

## City of Calabasas Story Pole Procedures

Effective June 25, 2015

Amended September 28<sup>th</sup>, 2016

Amended August 25<sup>th</sup>, 2021

### Purpose

Story poles are used to depict the silhouette of a proposed structure or an addition to an existing building. Story poles are intended to help decision makers, staff, neighbors and other interested parties visualize the location, mass and/or height of a proposed building(s), as part of the review of the project's relationship to its surroundings. In addition to story poles, the City may also require other visual aids, such as photo simulations, models or renderings, to assist in illustrating the proposed final project.

### Applicability

Unless determined otherwise by the Community Development Director ("CDD") or his/her designee, story poles shall be required to be installed for projects that are to be reviewed by the Planning Commission as follows:

- 1) All new projects, and any existing project with an addition of 500 square feet or more, on properties located within the Old Topanga, Calabasas Highlands and Scenic Corridor Overlay Zones, or on a designated significant ridgeline.
- 2) All new freestanding commercial and multi-family residential projects throughout the City
- 3) All projects seeking an exception (increase) in building height by way of variance or development plan.

### Exemptions

Story poles shall not be required for any proposed addition to an existing single-family residence, or for any proposed accessory building(s) on any previously developed residential property located on or near a mapped significant ridgeline, which proposed addition(s) and/or accessory structure(s) are exempt from the requirements for a ridgeline setback variance under Section 17.20.150 of the City of Calabasas Land Use and Development Code.

### Duration

Story poles shall be erected at least four weeks prior to any public hearing the Planning Commission holds to consider the project, and shall remain in place until such time the Planning Commission has rendered a final decision on the project. Story poles shall remain in place during the appeal period and through the appeal process. Following the final decision or exhaustion of the appeal process, whichever is later ("the "decision date"), the story poles shall be removed as soon as possible, but no later than 48 hours following the decision date. If at any time the story poles become unsafe, they shall be repaired

as soon as possible by the project applicant or removed and replaced with safe poles as soon as possible. If any poles fall down prior to the hearing date, they shall be promptly replaced by the project applicant as soon as possible.

**Plan Components**

A story pole plan must be submitted to staff for approval prior to installation. The story pole locations must be plotted on the project roof plan and each story pole location shall indicate the maximum height of the pole. The project applicant shall confer with City staff to determine the most appropriate locations for unusually shaped structures. The story pole plan shall also include the contact information and license number for the licensed contractor, licensed surveyor, licensed architect, or licensed civil engineer installing the story poles.

**Construction Method and Materials**

Story poles shall be made either of metal, standard 2"x 4" lumber, or similar material as determined by the CDD that is sturdy and avoids bending much as reasonably possible. All story poles shall be erected safely without putting the public at risk, and durably, so as to withstand weather. The story pole contractor shall install guy wires or other similar temporary support systems if necessary in his/her professional opinion to safely erect and maintain the story poles. Bright orange mesh netting 1 foot wide shall be attached between poles to delineate approximate roof lines, and shall be attached in a way that is safe, durable, and creates a visually crisp (non-sagging) representation of the proposed rooflines. The CDD, in consultation with a licensed story pole contractor, engineer, architect, or other similarly licensed professional with knowledge of building and engineering practices, may approve alternative materials for the depiction of rooflines, such as brightly colored flags or ribbons, if the CDD determines that the use of the bright orange mesh netting poses a safety risk or lacks necessary durability given the pole heights, expected seasonal weather patterns, and/or amount of time poles are expected to be erected and maintained.

**Pole Locations and Markings**

Story poles shall be erected at the most distant corners of the proposed structure or addition and at the maximum height of the roof ridge. The story pole locations shall achieve a silhouette of the proposed structure or addition, clearly defining the maximum roof heights. The tallest story pole shall be painted with a clearly visible black paint at every one (1) foot increment. The height of each pole shall be clearly marked on the base of each pole. (Story poles for roof overhangs, eaves, chimneys, balconies and accessory buildings may also be required at the discretion of the CDD).

**Certification**

Story pole heights and locations must be certified in writing by a licensed contractor, licensed surveyor, licensed architect or licensed civil engineer, and such certification shall be provided, along with the story pole plan, to the City's project planner a minimum of three weeks in advance of the first public hearing date.

### **Story Pole Feasibility Determination**

The CDD shall evaluate the following factors in its determination of whether it is feasible for the project applicant to install story poles at the project site. These factors shall include:

- a) Safety, such as the presence of power lines, public right of ways, pedestrians, vehicular access and other security and welfare concerns;
- b) Stability, such as the structure height, materials, weather, anchoring or topographic conditions;
- c) Accuracy of the depiction of the proposed project due to topography, land modifications, existing structures, grading or other site conditions;
- d) Impacts to trees, habitat, archeologic or biologic resources, or the need for land alterations in pole placement;
- e) Site constraints, such as roadway re-alignments, utilities, easements and fire access requirements.
- f) Potentially excessive cost or unreasonable financial impact of designing, installing and maintaining story poles for the subject project.

The CDD may, at the CDD's sole discretion, seek advice from the Architectural Review Panel and/or a story pole contractor in arriving at a determination of pole installation feasibility.

### **Planning Commission Review**

If the CDD finds that at least 50% of the project mass cannot reasonably be depicted with story poles, the CDD shall issue a written report to the Planning Commission setting forth the CDD's findings and recommendation. The recommendation shall identify all factors which limit the feasibility of story pole placement on the subject site. The Planning Commission shall consider the CDD's findings and recommendation, and such other evidence as it deems necessary and proper, and shall make a determination whether to: (a) accept the CDD's findings and recommendation; or (b) require more story poles than the CDD recommended; or (c) waive the requirement of story poles altogether. If the Planning Commission rejects the CDD's recommendation, it shall specify the extent to which story poles are required for the subject project. The Planning Commission shall also be the body to determine if story poles should be re-established in instances when vandalism has rendered the story poles no longer effective.

### **Notification**

For all projects subject to the City's Story Pole Procedures, the applicant shall erect a sign on-site displaying a rendering or photo simulation of the proposed project at the time that the story poles are

installed. The sign shall include contact information for the City's project planner, and if applicable, any web site information about the proposed project prepared by the City and/or applicant.

For all projects in which the project applicant proposes to install story poles which depict less than 100% of the project mass, the rendering or photo simulation located on the required notification sign shall include an overlay of the location of the story poles that are proposed for the project. The overlay is intended to assist the public and decision makers as to the relationship of the poles and the proposed project.

Required City notices for public hearings on a project shall also identify that story poles have been installed at the project site. For commercial projects, the required City notice should also include a project rendering or photo simulation.

The Planning Commission and the City Council shall be notified at the time that story poles are erected on the site.