

Residential Design Guidelines

Single-Family Residential Design Guidelines

Introduction

These guidelines seek to provide property owners, designers and developers with a clear understanding of the City's expectations for new single-family residential development and additions to existing homes. These guidelines will be used as criteria for approval during the City's plan review process.

While development must comply with the Calistoga Zoning Code and other applicable codes and ordinances, these guidelines seek a higher degree of design excellence than the minimum standards.

Design Objectives

These guidelines are intended to promote a level of development quality that will:

- Protect and promote Calistoga's rural, small town character
- Create a human-scaled and pedestrian-friendly environment
- Encourage visual diversity while protecting the unique and desirable qualities of established neighborhoods
- Promote high-quality design that enhances the character of Calistoga and is compatible with its environs.

Design Guidelines

A. Streetscape

A neighborhood's streetscape can be enhanced by incorporating the following design features.

1. The main entrance to a home should be clearly identifiable and visible from the street, and should have a connecting walkway.
2. The inclusion of front porches is encouraged to create an attractive interface with semi-public front yard areas.
3. Garages shall be a subordinate element of a home's design and shall not dominate the streetscape.
4. Setbacks for infill development should be similar to those of existing homes on the block or on adjacent properties.
5. The design of an infill home should reflect any prevailing site orientation in the neighborhood.

B. Building Form and Massing

Building forms and massing can enhance visual interest and reduce the perceived scale of structures.

1. The massing of structures shall be in proportion to the size of the buildable area of a lot.
2. The design of an infill home should reflect any prevailing pattern of scale and massing in the neighborhood.
3. The scale and mass of new infill buildings should be reduced by stepping down the building height towards adjacent smaller structures.
4. Massing shall accentuate entries and minimize garages.
5. The second story of a house shall be designed to reduce the appearance of the overall scale of the structure.

Possible techniques include setting the second story back from the front and sides of the first story, providing larger front and/or side setbacks for the entire structure, and/or placing at least 60% of the second story floor area over the back half of the first story.

6. Decks and balconies that protrude from the second story at the rear or side of a home should be recessed from the building face and use appropriate screening measures, such as solid walls, latticework or landscaping, to protect the privacy of neighboring properties.

C. Building Articulation

Facades should be articulated to avoid a monotonous appearance.

1. All facades of a residence shall be articulated and incorporate variation in massing, roof forms and wall planes, as well as surface articulation. While they do not need to be identical, there should be a sense of overall architectural continuity.
2. Extensive, unarticulated exterior walls are discouraged. Massing offsets, varied textures, openings, recesses and design accents are encouraged to provide visual interest.
3. Architectural elements that add visual interest, scale and character, such as balconies, trellises, recessed windows, overhangs and porches are strongly encouraged.
4. The design of an infill home should reflect any prevailing architectural styles and details in the neighborhood.

5. Porches should have a minimum depth of six feet and employ materials and/or details that are authentic to the architectural style of the home.
6. The supports for overhanging upper floors or decks along the rear of a residence shall be designed to provide a substantial appearance integrated with the overall design of the home.
7. Chimney caps should be decorative and spark arrestors should be concealed.

D. Roofs

The use of multiple rooflines and designs can create visual diversity and break up building mass.

1. The forms and materials of roof additions to existing buildings should be compatible with those that are existing.
2. The use of traditional roof forms such as gables, hips and dormers are encouraged. The use of "exotic" roof forms such as geodesic domes, "A" frames and flat roofs without a decorative cornice are strongly discouraged.
3. Variation in ridgeline height and alignment shall be utilized where feasible. Long, single-ridge rooflines are discouraged.
4. Roof overhangs shall be sized appropriately for the desired architectural style. Where applicable to the architectural style, roof eaves should extend a minimum of 12 inches from the primary wall surface to enhance shadow lines and articulation of surfaces.

5. Exposed gutters and downspouts, unless designed as an outstanding architectural feature of the overall theme, shall be colored to match the fascia and building face to which they are attached.

E. Building Materials and Finishes

High-quality materials shall be used to create a look of permanence.

1. Materials, finishes and colors shall be consistent with the desired architectural style.
2. Exterior walls shall have the appearance of wood, stucco or masonry, regardless of their actual composition. Reflective materials (exclusive of windows) are prohibited.
3. Surface detailing shall not serve as a substitute for well-integrated and distinctive massing.
4. Key portions of a facade should be enhanced with materials and color.
5. Exterior material changes should occur at intersecting planes, preferably at inside corners of changing wall planes or at the intersection of architectural elements (e.g., building projections such as chimneys and pilasters).
6. Contrasting but complementary colors should be used for trim, windows, doors and key architectural elements.

F. Windows, Doors and Entries

The architectural style of a residence can be enhanced by carefully-designed windows, doors and entries.

1. The main entrance to a home shall be clearly identifiable and shall be articulated with projecting or recessed forms so as to create a sheltered landing.
2. Entries should be in proportion to the building façade as a whole. Two-story entrances are generally not acceptable.
3. Window types, materials, shapes and proportions shall complement the architectural style of the building.
4. Windows shall be articulated with sills, trim, shutters or awnings that are authentic to the architectural style of the structure. Where architecturally appropriate, they may be inset from structure walls to create shade and shadow detail.
5. In order to enhance privacy, windows on side elevations shall not be positioned directly opposite an adjacent residence's windows.

G. Garages and Driveways

A garage that is well-integrated into a residence's design will ensure that it does not dominate its front façade. Minimizing paved surfaces such as driveways increases opportunities for landscaping and reduces runoff.

1. Garage doors facing the street shall be set back from the front façade to help reduce their visual impact.
2. Garage doors shall be articulated with trellises, panels and/or windows to break up their large planes.
3. The ratio of garage frontage to the width of the house's front façade should not be greater than 50 percent.

4. The width of driveways as well as cuts at the curb shall be as narrow as possible.
5. Permeable driveway materials, such as turf blocks, pavers or “Hollywood driveways” are encouraged.
6. Circular driveways are not allowed except where needed to ensure safe backing onto highly-traveled streets. Where unavoidable, the view of vehicles in the driveway shall be screened with landscaping and/or fencing.
7. Driveways on corner lots should be located as far as possible from street intersections.
5. Trees and large shrubs shall not be planted under overhead lines or over underground infrastructure if growth may interfere with public utilities.
6. When selecting tree species, consider maintenance and wildfire issues, nearby pedestrian activities and public rights-of-way.
7. Trees and shrubs shall be located and spaced to allow for mature and long-term growth.
8. Root problems caused by trees and shrubs shall be minimized by careful selection and planting procedures. Root barriers shall be required for any tree placed near pavement or other situations where roots could disrupt adjacent paving or curb surfaces.

H. Landscaping

Landscaping shall be used to enhance properties and streetscapes, define entrances to homes, provide a buffer between incompatible land uses and provide screening when necessary.

1. A variety of height, textures and colors shall be used in a project’s landscape palette.
2. A combination of trees, shrubs and ground cover shall be incorporated into landscaping plans.
3. New and rehabilitated landscaping shall comply with the State of California Model Water-Efficient Ordinance, where applicable.
4. Plantings shall not interfere with lighting, clear line of sight or access to emergency equipment or utilities (e.g., fire hydrants, fire alarm boxes, water meters).
9. Landscaping efforts shall be coordinated with adjacent property owners whenever possible to provide a complementary design.
10. Parkways should be planted with shade trees to provide a pleasant pedestrian environment and contribute to streetscape continuity.
11. Individual lot landscaping shall be compatible with the architectural style, size and massing of the individual home to create a diverse streetscape.

I. Lighting

Properly-designed lighting can enhance a project’s design while promoting safety and security.

1. The design of exterior lighting fixtures shall complement that of the residence in style and finish.

2. Lighting sources shall be screened from off-site view.
3. Lighting levels shall be the minimum necessary to provide safety and security in order to avoid glare and enhance the night sky.

J. Walls and Fences

Walls and fences shall be designed using styles, materials and colors that complement the house or neighborhood.

1. Walls should be constructed of natural materials such as brick, flagstone, slumpstone, split face block or masonry with a plaster or smooth stucco finish.
2. Fencing should be constructed of authentic materials (e.g., natural woods, brick, stone, river rock, wrought iron).
3. The following fencing materials are not allowed: chain link, barbed wire, razor wire and unfinished precision masonry block. Vinyl and other manufactured fencing materials are acceptable if the overall appearance appears natural.
4. Front yard fencing should be as transparent as possible to allow connectivity between the residence and the street.
5. Wrought iron fencing shall be powder-coated to reduce the potential for rust. No sharp projections may protrude above the fence.
6. The face of retaining walls that are more than four feet in height and visible to the general public shall be textured to provide visual relief.

7. Walls visible to the general public should be enhanced to provide visual relief and soften their appearance through techniques such as textures, staggered setbacks, wall inserts, decorative columns or pilasters and variation in height, in conjunction with landscaping.
8. Stucco walls should be capped with a different material to give them a finished appearance.
9. Walls should be constructed as low as possible while still performing screening, noise attenuation and security functions, with a maximum height of six feet unless additional height is required for noise attenuation or screening. Walls and fences in the required front yard setback may have a maximum height of four and one-half feet.
10. On corner lots, the area in front of street side yard fencing should be landscaped. Plantings or walls at street corners shall allow a clear line of sight.
11. Walls on sloping terrain should be stepped to follow the terrain.

K. Waste Storage

Each home shall be provided with a waste receptacle storage area that is screened from public view.

New Neighborhood Design

The following guidelines shall apply to the development of new neighborhoods with five or more homes that are not subject to other adopted design guidelines. They are in addition to the general design guidelines described above, as well as those contained in the Calistoga Municipal Code for hillside development (Title 17, Chapter 17.15) and subdivisions (Title 16).

A. Streetscape

1. Front setbacks in new neighborhoods should be varied.
2. Homes should be oriented towards the street to promote connectivity with the community.
3. The height, mass and appearance of residences shall include some variation to provide visual interest to the streetscape.
4. The same architectural design should not be placed on adjoining lots.

B. Building Placement

Building placement should enhance the quality of the streetscape and avoid a repetitive and regimented appearance.

1. When siting homes, care shall be taken to highlight view corridors of scenic resources from streets and neighborhood open space.
2. Privacy should be promoted by utilizing site layout techniques such as alternating the placement of rear yard outdoor patio areas and entrances on adjacent lots.

3. Lots should not be placed centered on "T" intersections to minimize noise and headlight glare impacts.

B. Parking Orientation

The visual impact of off-street parking shall be minimized.

1. In projects of five or more homes, a maximum of one house plan shall have a garage that extends beyond the main portion of the home. All other house plans shall vary garage door placement and layout to de-emphasize the garage. Possible techniques include:
 - a. Locating the garage at the rear of the lot, accessible from the side or rear;
 - b. Recessing the garage behind the primary building face of the home;
 - c. Placing the garage perpendicular to the street (side entry garage); and
 - d. Providing shared driveway access.
2. A maximum of two garage bays may face the street. Garage bays for more than two vehicles shall have a different orientation. However, in the case of a custom home on a large lot, more than two garage bays may face the street if the garage is placed towards the rear of the site or if a third bay is oriented differently.

C. Architecture

New neighborhood developments shall utilize architectural styles that complement each other.

D. Building Form and Massing

A mix of single-story, two-story, and one and one-half story designs shall be provided where feasible to promote a varied streetscape.

E. Roofs

A variety of roof designs shall be incorporated throughout a new neighborhood.

F. Building Materials and Colors

Exterior materials, finishes and colors shall be varied to generate visual interest and avoid a monotonous appearance.