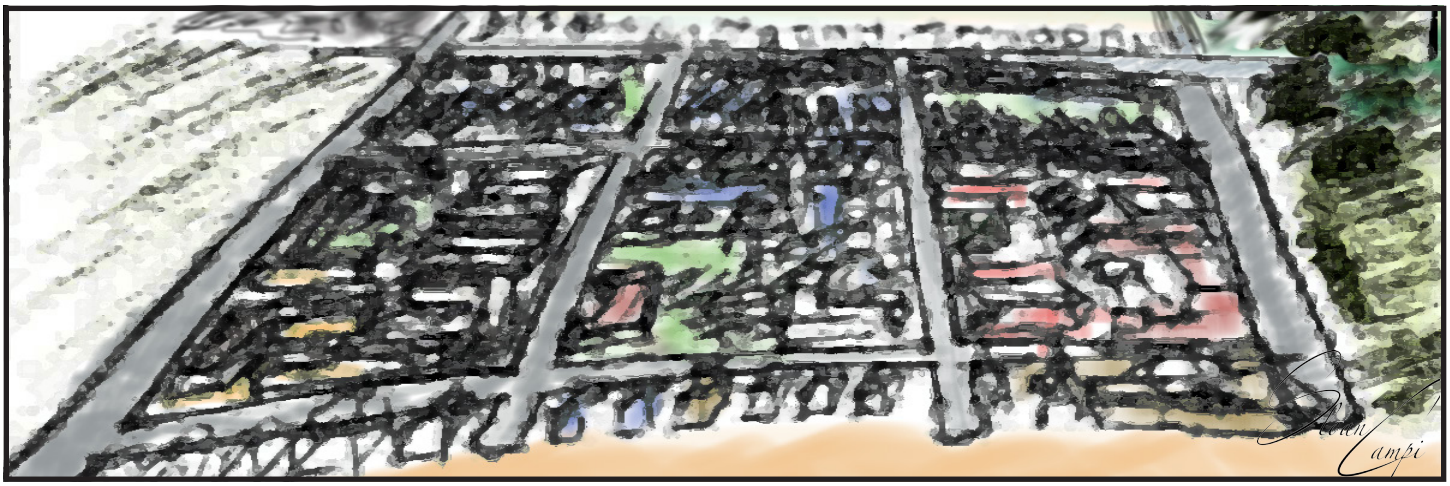
City of Carpinteria, California

Residential Design Guidelines for The Beach Neighborhood

November 2012



Purpose

The development review process is a creative and collaborative process designed to protect and preserve the natural historic charm and beauty of the City through careful review of proposed development. This process is important because the City of Carpinteria maintains much of its small beach community image within the development of its Beach Neighborhood. It is the intent of the General Plan and the Coastal Plan policies included in the Community Design Element of the General Plan to uphold this image. These Design Guidelines allow the creative process to continue while providing guidance as to the primary standards by which a project will be evaluated. These Guidelines augment existing standards contained in the Community Design Element of the General Plan/Coastal Land Use Plan, Carpinteria Municipal Code Chapter 14 of the Zoning Code and Chapter 2.36 – Architectural Review Board.

Figure 1: The Beach Neighborhood is adjacent to Carpinteria City Beach and Carpinteria State Beach.

Applicability

These Guidelines are intended for use by applicants, the public, City staff and the Architectural Review Board (ARB) to evaluate the suitability of a project as it is reviewed through the City's planning process. For applicants, the Guidelines can be used in design before an application is submitted to the City for review. The public can use these Guidelines as a measure of whether a proposed project is appropriate. City staff can use the Guidelines to assist applicants, the public and the ARB in analyzing a project's consistency with development policies and the Architectural Review Board can use the Guidelines as a tool to evaluate the compatibility and context of a structure in addition to its architectural merit.

Contextual compatibility of development is of foremost importance and underlies the purpose of these design guidelines. Context is considered to be the setting in which a structure exists, including the project site, properties immediately adjacent to a project site and the larger surrounding neighborhood. Building scale and massing, how the building is presented to the street and its setting and the architectural style all contribute to the perception of compatibility.

These Design Guidelines apply to the Planned Residential Development (PRD) Zone District in Subarea 1, known as the Beach Neighborhood shown in Figure 3.

The Beach Neighborhood is bounded by the Carpinteria Salt Marsh to the west, the Union Pacific Railroad to the north, Carpinteria City Beach to the south and Linden Avenue to the east. The Beach Neighborhood consists of three main types of development: single-family dwellings, multi-unit buildings and the Silver Sands Mobile Home Park. These Design Guidelines do not apply to Silver Sands Mobile Home Park due to State regulations that apply to mobile home parks and limit the authority of local governments to regulate this type of land use. These Guidelines promote contextual compatibility and a proper transition between dwelling types. Proper transitions between the different types of development found in the Beach Neighborhood unify the area as a single community.

Figure 2: The Carpinteria Salt Marsh is an open space that borders the Beach Neighborhood.

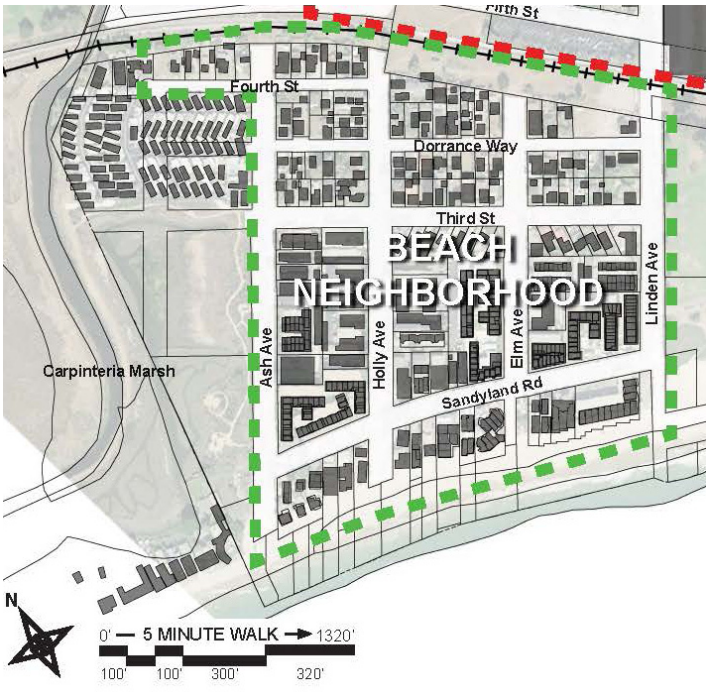


Figure 3: Map of the Beach Neighborhood (Subarea 1).

Definitions

Building Form - The configuration, shape, size and type of a building. Building form is a critical component for defining the character of the Beach Neighborhood. Primary building forms in the Beach Neighborhood include one and two-story single family dwellings and multi-unit buildings.

Double Wide Lots – Lots that are significantly wider than the immediately surrounding lots. Significance can be determined by a width that is at least 50% wider than the average width of adjacent lots.

Edges - Neighborhood edges define boundaries between land uses. In the Beach Neighborhood, edges delineate between development and open space areas such as the Carpinteria Salt Marsh, Carpinteria City Beach and Carpinteria State Beach. Neighborhood edges are typically bound by larger housing developments and heavily traveled streets.

Interiors - Neighborhood interiors are characterized by similar types of development that define a district and provide a quiet, safe and family-oriented environment.

Pedestrian Oriented Neighborhood - A neighborhood that is designed for pedestrians. Pedestrian oriented neighborhoods use human scale development, create a sense of place and form a relationship between the public realm and private realm.

Private Realm - Privately owned lots and dwelling units. Property lines define the threshold between the private and the public realm. The general public's activities are limited within the private realm per each property owner's purview.

Public Realm - The area outside of privately owned lots and dwelling units. This area includes but is not limited to public streets, sidewalks, open spaces and other areas where recreation may occur.

Sense of Place - Sense of place is a feeling or perception resulting from the experience and knowledge of the characteristics that make a place special or unique, including the history, geography and natural and social environment.

Figure 4: The Beach Neighborhood's character, history and geography represents its Sense of Place.

Figure 5: The private realm. Consideration of multi-unit open space areas is important in the Beach Neighborhood.

Figure 6: The public realm. Public beaches and open space areas are an important feature of Carpinteria's public realm.

Figure 7: A graphic representation of interiors and edges in the Beach Neighborhood.

Goals

The overarching goal of the Design Guidelines is to guide the character and appearance of development in the Beach Neighborhood (Subarea 1) to achieve consistency with the vision for the neighborhood outlined in the Community Design Element in the City's General Plan. A cohesively designed neighborhood creates a visual sense of community and establishes the character of that neighborhood.

There are five main focus areas in the Design Guidelines: Building Scale and Massing, Frontage Design, Architectural Elements, Landscaping, Fencing and Lighting and Utilities and Services. The specific goal for each focus area is listed below. A project that follows the Guidelines in each focus area should ultimately be consistent with the Community Design Element Policies and the small beach town character of the Beach Neighborhood.

Goal for Building Scale and Massing
Create consistency and compatibility in the built environment within the Beach Neighborhood in support of the "small beach town" image of Carpinteria.

Goal for Frontage Design
Create frontages that are distinguishable to the Beach Neighborhood, that form a pedestrian oriented neighborhood without hindering privacy.

Goal for Architectural Elements
Allow for a diversity of building styles while ensuring that structures continue to complement each other with respect to design and materials to reflect the eclectic character of the Beach Neighborhood.

Goal for Landscaping, Fencing and Lighting
Use landscaping, fencing and lighting to frame the public realm and delineate the private realm of the Beach Neighborhood in a distinguishable manner that complements the structures and the surrounding environment.

Goal for Utilities and Services
Locate utility connections, private infrastructure and similar services so that they do not detract from the visual character of the neighborhood while still being conveniently and safely located.

Figure 8: Building scale and massing, frontage design and landscaping all contribute to the scenic value of development.

Figure 9: New development should be compatible in size, scale and mass with existing development.

Figure 10: Landscaping and utility services are also important aspects addressed in these Design Guidelines.

Evaluation

These Guidelines are to be used in addition to the City's Zoning Code and General Plan/Coastal Plan as a gauge of whether a project is appropriate in a particular location. A project does not necessarily need to comply with every Guideline in order to be approved; however, the greater the degree of compliance a project has with these Guidelines, the greater the likelihood of approval.

Figure 11: These Design Guidelines are intended to be used for project review purposes in the development review process.

Organization

The Design Guidelines for the Beach Neighborhood are divided into five sections:

- Building Scale and Massing
- Frontage Design
- Architectural Elements
- Landscaping, Fencing and Lighting
- Utilities and Services

Each section describes aspects related to a specific facet of urban design within the Beach Neighborhood. Sections begin with a compendium of applicable policies and objectives from the Carpinteria General Plan/Coastal Plan and Carpinteria Municipal Code, followed by design guidelines to implement these policies. All applicable policies, standards and guidelines are shown in italics.

Figure 12: Though large multi-unit buildings exist in the Beach Neighborhood, the physical structure must conform to the established goals and character of the Beach Neighborhood.

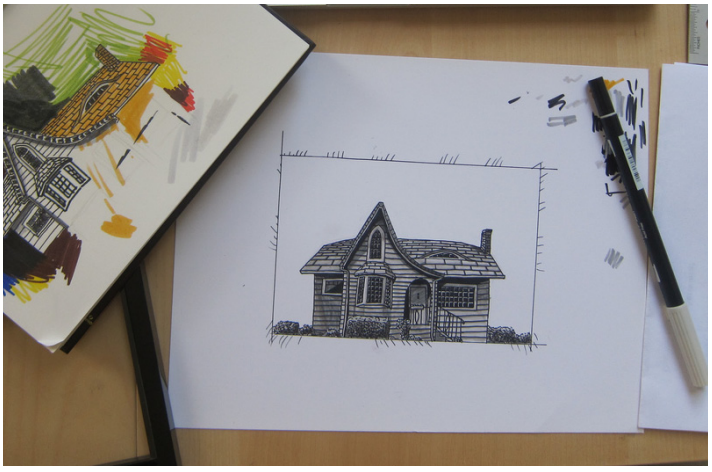


Figure 13: These Design Guidelines are intended to assist architects and designers in their creative process.

Design Guidelines

Building Mass and Scale

Mass and scale are important contributors to how an individual experiences a sense of place. The way that residents and visitors feel within a community should be consistent with the objectives and goals of the City's General Plan/Coastal Land Use Plan. These spaces should also exhibit the desired neighborhood character which starts with the mass and scale of buildings. Not only is it important for residents and visitors to identify with the characteristics of the neighborhood, but it is also important that a building's mass and scale be consistent with other surrounding buildings.

The following Municipal Code regulations and Community Design Element Objectives and Policies from the General Plan/Coastal Plan relate to mass and scale.

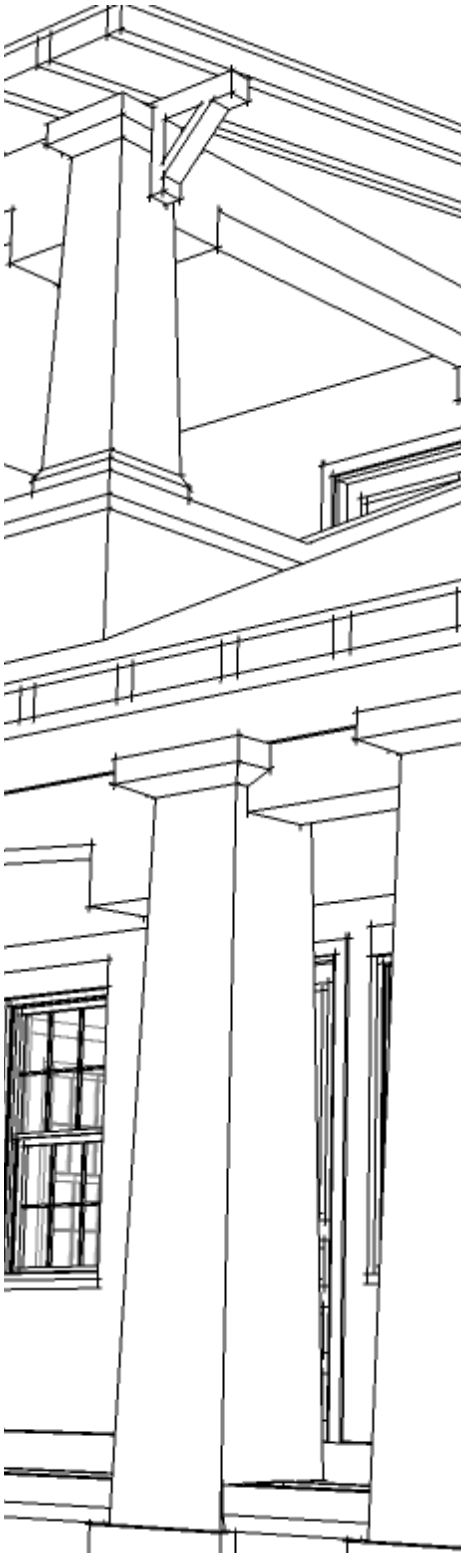
Objective CD-1: *The size, scale and form of buildings and their placement on a parcel should be compatible with adjacent and nearby properties, and with the dominant neighborhood or district development pattern.*

Objective CDS1-3: *Ensure that the scale and character of new development is consistent with the existing small-scale character of the residential neighborhood and that it is consistent with the neighborhood "small beach town" image. Discourage new development of large, "boxy" buildings, with ground floors primarily devoted to garages.*

CMC 2.36.080.A: *Overall building shapes as well as parts of any structure (buildings, walls, screens, towers or signs, (shall be) in proportion to and in scale with the site and the other existing or permitted structures in the area.*

CMC 2.36.130.B: *The review of all second-story additions and any additions at the front of an existing single-family structure shall be conducted so as to achieve neighborhood compatibility, including but not limited to protection of appropriate residential density, privacy, and significant public views.*

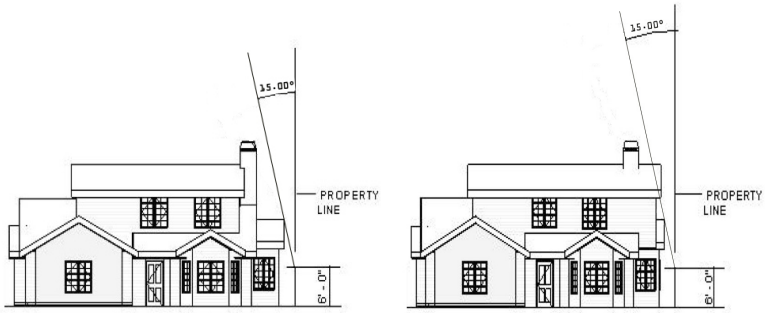
Implementation Policy CDS1-7: *To create a picturesque skyline, visible pitched roofs are recommended, rather than flat roofs with parapets or mansard fascias. On three-story elements, visible pitched roofs should be required to prevent the buildings from "walling off" the beach from the town.*



To further articulate these Standards, the following Guidelines should be applied to new development within Subarea 1.

Encroachment Plane

DG-1: *The primary dwelling should not be located beyond a side yard encroachment plane defined as follows: a 15-degree angle measured from the vertical, at a point beginning six feet above the existing grade along the interior side property line(s). For street side yards, the standard setback shall be applied. Encroachments consistent with those defined in CMC Section 14.50.070, General Yard Regulations, (i.e., sills, belt courses, buttresses, cornices, chimneys, eaves, ornamental features and uncovered landings) are permitted (see Figure 14).*



Preferred *Not Preferred*

Figure 14: An example of a residence that complies with the 15-degree encroachment plane and one that does not.

Compatibility

DG-2: *New or modified buildings should be compatible with surrounding buildings and with the character of the Beach Neighborhood. The small beach town charm should be reflected in the scale and form of the building.*

Structure

DG-3: *Buildings should be composed of varying masses. Variety in the shape, scale and design of buildings is encouraged throughout the neighborhood.*

DG-4: *For single family dwellings, the second story should comprise not more than 40% of the total building square footage (including garages). (See Figure 16.)*

DG-5: *Second floor frontages should be stepped in at least three feet from the ground floor façade in order to maintain single story elements along the street frontage and reduce the prominence of second floors.*

DG-6: *Double wide lots should use larger side and rear setbacks than the minimum required distances.*

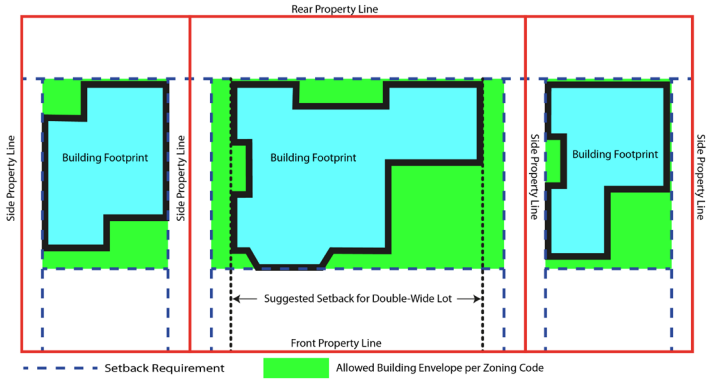
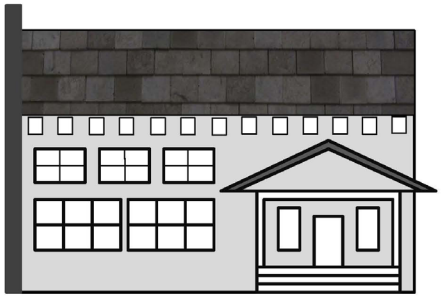


Figure 15: Larger side setbacks are preferred for double-wide lots.

Preferred



Not Preferred

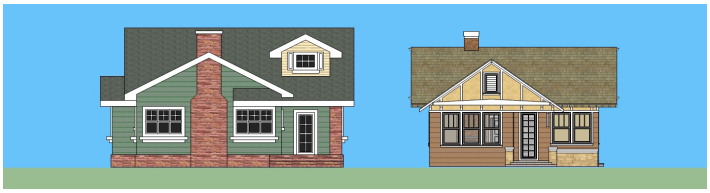
Figure 16: Building mass is affected by building form. Inappropriate form (lower image) creates a "boxy" and excessively large building mass.

Height

DG-7: *Maximum building heights over 26 feet for two-story structures are discouraged.*

DG-8: *Maximum building heights over 20 feet for one story structures are discouraged.*

DG-9: *Using a combination of techniques to comply with flood elevation requirements (such as fill, raised floor foundations or below-grade parking) is preferred over relying solely on one technique to achieve required finished floor heights for habitable spaces.*



Preferred

Not Preferred

Figure 17: Effects of compatibility of scale.

Scale

DG-10: *Building façades longer than 20 feet should incorporate design features such as larger windows or off-set wall planes.*

DG-11: *Greater side setbacks should be considered for multi-unit dwellings when located adjacent to single family dwellings.*

DG-12: *Large roof masses should be avoided. Roofs should feature varied and articulated roof planes, which may include but are not limited to front-facing gables, cross gables or hipped roofs. Flat roofs and side-facing gables are discouraged.*

Figure 18: Gables that face the street are preferred.

Frontage Design

In pedestrian oriented neighborhoods, it is critical that the space between the street and the building be designed as an attractive, comfortable and safe place to walk, while still delineating private property for residents. This space between the building and the street is the frontage. Well-designed frontages are key to the success of the relationship between the private and public realms. These Design Guidelines address the design and use of frontages within the Beach Neighborhood and how they should interact with the street and the rest of the community.

The following Objectives and Policies from the Community Design Element relate to frontages.

Policy CD-5: *The streets of neighborhood interiors should be designed to be the "living rooms" of the neighborhood, where children and adults can safely play or walk. The design and details of streets, frontages and buildings should support this objective.*

Policy CD-5a: *Main entrances to homes should be oriented to the street. Entry elements such as porches, stoops, patios and forecourts are encouraged. Such entry elements should be selected for their compatibility with the adjacent houses and the general neighborhood pattern.*

Policy CD5b: *Garages should not dominate views from any public street.*

Objective CD-10: *Areas with attractive frontage designs should be maintained. New development should be carefully planned with frontage areas, which maintain and enhance the quality of Carpinteria's streetscape.*

Policy CD-10a: *Minor variations in front yard building alignments within a block are encouraged. Relatively steady setback patterns clearly define the public space and reinforce the small town character.*

Objective CDS1-2: *Enhance the pedestrian character of the neighborhood streets.*

Implementation Policy CDS1-2: *To avoid blank ground floor façades that discourage pedestrian life on the street, the ground floors of the residence should be between one and five feet in height above the public sidewalk, unless a greater height is mandated by flood prevention policies.*

Implementation Policy CDS1-4: *No more than 50 percent of the façade width should be occupied by garage doors.*

Implementation Policy CDS1-5: *The front door should face the street. Pedestrian-oriented transitional spaces should be provided from the public sidewalk to the front door. Such spaces may include landscaped front yards, landscaped and/or hardscaped forecourts, and raised front porches and dooryards. These spaces should be designed to accommodate uses such as children's play areas and/or sitting areas.*

Implementation Policy CDS1-8: *Building articulation is encouraged: e.g. balconies, bay windows, dormers, porches and pergolas.*

Implementation Policy CDS1-10: *New buildings on streets with existing one story bungalows should include porches and other one story elements that are compatible in scale and spacing with the existing development.*

To further articulate these Standards, the following Guidelines should be applied to new development within Subarea 1.

DG-13: *Frontages that include porches and/or yards where residents may sit or interact with the public realm are encouraged. A boundary such as a landscape feature between the public realm (i.e., the street or sidewalk) and the private realm (the private property) may exist, but not in a manner that prevents the desired interaction.*

DG-14: *Multi-unit residential buildings should include frontages that are welcoming to residents and visitors from the street. These frontages may include courtyards or gateways and should allow residents and visitors to interact with the surrounding public realm.*

DG-15: *Dwellings should include a pathway separate from the driveway to lead pedestrians from the front door to the street or sidewalk.*

DG-16: *Dwellings on corner lots should be designed with street-oriented façades on both street frontages.*

DG-17: *Garages and driveways should not dominate the habitable frontage of the dwelling. Garages that are placed out of street view (such as detached garages placed at the rear of a lot) and accessed via a driveway or alley are preferred. Garages included as part of the frontage design of the house are acceptable but should include measures to reduce their prominence (see DG-18).*

DG-18: *Garage design may include windows, trellises, separate doors, decorative trim and other architectural elements to enhance the aesthetics of the garage. When placed at the front of a house garages should be set back from the main frontage and entry.*

DG-19: *Whenever possible, carports and parking lots should be located out of view from the public realm.*

Figure 19: Porches oriented toward a pedestrian pathway create a human scale environment that allows for walkability without hindering privacy.

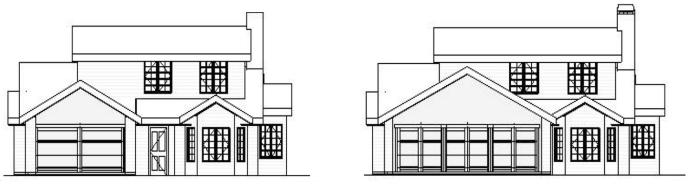


Figure 20: Garage doors should be designed to occupy less than 50% of the frontage.

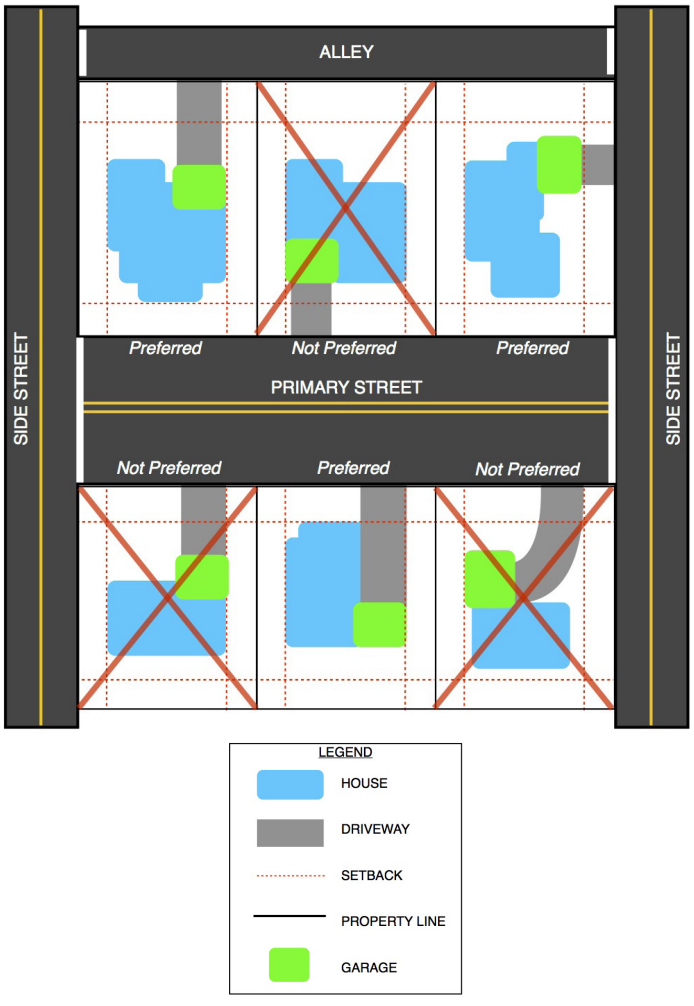


Figure 21: Examples of garage placement.

Architectural Elements

Architectural elements such as windows, doors, cornices, dormers and roof forms play a significant role in the appearance of a structure and can also influence how a building's mass and scale are perceived. Although there is no required architectural style for the Beach Neighborhood, a common architectural theme has been set by the existing buildings, such as the collection of original beach bungalows and Craftsman-style cottages. It is important for new development to be compatible with the existing styles and details of the architectural elements within the Beach Neighborhood.

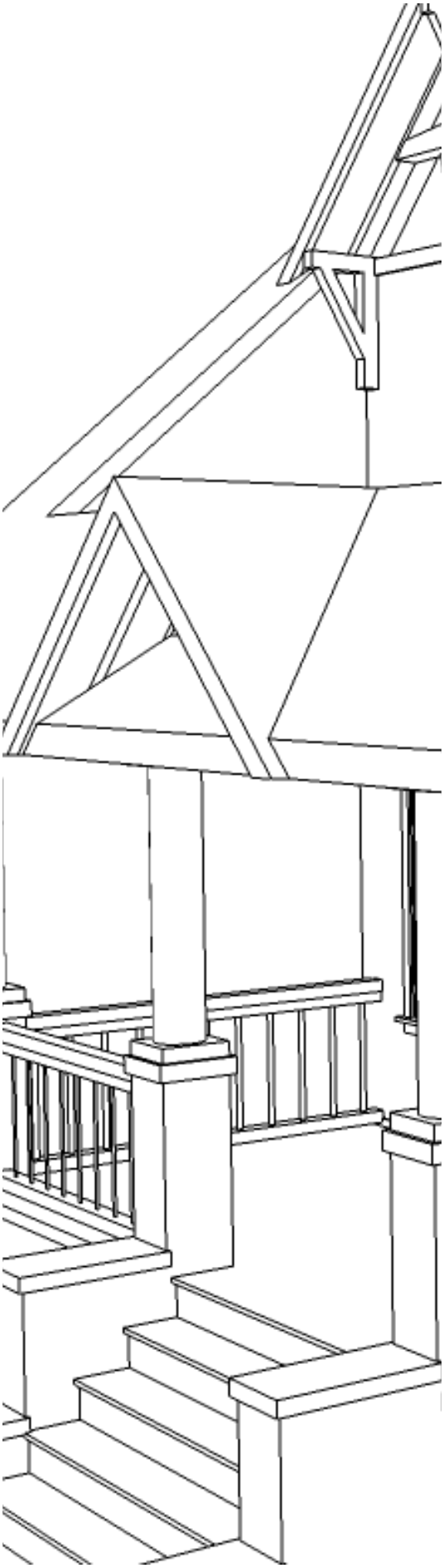
The following Policies and Standards from the City's Municipal Code and Community Design Element relate to architectural elements.

CMC §2.36.080.A: *Overall building shapes, as well as parts of any structure (buildings, walls, screens, towers or signs) (shall be) in proportion to and in scale with the site and with other existing or permitted structures in the area.*

CMC §2.36.080.D: *(A design shall provide for) consistency and unity of composition and treatment of exterior elevations.*

Policy CD-5d: *Houses within a neighborhood may vary in materials and style, but strong contrasts in scale, color and roof forms should generally be avoided.*

Implementation Policy 9: *To avoid "top-heavy" buildings, cantilevered elements of upper floors should be supported by visible brackets or braces consistent with the architectural style.*



To further promote these Standards, the following Guidelines should be applied to new development within Subarea 1.

Architectural Style

DG-20: *The selected architectural style should include the primary identifying features indicative of that style.*

Architectural Details

DG-21: *Elements such as windows and doors should be consistent in design with the architectural style, and when appropriate, should draw from elements in the existing neighborhood.*

DG-22: *Bay windows, dormers, balconies, covered porches and other decorative elements are encouraged when appropriate to the architecture of a building, particularly when these elements are oriented toward a public street, public space or open space.*

DG-23: *Fenestration should be provided to add architectural interest when façades are visible from the public realm.*

DG-24: *Exterior architectural detail and treatment should be carried around all sides of the building.*

Colors

DG-25: *Muted tones are encouraged or other colors determined to be appropriate by the Architectural Review Board.*

Privacy

DG-26: *Second floor balconies, windows and decks that are oriented toward the public realm are preferred. When these features face adjacent private properties, they should be located and designed to protect privacy.*

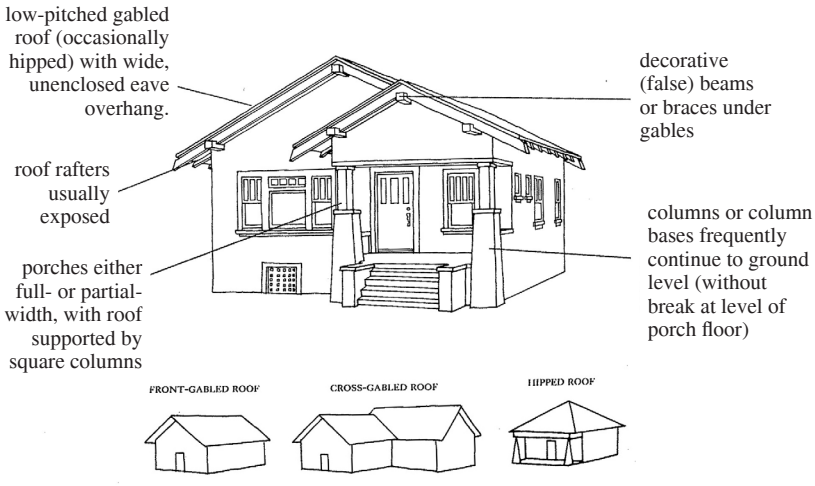


Figure 22: Identifying features of Craftsman style for single family dwellings.

Figure 23: Typical architectural style and details of a single family dwelling in the Beach Neighborhood.

Not Preferred

Figure 24: Balconies should not face windows of neighboring dwellings.

Landscaping, Fencing and Lighting

Landscaping, fencing and lighting are critical components of development within Carpinteria. These details make a significant contribution to the sense of place established in the Beach Neighborhood. The City encourages landscaping that reflects the natural environment of Carpinteria. Inappropriate fencing can isolate a property and inhibit its interaction with the public realm. Lighting design is important not only as a means of providing safety but in order to demonstrate the community's commitment to minimize light pollution.

The following Policies and Objectives from the Community Design Element relate to landscaping, fencing and lighting.

Policy CD5c: *Low walls, low fences and hedges should be encouraged along the frontages to define the edge of the private yard area, where appropriate.*

Policy CD-11f: *Landscape design guidelines should emphasize the use of native drought tolerant plant materials, and the importance of trees as the primary elements of the town landscape. All landscaping shall utilize only non-invasive type plants.*

Objective CD-12: *Development should fit quietly into the area's natural and introduced landscape, deferring to open spaces, existing natural features and native and sensitive habitats.*

Policy CD-12a: *Landscape planning shall be respectful of the natural character of the City and enhance existing native plant communities and environmentally sensitive habitat areas.*

Policy CD-12-1: *Use of native, locally adapted species shall be encouraged and shall be required within and adjacent to ESHA.*

Policy CD-12-2: *More urban, "formal" landscape designs may be used in the immediate vicinity, entryways or interior site areas of the commercially developed areas. Urban landscape species shall not be used adjacent to sensitive habitat areas.*

Policy CD-13: *Ensure that lighting of new development is sensitive to the character and natural resources of the City and minimizes photopollution to the maximum extent feasible.*

Policy CD-13a: *Lighting for development adjacent to an ESHA shall be designed to further minimize potential impacts to habitat.*

Policy CD 13b: *Lighting shall be low intensity and located and designed so as to minimize direct view of light sources and diffusers and to minimize halo and spillover effects.*

Objective CDS1-1: *Preserve and strengthen the visual and physical connections between the neighborhood, beach, the salt marsh, State Beach Park, and the Downtown District.*

Implementation Policy 41: *Open wood fences including split rail and picket types are appropriate on frontage lines. Solid fences and walls should be limited to side and rear lot lines.*

To further articulate these Standards, the following Guidelines should be applied to new development within Subarea 1.

Landscape

DG-27: *Trees, shrubs and other low plantings should be compatible with the surrounding landscape and urban form. Plantings should include native or drought-tolerant species and trees that complement the public realm. Native species are encouraged where appropriate.*

DG-28: *Landscaping should frame corridors in the public realm.*

DG-29: *Landscaping should allow visibility of the building and complement its architecture, without hindering privacy or causing excessive shading or leaf litter on adjacent lots.*

Hardscape

DG-30: *Hardscape materials should complement the building and be distinguishable from materials used in the public realm. Hardscape that incorporates varied materials, textures and designs is encouraged.*

DG-31: *Permeable materials are encouraged for all driveways and parking areas to reduce runoff.*

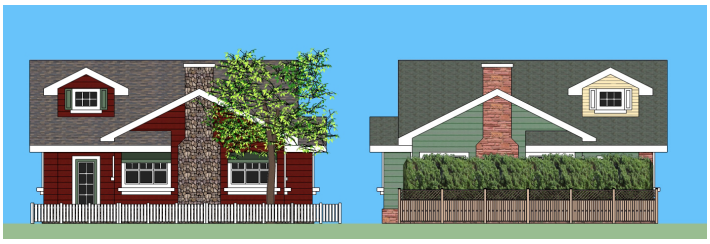
Fencing

DG-32: *Exposed walls should be finished with stone, stucco or other aesthetic treatment.*

DG-33: *Fences should be finished on both sides to create a uniform appearance as viewed from either side.*

DG-34: *Along street frontages, open fence types such as picket, wrought iron or post and rail are preferred. Chainlink and solid fencing materials are discouraged but if they are used, should be screened with landscaping to the height of the top of the fence or wall.*

DG-35: *Where the side yard faces a street on a corner lot, the rear yard portion of the street side fence may be solid and up to six feet in height.*



Preferred *Not Preferred*

Figure 25: Landscaping should enhance and frame the building frontage (left), not obstruct it (right).

Figure 26: Creative hardscapes, including permeable surfaces, are encouraged.

Figure 27: Front yard fencing with appropriate landscaping.

Lighting

DG-36: *Outdoor lighting should include:*

- *Fully shielded fixtures positioned so that light is not visible above the horizontal plane of the fixture;*
- *Motion sensor and timers to keep lights off when not in use;*
- *Energy efficient light types with low watts and lumens;*
- *Fewest number of fixtures possible at minimum height necessary; and*
- *Cutoffs for fixtures to prevent spillover onto neighboring properties.*

Preferred Lighting

Not Preferred Lighting

Figure 28: Prevent light pollution by using outdoor fixtures sensitive to the visibility of the night sky. (Image Source: International Dark Sky Association)

Utilities and Services

Public utilities and services are an important element to consider in planning new development. Amenities such as trash enclosures, utility lines, backflow preventers, mailboxes and community mailboxes, antennas and solar panels should be appropriately located and screened.

The following Policies and Objectives from the Carpinteria Municipal Code and the Community Design Element relate to Utilities and Services.

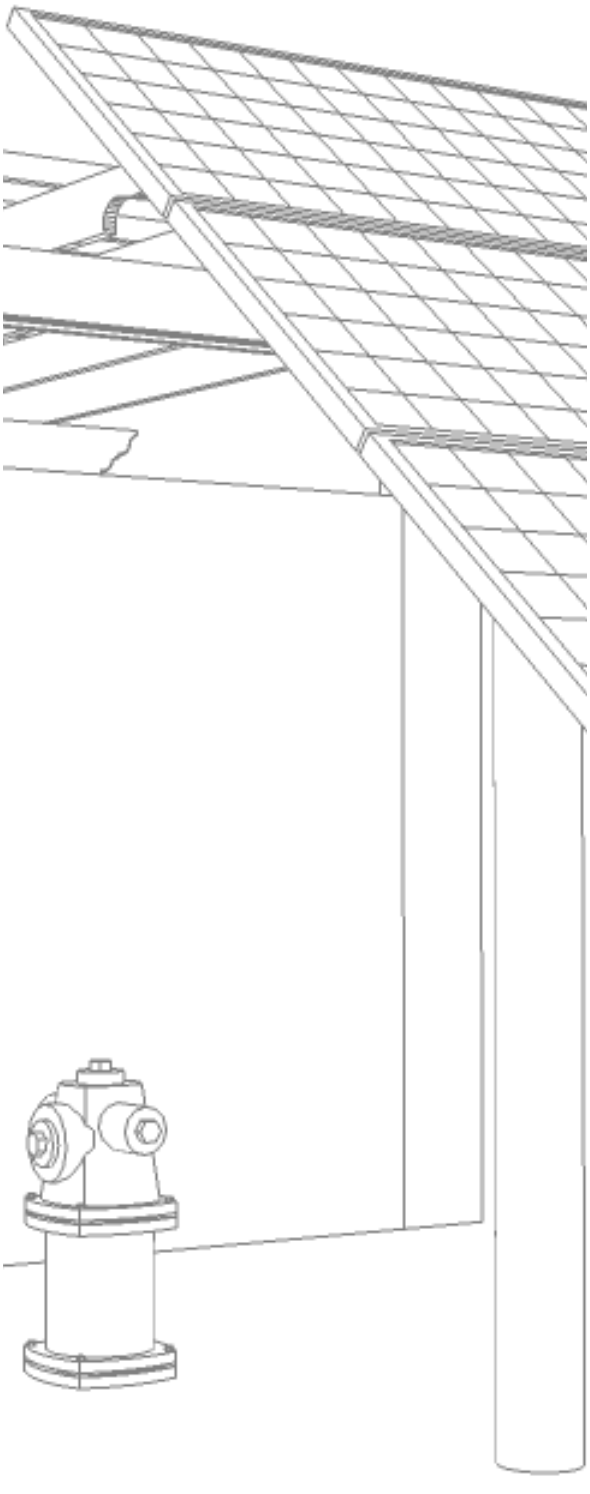
CMC §2.36.080L: *Mechanical and electrical equipment and trash storage should be concealed and integrated in the total design concept.*

CMC §2.36.080N: *Storage areas should be defined as to height limits and architectural screening where exterior of structure.*

Implementation Policy 7: *Building orientation shall be designed to maximize natural lighting and passive solar heating and cooling.*

Implementation Policy 43: *Utility hardware, such as water meters and backflow preventers, electrical transformers, and similar devices should be located underground or in parkway strips whenever possible. These elements are not attractive in front yards. Parkway strips can also accommodate fire hydrants, traffic control signs and traffic signal controllers, keeping them away from sidewalks and pedestrians.*

Implementation Policy 44: *Community mailboxes should be located in specially designed locations that are comfortable for the user. These locations should be visible from adjacent streets and houses to enhance security.*



To further articulate these policies and standards, the following Guidelines apply to new development within Subarea 1.

Utility Placement

DG-37: *Solid waste receptacles should be located in a manner that considers adjacent land uses to reduce the impacts of trash service.*

DG-38: *Utility lines should be placed underground.*

DG-39: *Utility hardware (air conditioner units, backflow prevention devices, utility vaults, etcetera) and solid waste containers should be placed out of view from the street frontage and screened using landscaping or other architectural or aesthetic features. Screening using cages, grates or boxes is discouraged.*

Figure 29: Trash enclosure for a dumpster.

Mailboxes

DG-40: *Individual and community mailboxes should be integrated with the architecture of the associated building.*

Figure 30: Community mailboxes should be designed to accentuate the architecture and materials used in the associated development. (Image Source: Exterior Systems Mailboxes)

Antennas

DG-41: *Antennas should be located toward the rear of a structure so as to not detract from the building frontage.*

Solar Panels

DG-42: *When solar panels are used, they are encouraged to be placed on rooftops. Solar panels should not detract from the style or architecture of the building, but rather be integrated into the design.*

DG-43: *Solar panels should be low profile and parallel with the plane of the pitched roof.*

DG-44: *Top of panels should not extend above the ridgeline of a pitched roof and should be located away from the edges of a flat roof.*

DG-45: *Placement of panels should be uniform.*

DG-46: *Support structures and frames should be neutral in color and compatible with the roof surface color.*

Figure 31: Example of a residential photovoltaic system.