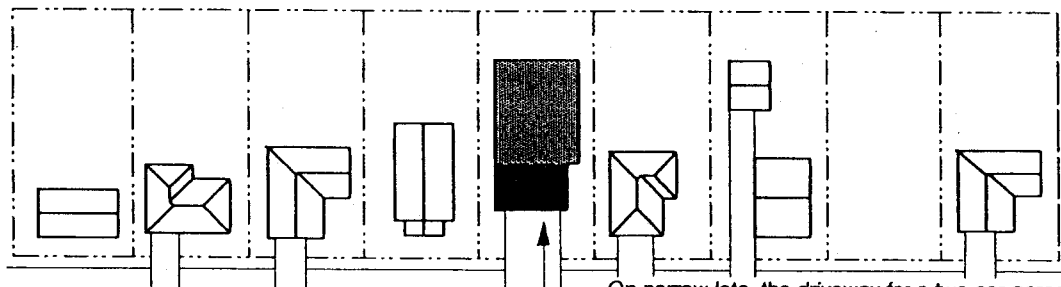
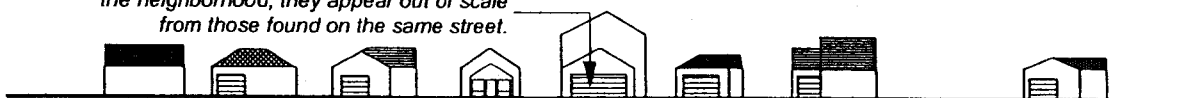
DESIGN
BROCHURE NO. 2

PARKING & GARAGES

4

The location chosen for parking and a garage, the size of the garage door, and the design and material of the garage door are factors in neighborhood compatibility. Garages and driveways should not be a dominant form in the streetscape, and should **respect the patterns** of their location, size and design in the neighborhood.

When two-car garage doors are not common in the neighborhood, they appear out of scale from those found on the same street.



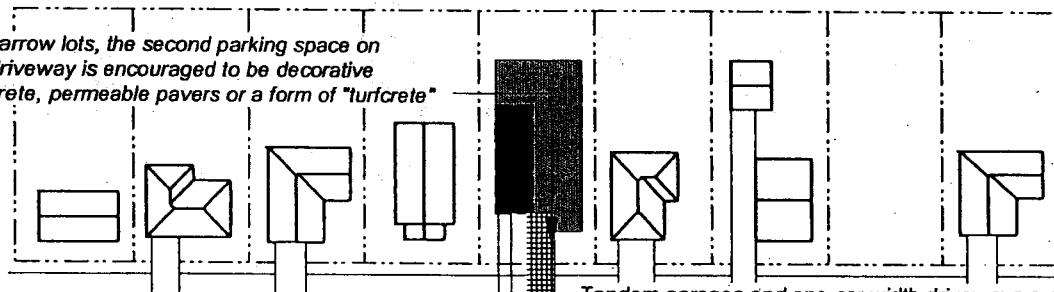
On narrow lots, the driveway for a two car garage may comply with the maximum limitations (half the width of the lot) and still be incompatible with the existing pattern of parking.

DISCOURAGED

Providing a single-door garage allows the opportunity to enliven the front of the house with a porch or covered entry.



On narrow lots, the second parking space on the driveway is encouraged to be decorative concrete, permeable pavers or a form of "turfcrete"

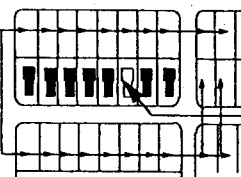


Tandem garages and one-car width driveways are one example of a parking solution which is compatible with the neighborhood and may meet the zoning requirements for off-street parking.

ENCOURAGED

CONTEXT
for this
Compatibility
Factor -

*lots which
are not
considered*



*proposed
residence*

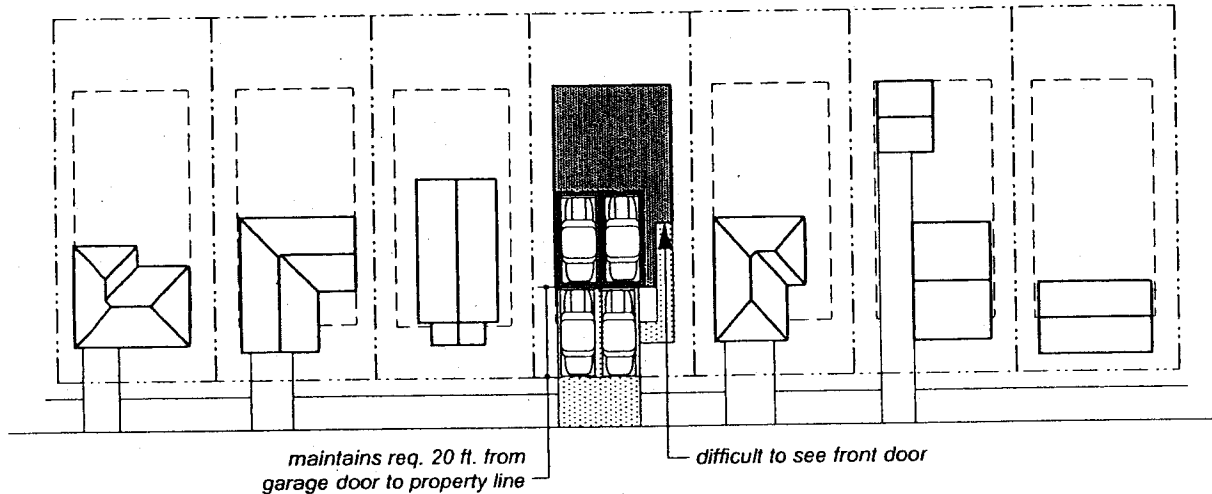
County of Santa Cruz

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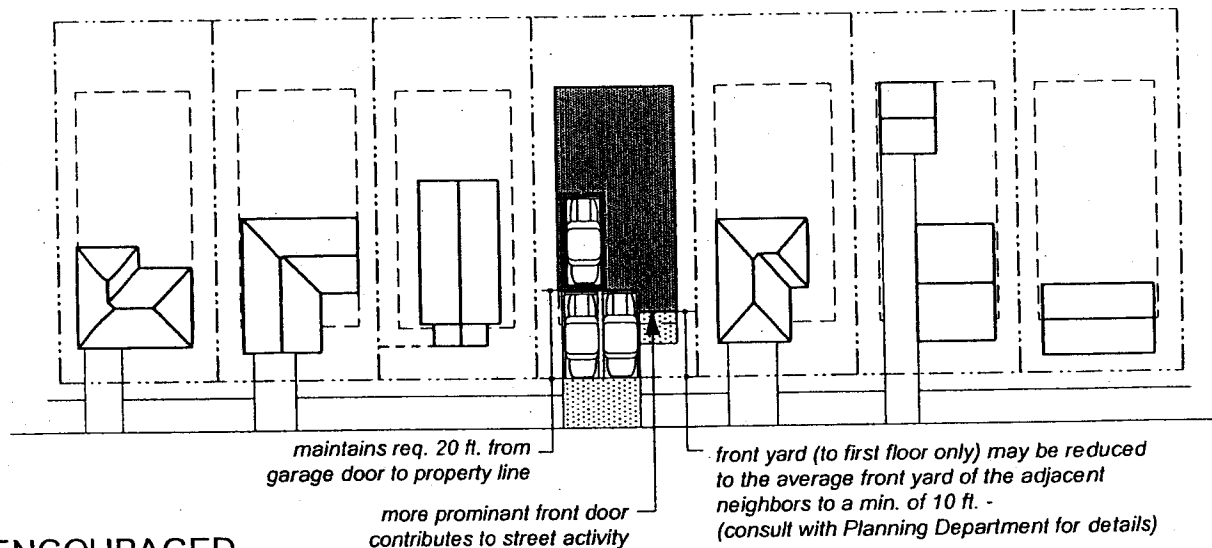
SETBACKS

5

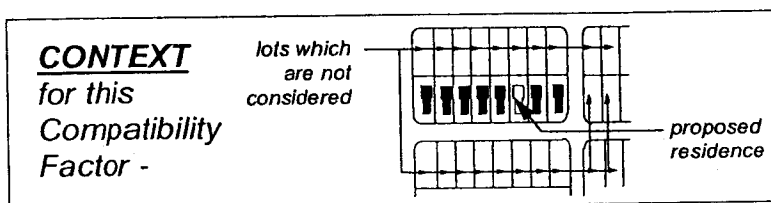
The distance that each residence is from the street creates a rhythm. When a new house is visually **out of alignment** with the adjacent houses on the same side of the street, it may not enhance the neighborhood character.



DISCOURAGED



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BROCHURE NO. 2

MATERIALS / COLOR

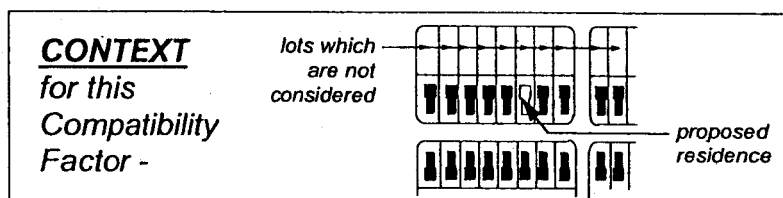
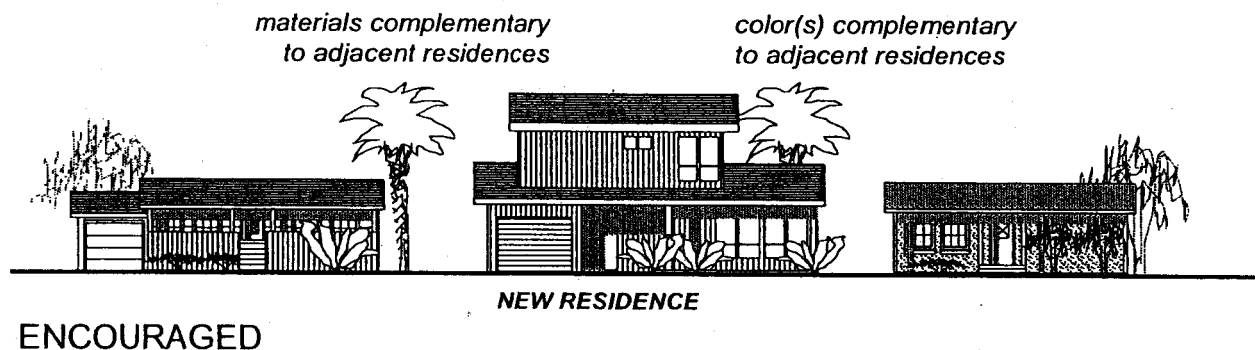
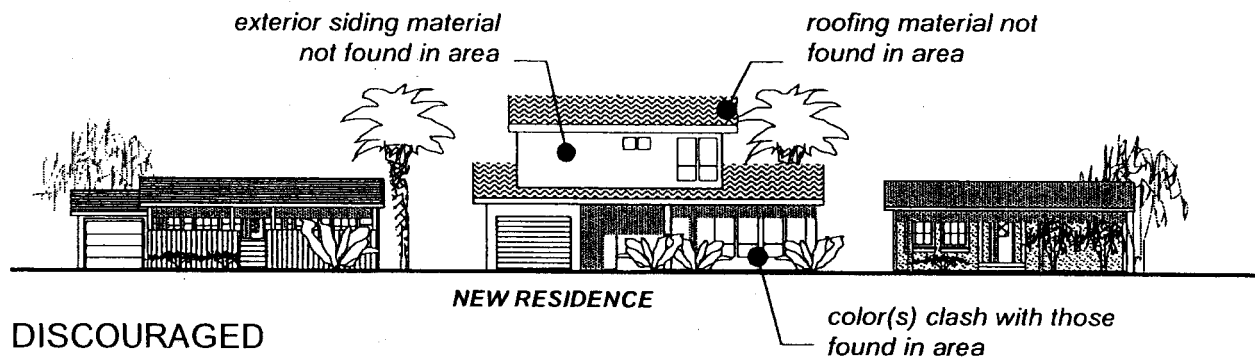
6

In some cases, a building with exterior materials and colors which are not found in the immediate vicinity may seem

out of character with the "sense of place".

Similar materials and/or colors may assist in establishing a greater sense of compatibility with the neighborhood.

(This compatibility factor will only be utilized in cases where the proposed structure is substantially incompatible with the neighborhood).



County of Santa Cruz

DESIGN
BROCHURE NO. 2

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PLANNING DEPARTMENT

Tom Burns, Director
Glenda Hill, AICP, Principal Planner (Policy Section)
Lawrence Kasparowitz, Urban Designer

RESIDENTIAL AND GENERAL DESIGN BOOKS

Alexander, Christopher, Sara Ishikawa and Murray Silverstein. A Pattern Language. Oxford University Press, New York, 1977.

Jacobson, Max, Murray Silverstien and Barbara Winslow. The Good House, Contrast as a Design Tool, Taunton Press, Newtown, Connecticut, 1990.

Kern, Ken. The Owner Built Home, Scribners, New York, 1975.

McAlester, Virginia and Lee. A Field Guide to American Houses, Alfred Knopf, Inc. New York, 1984.

McCreight, Tim. Design Language. Brynmorgen Press, 1997.

Mouzon, Stephen A. Traditional Construction Patterns. McGraw-Hill, New York, 2004.

Susanka, Sarah. Home by Design, Taunton Press, Newtown, Connecticut, 2004.

_____. The Not So Big House, Taunton Press, Newtown, Connecticut, 1998.

Walker, Les and Milstein, Jeff. Designing Houses, an Illustrated Guide, Overlook Press, Woodstock, New York, 1976.

Title 13 PLANNING AND ZONING REGULATIONSChapter 13.11 SITE, ARCHITECTURAL AND LANDSCAPE DESIGN REVIEW**13.11.073 Building design.**

(a) It shall be an objective of building design that the basic architectural design principles of balance, harmony, order and unity prevail, while not excluding the opportunity for unique design. Successful use of the basic design principles accommodates a full range of building designs, from unique or landmark buildings to background buildings.

(b) It shall be an objective of building design to address the present and future neighborhood, community, and zoning district context.

(1) Compatible Building Design.

(i) Building design shall relate to adjacent development and the surrounding area.

(ii) Compatible relationships between adjacent buildings can be achieved by creating visual transitions between buildings; that is, by repeating certain elements of the building design or building siting that provide a visual link between adjacent buildings. One or more of the building elements listed below can combine to create an overall composition that achieves the appropriate level of compatibility:

(A) Massing of building form.

(B) Building silhouette.

(C) Spacing between buildings.

(D) Street face setbacks.

(E) Character of architecture.

(F) Building scale.

(G) Proportion and composition of projections and recesses, doors and windows, and other features.

(H) Location and treatment of entryways.

(I) Finish material, texture and color.

(2) Building design should be site and area specific. Franchise type architecture may not achieve an appropriate level of compatibility and is not encouraged.

(c) It shall be an objective of building design to address scale on the appropriate levels (Scale is defined in Section 13.11.030(v)).

(d) It shall be an objective of building design to use design elements to create a sense of human scale, and pedestrian interest.

Building Articulation.

(1) Variation in wall plane, roof line, detailing, materials and siting are techniques which can be used to create interest in buildings, where appropriate. Roof and wall plane variations including building projections, bay windows, and balconies are recommended to reduce scale and bulk.

(2) All exterior wall elevations visible from and/or facing streets are to have architectural treatment. No building surface fronting on a street shall have a flat, void surface without architectural treatment. The provision of projections and recesses, windows, doors and entries, color and texture, are methods of articulating facades.

(e) It shall be an objective of building design to locate and screen mechanical equipment, and other accessory uses, so as to reduce impacts on primary building uses and on adjacent properties.

Rooftop Equipment.

(1) All rooftop mechanical and electrical equipment shall be designed to be an integral part of the building design, and shall be screened.

(2) Utility equipment such as electrical and gas meters, electrical panels, and junction boxes shall not be located on exterior wall elevations facing streets unless screened from streets and building entries using architectural screens, walls, fences, and/or plant material.

(f) It shall be an objective of building signage to relate to the building design.

(1) Building Signage. Signage attached to buildings shall relate to the building design by being an integral part of that design or by use of compatible materials and colors.

(g) It shall be an objective of building design to promote energy conservation and to reduce the impacts of environmental influences.

EXHIBIT B

(1) Noise. Where noise will impact the building users, the building design shall incorporate buffering to reduce the interior sound levels.

(2) Solar Design.

(i) Buildings shall be designed so that solar access is reasonably protected for the buildable lot area of adjacent, affected properties.

(ii) Wherever lot size and setbacks permit, the building walls with major window areas shall be appropriately oriented for passive solar heating and cooling, and natural lighting. Building layout should encourage energy conservation.

(3) Recycling.

(i) Encourage recycling areas or storage systems within all commercial, industrial, institutional and residential structures for use by the building occupants. Recommended storage space and design concepts can be found in the Santa Cruz County Recycling Design Criteria.

[<< previous](#) | [next >>](#)

EXHIBIT B