

9.17.010. - Purpose.

The purpose and intent of the Hillside Development Standard is to implement the goals, objective and policies of the General Plan relating to the preservation and maintenance of the natural character and visual amenities of hillsides as a scenic resource of the City and relating to protection from geologic hazards, such as unstable soils and erosion.

9.17.020. - Applicability.

All development within the Hillside Management Area, as designated by the Westlake Village General Plan, shall conform with the standards set forth in this Chapter; however, they shall not be applied so as to preclude the reasonable development of a residence on a legally-created parcel. Approval of a specific plan, tentative subdivision map or planned development permit shall constitute approval of the development's conformity with the requirements of this Chapter.

(Ord. No. 192-05, Amended, 3/9/05)

9.17.030. - Findings.

The Commission or Planning Director may approve an application for development within the Hillside Management Area only if all of the following findings of fact can be made in a positive manner:

1. The natural topographic character of hillsides as exhibited in prominent ridgeline silhouette and backdrop, rounded hill form and angled hillside slopes will be maintained and/or reinforced.
2. Significant natural systems and resources associated with hillside environments, including but not limited to prominent ridgelines, significant vegetation and wildlife habitats, special geological features, steep slopes, and important historic or cultural man-made features, will be maintained to the maximum extent feasible.
3. The visual character of hillsides will be maintained, recognizing both the importance of the exposure of hillside development to off-site public views and the importance of providing panoramic views from the hillside.

9.17.040. - General Development and Design Standards.

The following standards shall apply to all development within the Hillside Management Area.

A. Views

1. Hillside development is more visible than flatland (level terrain) development. Therefore, hillside development shall be visually pleasing.
2. Panoramic views from hillside roads and public places are as important to the character of the community as views of hillside development. Therefore, hillside development shall provide for view opportunities to the greatest extent feasible for all residents of and visitors to the City.

B. Camouflage

1. Quality hillside development blends man-made and man-introduced factors with the natural environment. Therefore, architecture and landscape shall be harmoniously integrated into the natural environment.

2. Compatible architecture responds to the natural environment, incorporating sloped terrain into development eliminating such terrain. Therefore, the scale, form and surface expression of architecture shall either blend complement the character and textures of the hillside.
3. Compatible landscaping, like architecture, responds to the natural environment. Vegetation planted within a developed area creates the theme and character of the community and shall blend and unify the architecture. Therefore, vegetation shall be compatible with and responsive to the environmental conditions of the development site.

C. Compression

1. Conforming to the gradient of a slope forces development into a more vertical living environment. Compact development shall be attained through methods such as clustering and minimizing setback, thereby minimizing grading and making development less obtrusive.

D. Diversity

1. Diversity in design solutions adds the characteristic of variety to hillside development. Meandering streets conforming to the topography, varied setbacks of homes, and individual solutions to traversing slopes shall be incorporated into the project design.
2. Uniform "stair-stepping" of building pads shall be prohibited to the greatest extent feasible.

E. Accent and Image

1. Attention shall be concentrated on significant visual and environmental elements, including but not limited to ridgelines, significant vegetation and wildlife habitats, canyons, steep slopes, and important historical or cultural man-made features. Such elements collectively express hillside character. Therefore, preservation or restoration of these elements shall be comprehensively integrated with the hillside development plan.

9.17.050. - Site Planning Standards.

A. Project Layout

1. Generally, minimizing required setbacks, especially front and rear setbacks, may lessen the amount of grading by reducing the overall width of road and structure arrangements. However, before applying reduced setbacks to a structure, it shall be demonstrated that grading will be reduced, while still providing for useful private space as part of the site.
2. Lot lines shall be placed at the top of major slope areas within public view corridors to help ensure their maintenance by the downhill owner.
3. No project shall be approved unless it provides for the minimization of grading impacts and flexibility in siting structures and circulation, such as providing for low density and large lots or for higher density and clustered development.
4. No project shall be approved unless it provides for visual analysis documentation (including, but not limited to, photographs, sketches, renderings and a three (3) dimensional scale model if required by the City) relating to ridgeline preservation and recontouring as deemed necessary by the City.

B. Land Controls

1. As a condition of approval, a subdivision map shall require that all areas of common open space exposed to public view or major slope areas shall be developed and maintained in a consistent manner, that such lands

be owned in common by a homeowners association and that they be developed and maintained as set forth in a declaration of covenants, conditions and restrictions.

2. Before a project is approved, major open spaces and natural features of City-wide significance shall be considered for public ownership.

C. Resource Preservation

1. The site plan for a hillside development shall provide for the preservation of prominent ridgelines in their natural state, protecting them from development impacts, and maintaining them as a backdrop for development. "Prominent ridgelines" are those designated as such in the General Plan and which form a part of the skyline visible from any City arterial. Alteration of prominent ridgelines shall be permitted only to accommodate General Plan-designated trails and circulation components, viewpoints, fuel modification measures or other requirements needed to implement the goals and objectives of the General Plan, or to provide for the public health, safety, or welfare.
2. Significant views of prominent ridgelines shall be maintained from elements of the general circulation plan and other public open spaces, especially scenic highways.
3. No point on any structure subject to the provisions of these Standards shall be closer to a prominent ridgeline than 150 feet measured horizontally from the center of the ridge or 50 feet measured vertically on a cross section, whichever is more restrictive, except that this requirement shall not affect the location of structures to be placed at or below the lowest visible elevation of a prominent ridgeline. Lesser setback distances may be authorized by the Commission if it can be demonstrated that the objectives of these Standards will be achieved.
4. All watersheds exceeding 10 acres shall be considered "major" watersheds and shall be reviewed on a case-by-case basis to determine development setback requirements.
5. When the retention of natural or recontoured drainage swales is required, no project shall be approved without a hydrologic analysis to determine an adequate setback for preservation of natural or recontoured swales, public safety, and riparian vegetation and wildlife (if any).

D. Slope Maintenance

1. No tentative subdivision map shall be approved unless conditioned upon the preparation and recordation of a declaration of covenants, conditions and restrictions providing for the development and maintenance of slopes as required by these Standards.
2. No tentative subdivision map shall be approved unless conditioned upon the subdivider's supplying a program and/or staff for maintenance of major manufactured slope areas. Such program shall be approved prior to approval of a final map and shall include homeowner slope maintenance requirements and guidelines to be incorporated into the declaration of covenants, conditions, and restrictions.

E. Grading Standards

1. The following factors shall be taken into consideration in the design of a project:
 - a. When space and proper drainage requirements can be met with approval by the City Engineer, rounding of slope tops and bottoms shall be accomplished.
 - b. When slopes cannot be rounded, vegetation shall be used to alleviate a sharp, angular appearance.
 - c. A rounded and smooth transition shall be made when the planes of man-made and natural slopes intersect.

- d. When significant landforms are "sliced" for construction, the landforms shall be rounded as much as possible to natural grade.
 - e. Manufactured slope faces shall be varied to avoid excessive "flat-planed" surfaces.
2. No manufactured slope shall exceed 30 feet in height between terraces or benches.
 3. A detailed Soils and Geologic Report shall accompany each Grading Permit application. The report shall address such items as the recommended maximum slope angles for natural and manmade cuts and fill slopes, the effect of saturation or supersaturation of soils due to over-watering (irrigation), seismic safety, liquefaction, and soil or rock erosion. The foregoing items are minimum requirements for the report. The report shall address any other items necessary, in the professional opinion of the soils and/or geologic engineer, and as required by the City.

9.17.060. - Architectural Standards.

A. Building Form

1. Design and placement of structures shall respond to both the cross-sectional slope and the silhouette contour of the hillsides. Structures shall be designed to minimize creation of flat pads. Single-family units shall be compact and split-level if possible. Multi-family units may be designed with two stories upslope and two stories downslope.
2. Building forms shall be scaled to the particular environmental setting so as to complement the hillside character and to avoid excessively massive forms that detract from the hillside character. Building facades shall use plane changes or overhangs to create shadow lines to further break up massive forms.
3. Front yard setback may be minimized to reduce the amount of building mass located on a slope. Private rear yard space may be provided with a small yard, terrace or deck. Buildings on slopes shall step back or down with the topography.
4. A majority of the roof pitches shall be placed to angle with the slope. However, variations shall be provided to avoid a monotonous application. Collective mass roof lines shall reflect the naturally-occurring ridgeline silhouettes and topographical variation, or create an overall variety that blends with the hillside. Totally flat roof lines shall be avoided.
5. On ridgelines not designated as prominent, and used for continuous development along the ridgetop, collective roof lines shall be kept low in profile, and the natural silhouette of the ridge shall be repeated with smooth transitions in height from building to building. Consideration of this ridgeline treatment may take variations and landscape features into account.

B. Building Exteriors

1. Colors of the buildings shall be selected to blend with the natural colors and hues of the surrounding hillsides. A color palette shall include off-white, browns, greens or other earth tones.
2. Surface materials shall be rough-textured to blend with the coarseness of landscaping and natural vegetation. Textured stucco, wood, earthtone brick and coarse block are appropriate.
3. A harmonious mixture of materials, color and forms combined to achieve a mottled effect shall be used to blend with the natural hillsides.
4. Roof materials shall be of rough-textured, fire-retardant material. Roof colors shall be of darker tones, including browns, black, greens and terracotta. Bright colors shall be avoided.

C. Architectural Elements

1. Free-standing walls integral to a structure shall be of the same material and design as the structure. The height of such walls shall not exceed six feet.
2. Where fences and walls occur on privately-owned property within slope areas, their designs shall be as uniform as possible.
3. Continuous rear yard fences and walls across the tops of slopes shall be coordinated in design and use of materials.
4. Wall setbacks on slopes shall not allow more than four feet of solid wall or fence to show above the sight line projected along the slope angle.
5. Retaining walls shall be designed with smooth, continuous lines that conform to the topography. Maximum wall height at the base of slopes along roadways shall not exceed five feet in order to avoid a contained, channel-like effect.
6. Retaining wall structures used to accommodate a patio or terrace shall conform to the natural hillside profile as much as possible. Excessively high retaining walls shall be avoided.
7. In deck construction, the distance between structure and grade shall conform to the natural hillside profile as much as possible. Excessively high distances between structures and grade shall be prohibited.

9.17.070. - Circulation.

A. General Layout

1. The following factors shall be taken into consideration by a project's design:
 - a. Circulation shall be aligned to conform to the natural grades as much as possible. Long stretches of straight road shall be avoided by utilizing gentle horizontal and vertical curves.
 - b. Roads that run either directly parallel or perpendicular to the slope shall be avoided in order to reduce grading and to aid in drainage.
 - c. Bridges shall be considered for roads crossing drainage ways and canyons of exceptional environmental setting to eliminate excess fill when structural requirements do not negate the intent of environmental preservation.
 - d. Proper sight distances shall be maintained. Subject to the approval of the City Engineer, three-way intersections at angles at less than 90 degree shall be considered to reduce grading requirements.
2. Pedestrian circulation traversing man-made slopes may be provided in benches; on low slopes, vertical shortcuts may be developed with steps.
3. Opportunities should be created for public views from roadways and public open spaces by selective placement of structures at key locations.
4. On-street parking shall be provided for in a flexible manner. Parallel parking may be eliminated to reduce road width in critical areas and provided for in on-street bays at more suitable locations.
5. Common drives in single-family developments may be permitted if grading is reduced by their use.

B. Roadway Sections

1. When provided, parallel parking shall be located on one side only and be limited to eight feet in width.
2. The following factors shall be taken into consideration by a project's design.

- a. Road sections shall meet appropriate standards for hillside roads as found in the City subdivision Ordinance specific plans, subject to the approval of the City Engineer.
- b. Sidewalks may be permitted directly adjacent to the curb on one or both sides of the street in order to minimize grading.
- c. All underground utilities shall be located, when possible, in a common trench in the parkway or under the sidewalk.
- d. When placement of roads near ridges and on slopes is proposed, acceptable placements shall include a split roadway section to accommodate grade, knob removal to accommodate views from the road, and the rounding off of cut slopes to enhance appearance.

9.17.080. - Landscape Treatment.

A. Design Regulations Relating to Slopes

1. No project shall be approved unless it provides that all cut and fill slopes within street rights-of-way, on land held by a homeowners association, and all slopes over five feet in height shall be landscaped with a combination of ground cover, shrubs and trees by the developer prior to completion of the project.
2. Turf that requires mowing shall not be used on slopes in excess of 4:1.
3. Plant materials used in slope planting shall be fire-retardant, drought-tolerant introduced species or native plants adapted to and suitable for providing vigorous rooted growth. Such materials shall comply with the approved slope plant materials contained in the City Guidelines and Specifications for Landscape Development.
4. In cases of severe soil problems, where shrubs and tree pits can trap water leading to slope failure, hydroseed mixes or smaller plant materials shall be required.
5. Plant materials shall be placed in informal masses to help alleviate the impact of uniform, graded benches.
6. Shrubs shall be arranged in broad, informal masses of the same plant materials in overall quantities to provide a minimum of one shrub per 75 square feet. These masses shall be combined to produce a mounded, textured slope surface, similar to the natural chaparral vegetation.
7. Trees shall be arranged in informal masses in overall quantities to provide a minimum of one per 500 square feet. These masses shall be placed to selectively allow views from housing while partially screening buildings and reducing the scale of long, steep slopes.
8. Required irrigation systems shall be designed on pad or slope areas where it has been determined by the soils engineering report that over watering and super-saturation of soils would jeopardize the stability of the slope so as to not cause slippage or erosion.

B. Design Regulations Relating to Street Trees

1. Street trees shall be selected which create an intimate scale along the streetscape and do not overpower narrower streets.
2. The arrangement of street trees shall be carefully planned to create an informal character and to enhance potential views.
3. Street trees along roads without adjacent development shall be selectively located to provide an edge to the road. They shall not be uniformly spaced, but used in groups to enhance and frame views. It may be appropriate to eliminate trees along roads through natural open space areas.

4. Street tree quantities and types shall be provided as required by the City Guidelines and Specifications for Land Development.

C. Landscape Edge Conditions

1. Special attention shall be given to the interface between development and open space and internally between structures on slopes to integrate structures with the natural landscape.
2. Planting along the slope side of development shall be designed to allow controlled views out, yet partially screen and soften structures.
3. In situations where edge planting at lower levels of slope development may block views from above, height restrictions on plant materials shall be applied.
4. Between natural open space and development, a fire break or fuel modification line shall be provided. This zone shall consist of at least 100 feet and must have non fire-resistant native ground cover removed, larger trees and shrubs pruned and fire-resistive ground cover added if necessary.

9.17.090. - Variance from Standards.

1. As part of an application for development within the Hillside Management Area, the applicant may also apply for a variance from the requirements of the Hillside Development Standards if any or all of the following circumstances exist:
 - a. There is an internal conflict within the Hillside Development Standards such that the attainment of one objective or requirement can only be achieved by permitting non-attainment of another objective or requirement.
 - b. There is conflict between the Hillside Development Standards and other City regulations or ordinances applicable to development of the property.
 - c. Compliance with the Hillside Development Standards may endanger the public health or safety. In cases where such a conflict exists between this Ordinance and the provisions of the Grading Ordinance, the Grading Ordinance shall control over the Hillside Development Standards.
 - d. Due to special conditions or exceptional characteristics of the property or its location, the strict application of the development requirements would not achieve the goals and objectives of these Standards.
2. The application for a variance shall be accompanied by a written statement setting forth the following information:
 - a. The location of the proposed variance.
 - b. The provision of the Hillside Development Standards from which the applicant proposes to vary.
 - c. The nature and extent of the proposed variance.
 - d. A description of the alternatives to the variance which were considered by the applicant and the basis for their rejection.