

**CITY OF NAPA**  
**HILLSIDE DEVELOPMENT GUIDELINES**

**ADOPTED: JANUARY 2, 1990**

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**PREFACE**

Hillsides, by their very nature, are sensitive sites; they are even more sensitive in Napa because they constitute a significant natural feature visible to residents and visitors alike and because they serve an important role in providing open space in a city which has adopted a growth limit boundary (the Rural-Urban Limit Line or RUL).

These Hillside Development Guidelines are intended to facilitate the appropriate development of those significant Hillsides which have been identified by the City and subsequently rezoned :HS by the City Council. They are not intended to be strict standards, but rather, as their title implies, guidelines encouraging development which is sensitive to the unique characteristics common to hillside properties. Their purpose is not to restrict an individual from proposing an innovative or alternate method of design in a hillside area; innovation is, in fact, encouraged as long as the end result is one which respects the hillside and is in harmony with the character of the City.

## I. INTENT & PURPOSE

The City of Napa benefits from the hills which form the boundaries of the valley and serve to define the City. These hills are a dominant natural feature and play a particularly important role as open space which is highly visible from many roads and homes in and around the City. In order to encourage that the development within these areas is accomplished in a sensitive fashion, Hillside Development Guidelines have been found by the City to be necessary. These Guidelines apply to all development which bears the ":HS" suffix; their purpose is to accomplish the following:

1. To encourage an alternative approach to conventional flat land practices of development;
2. To encourage the maximum retention of natural topographic features, such as drainage swales, streams, slopes, ridge lines, rock outcroppings, vistas, natural plant formation and trees; and to shape essential grading or fill to complement these natural land forms;
3. To preserve the predominant views both from and of the hillside areas, and to retain the sense of identity that these hillside areas now impart to the City of Napa and its environs;
4. To place and shape a variety of housing types which complement one another and the natural landscape, provide visual interest, and create a sense of identity within the development;
5. To landscape the spaces around structures and blend them into the natural landscape; and to exercise special consideration in the design of such visual elements as street lighting, fences, sidewalks, pathways, and other streetscape improvements.

## II. HILLSIDE OVERLAY

### A. :HS, Hillside Overlay District

The :HS, Hillside Overlay District identifies hillside areas (slopes greater than 15 percent) which are subject to special regulations and design criteria. Some development standards which apply in the underlying zoning district may be modified or waived when an improved or more sensitive design will result.

The :HS District has been incorporated into the City's Municipal Code and appears on the zoning map for each property subject to the :HS District regulations and Hillside Design Guidelines.

### B. Review Process in the :HS District

A Pre-Application meeting with the Planning Department is recommended for all proposals to develop properties zoned :HS. The purpose for this meeting is to define the relationship of the General Plan's goals, policies and programs to the proposed development; determine whether the :HS regulations apply to the property and/or proposed development; review the :HS District's density and/or development criteria; and to outline the items that need to be submitted with a complete application.

Subject to the review and confirmation by the Planning Commission (or City Council if they are the final decision making body), the Planning Director through the Pre-Application process may: (1) exempt properties and/or developments from the requirements of :HS Hillside Overlay District regulations; or (2) suspend specific items required for filing a complete application. The exemption and/or suspension of application requirements is intended to provide relief from these regulations in the event that: (1) a property zoned :HS is not a hillside or ridge property; or (2) the type, size, scale, design and/or location of a proposed development is consistent with the purpose of the :HS Hillside Overlay District and Hillside Development Guidelines.

### C. Review Criteria

#### One Dwelling, Accessory Buildings and Structures in Excess of 120 Square Feet, and Other Accessory Buildings and Structures That Require a Building Permit on an Existing Residential Lot:

The approval of a Use Permit for one dwelling, accessory buildings and structures, and other accessory buildings and structures that require a building permit on an existing residential lot or parcel shall be based on its compliance with the purpose of the :HS District and Hillside Development Guidelines. An addition to an existing dwelling, accessory building or structure shall be exempt from the requirement of a Use Permit when the floor area of the addition is fifty percent (50%) or less of the floor area of the existing dwelling, accessory building or structure to which it will be attached.

Subdivision or Other Development With a Potential for More Than One Dwelling on an Existing Residential Lot:

An application for a subdivision or other development with a potential for more than one dwelling per existing residential lot or parcel must first be found by the Planning Commission to be consistent with the purpose of the :HS District and Hillside Development Guidelines. After which the Planning Commission may, by Use Permit, allow property zoned :HS to be subdivided and/or approve other developments with a potential for more than one dwelling per existing residential lot or parcel. The approval of this Use Permit shall be based on the following criteria:

- a. The visibility of the new house(s) and accessory buildings to the valley floor along Highway 29, Silverado Trail, Browns Valley Road, Buhman Avenue, Foster Road, Redwood Road, Coombsville Road, and Soscol Avenue.
- b. The visibility of the new house(s) and accessory buildings to the adjacent neighborhood.
- c. Cut and/or fill required to establish access roads and parking areas; short-term and long-term appearance of such changes and any related engineering improvements, together with any proposed mitigation measures.
- d. Cut and/or fill required to establish the new house(s) and accessory buildings.
- e. Height, width and bulk of each new house and accessory building, if known.
- f. Construction materials and colors of each new house and accessory building, if known.
- g. Existing trees and vegetation to be removed from the property.
- h. Degree of screening of the new development with existing trees and vegetation.
- i. Degree of screening of new development with new plant materials; length of time to see these established at a mature size.
- j. Any open space easements, special building setbacks, building envelopes or other covenants that may be established to preserve the existing character of the property.

Nonresidential Development Associated with Properties Zoned for Nonresidential Use:

The approval of a Use Permit for the construction of buildings and structures associated with properties zoned for nonresidential uses shall be based on its compliance with the purpose of the :HS District and Hillside Development Guidelines.

D. Hillside Density Standards

In any case, the allowable density of subdivisions or other developments with a potential for more than one dwelling on an existing residential lot or parcel in the :HS District shall be based on the following density standards:

- a. Any portion of the lot or parcel having a slope of less than fifteen percent (15%) shall be assigned the density of the General Plan land use classification.
- b. Any portion of the lot or parcel having a slope of fifteen percent (15%) to thirty percent (30%) shall be assigned a density of one (1) dwelling unit for each acre.
- c. Any portion of the lot or parcel having a slope greater than thirty percent (30%) shall be assigned no density.

E. Alternative Hillside Development Standards

To minimize the impact of hillside development, the following alternative standards shall apply to lots zoned :HS:

- a. Buildings and structures may encroach into a required yard or setback for a distance of not more than one-half of the required yard or setback with the approval of the Planning Commission when the encroachment minimizes the impact of hillside development.
- b. Buildings and structures shall not exceed 24 feet in height from the natural grade at any point on the lot except as provided in Division 1 of Article IV. The Planning Commission may grant an exception to this height limitation when the additional height results in less lot coverage, reduces lot grading, or saves significant existing trees and vegetation. And exception may also be approved when the aesthetic impact of the additional height is mitigated by existing on-site conditions, or the size or shape of the lot unreasonably restricts the size of the proposed buildings and structure.
- c. Tandem parking may be permitted on hillside lots served by an access drive with the approval of the Planning Commission when the provision of tandem parking minimizes the impact of hillside development.
- d. The requirements and standards for public improvements (streets, curbs, gutters, etc.) may be modified with the approval of the Planning Commission to reduce the impact of hillside development.

F. Application Requirements

One Dwelling, Accessory Buildings and Structures in Excess of 120 Square Feet, and Other Accessory Buildings and Structures That Require a Building Permit on an Existing Residential Lot; and Nonresidential Development Properties Zoned for Nonresidential Use:

Unless suspended during the Pre-Application review, the following materials are required for an application for one single-family dwelling on an existing residential lot or parcel:

- a. Surveyed site plan with the precise location of all physical features and slope contours. Contour lines shall have an interval of one (1) foot for areas having a slope of zero to fifteen percent (0% - 15%), two (2) feet for areas having a slope of fifteen to thirty percent (15% - 30%), and five (5) feet for areas having a slope of more than thirty percent (30%).
- b. Site Assessment Plan identifying dominant features (solar orientation, site access, dominant views from the site, etc.) and constraints (prevailing winds, excessive slopes, sensitive areas, dominant views of the site, etc.).
- c. Construction drawings
- d. Samples of building materials
- e. Precise grading/drainage plan
- f. All plans required by the :CR-1 zoning overlay
- g. Landscape plan
- h. A scale model and/or photomontage.
- i. Other information, plans or studies which are deemed by the Planning Director to be necessary to accurately assess the project.

Subdivision or Other Development With a Potential for More Than One Dwelling on an Existing Residential Lot:

Unless suspended during the pre-application review, the following materials are required for an application for a subdivision of other development project with a potential for more than one dwelling on an existing residential lot or parcel.

- a. Surveyed site plan with precise location of all physical features, including existing trees and major vegetation.
- b. A detailed slope analysis showing those areas having a slope of less than fifteen percent (15%), areas having a slope of fifteen to thirty percent (15% - 30%), and areas having a slope greater than thirty percent (30%). Contour lines shall have an interval of one (1) foot for areas having a slope of zero to fifteen percent (0% - 15%), two (2) feet for areas having a slope of fifteen to thirty percent (15% - 30%), and five (5) feet for areas having a slope of more than thirty percent (30%).

- c. Site Assessment Plan identifying dominant features (solar orientation, site access, dominant views from the site, etc.) and constraints (prevailing winds, excessive slopes, sensitive areas, dominant views of the site, etc.).
- d. Proposed building footprints or building envelopes.
- e. Diagrams of typical building sections and massing.
- f. Preliminary grading plan.
- g. A road profile plan.
- h. Plans called for by the :CR-1 zoning overlay.
- i. Aerial photograph.
- j. A scale model and/or photomontage.
- k. Other information, plans or studies which are deemed by the Planning Director to be necessary to accurately assess the project.

### III. HILLSIDE DESIGN GUIDELINES

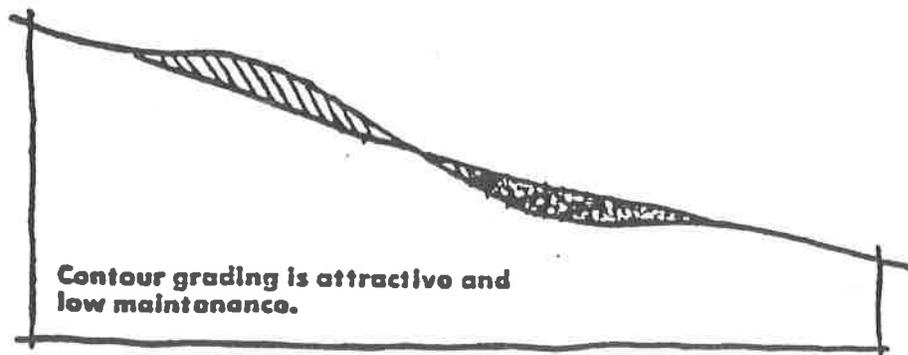
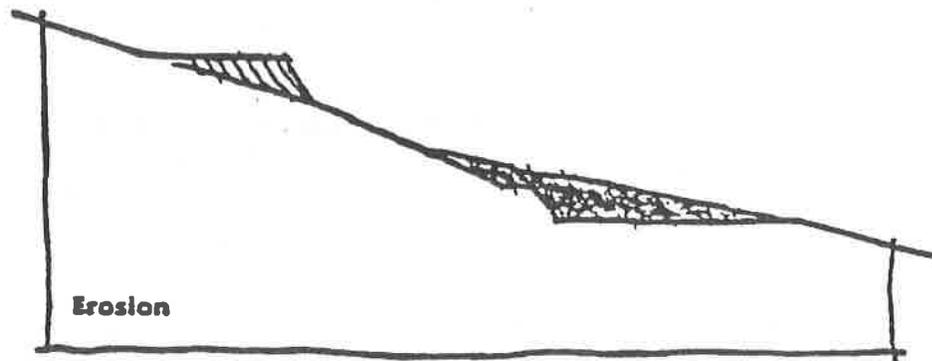
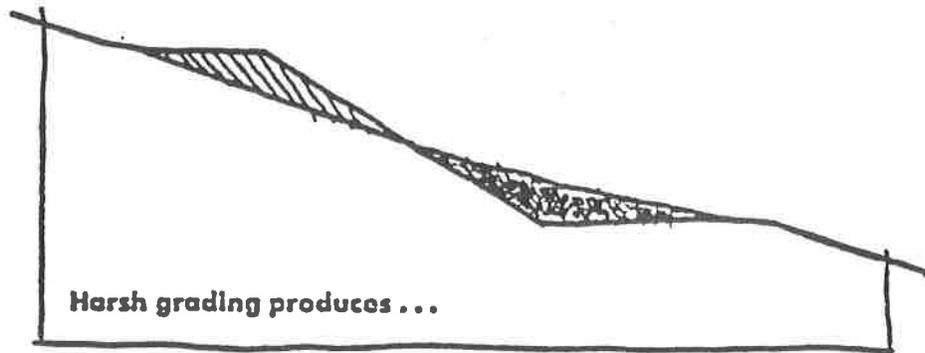
#### A. Grading

Grading should be kept to a minimum and should be performed in such a manner as to maintain a natural appearance respecting significant natural features as well as blending with adjacent properties. Factors to be considered in the development of a grading plan are the characteristics of the site, its slope, soil characteristics, vegetative cover, natural features, access to the site, its orientation and visibility of both the site and the proposed development.

A detailed geotechnical report may be required prior to the preparation of the grading, drainage and erosion control plans. Careless grading can result in extensive slope cuts with highly visible scars, unstable slopes, increased erosion and a degradation of the aesthetic quality that the hillsides afford to the City and its residents.

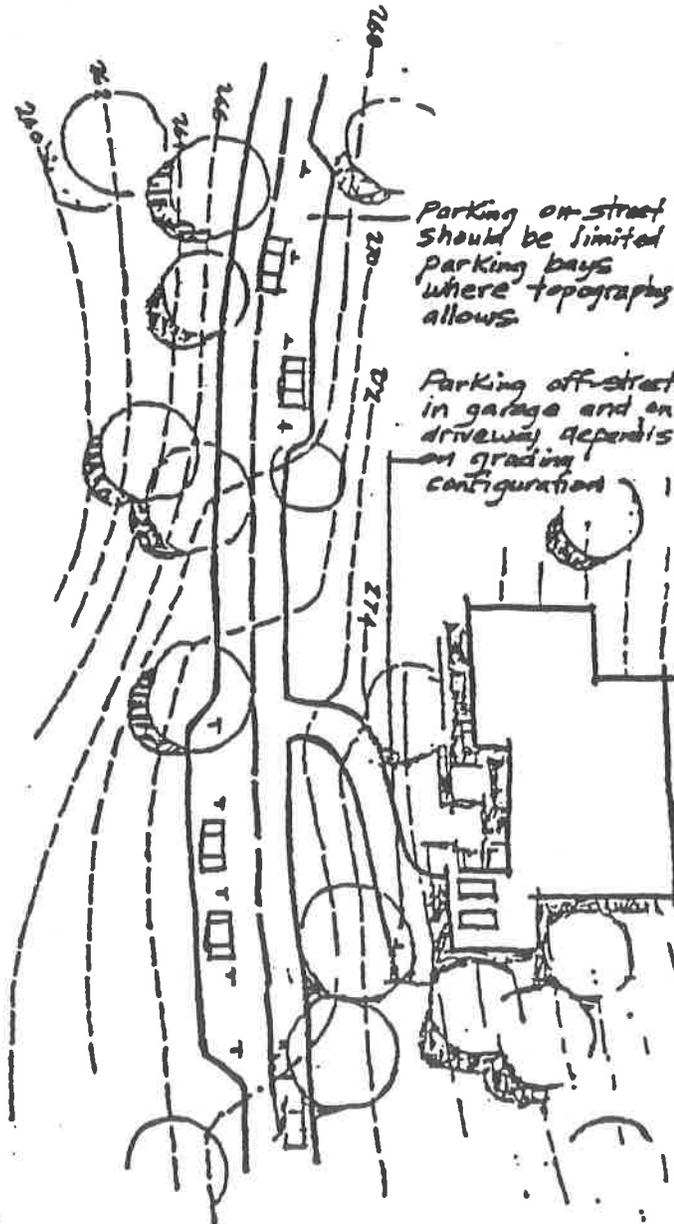
Hillside development shall observe the following grading policies:

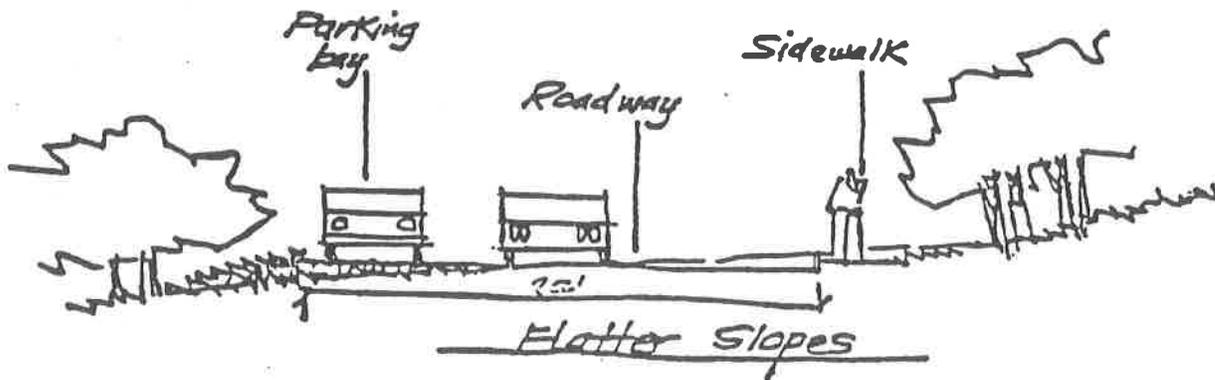
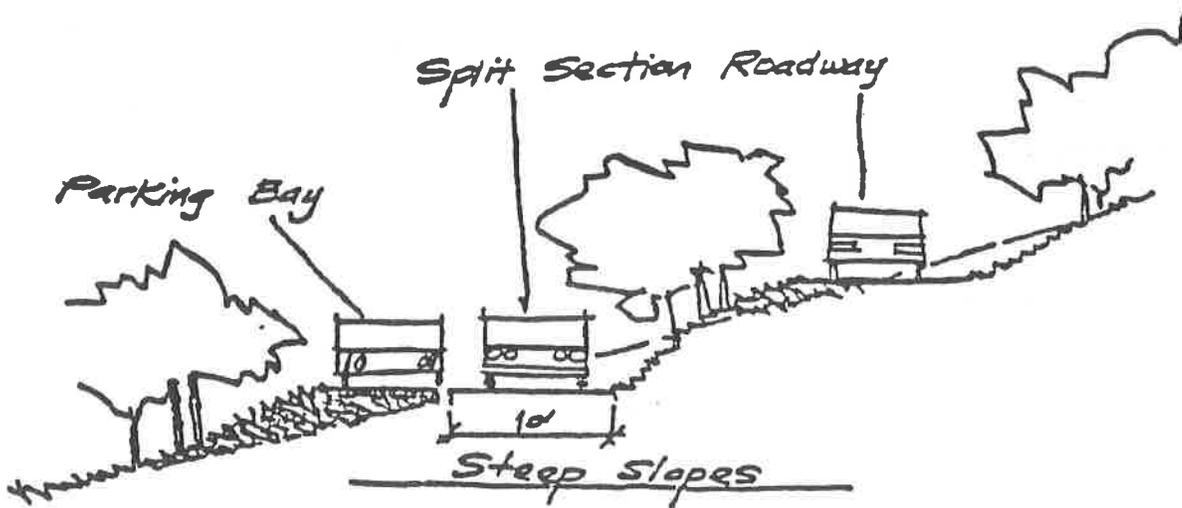
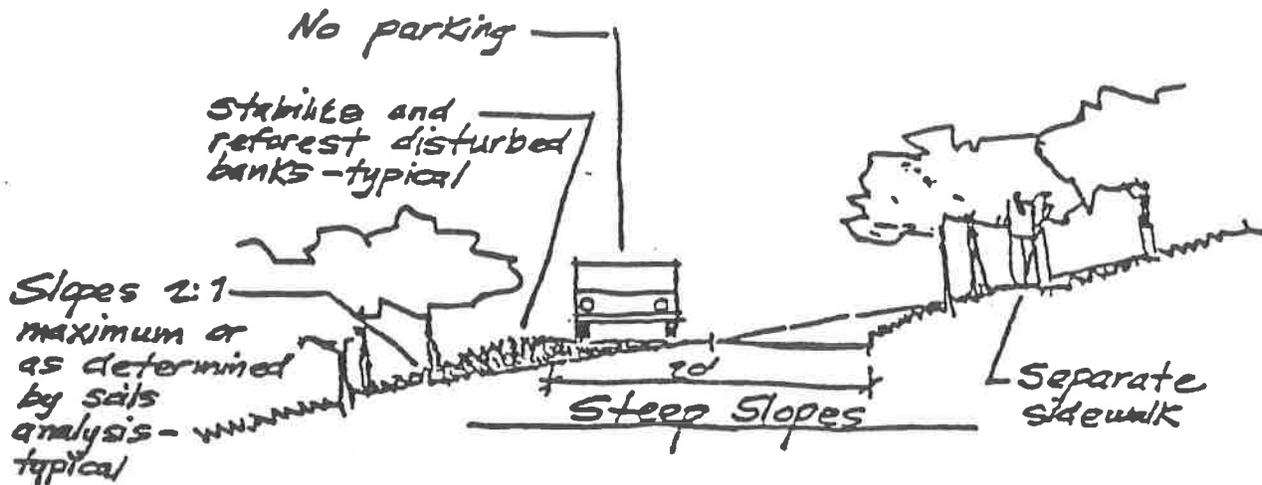
1. Grading shall be minimized, and shall complement the natural land forms and keep the height of all retaining walls, separate from the main structure, to a minimum.
2. Grading which "rounds off" sharp angles of cut and fill slopes is to be encouraged, as is grading which limits the grade differential between adjacent properties.
3. Disturbance of significant natural vegetation should be avoided during grading. All graded slopes should be revegetated and stabilized to minimize soil erosion and to accelerate the screening of the grading activity.



2. Parking Areas.

On-street parking requires a wider roadway width and, in many instances, additional grading. On-site guest parking should be considered as an alternative to the City's standard road width in those cases when adequate on-site space is available. However, in cases where considerable grading or other site disruption would result, on-street parking bays, decks or wider road widths for limited areas, may be appropriate alternatives. This on-street parking should be located so that site topography is recognized, concentrating parking on more level areas to diminish necessary grading and to minimize the height of resulting retaining walls.

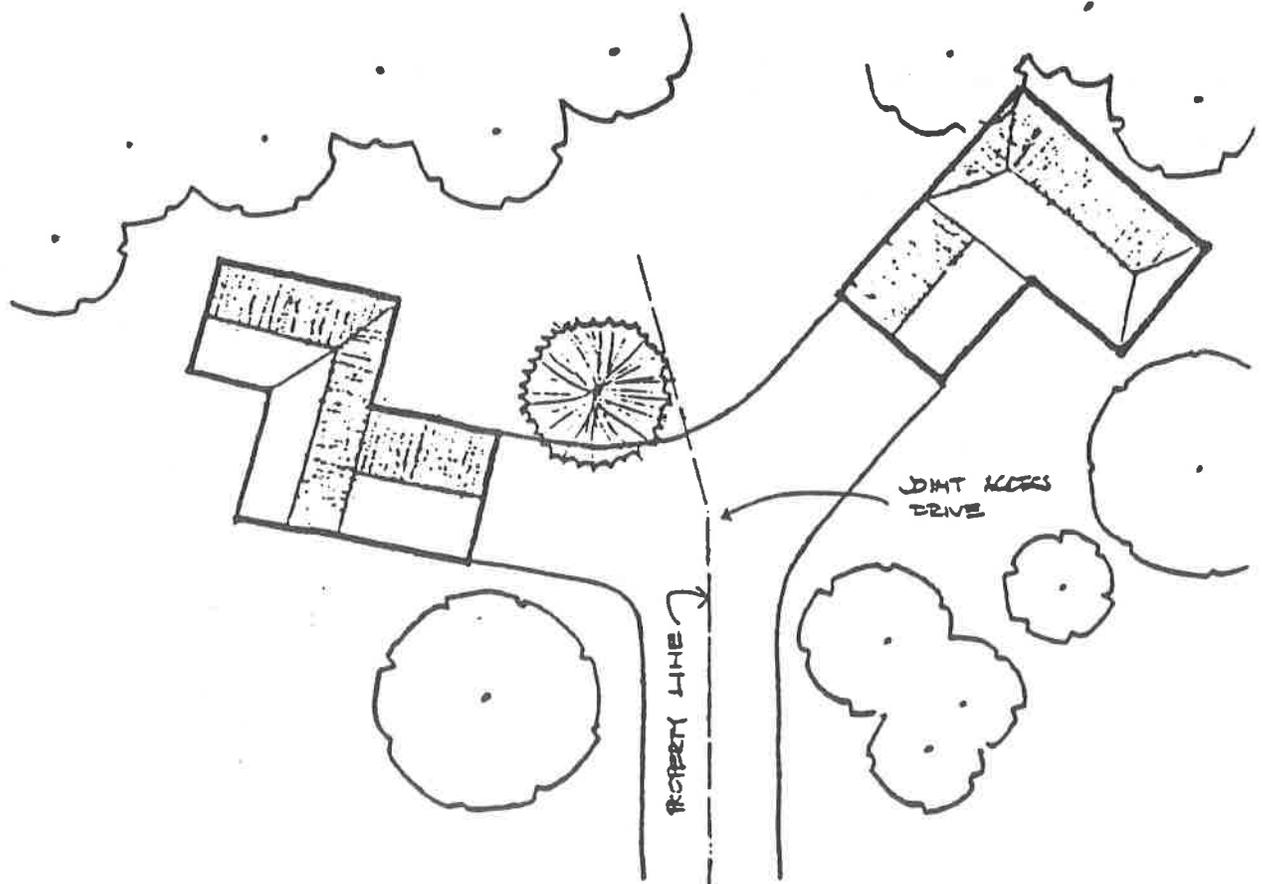




### 3. Driveway Location

Driveways should be designed to provide direct access to the building site and, where possible, should be aligned with the natural contours of the land. Driveways which serve more than one parcel are encouraged as a method of reducing unnecessary grading, paving and site disturbance.

Driveway grades in hillside developments may exceed the standard permitted for roads but are acceptable for short distances, subject to final approval by the Public Works Department. On driveways with a slope greater than 20% either a coarse paving material or grooves for traction must be incorporated into the construction. Drainage from the driveway should be directed in a controlled manner to the drainage facilities of the main road wherever possible.

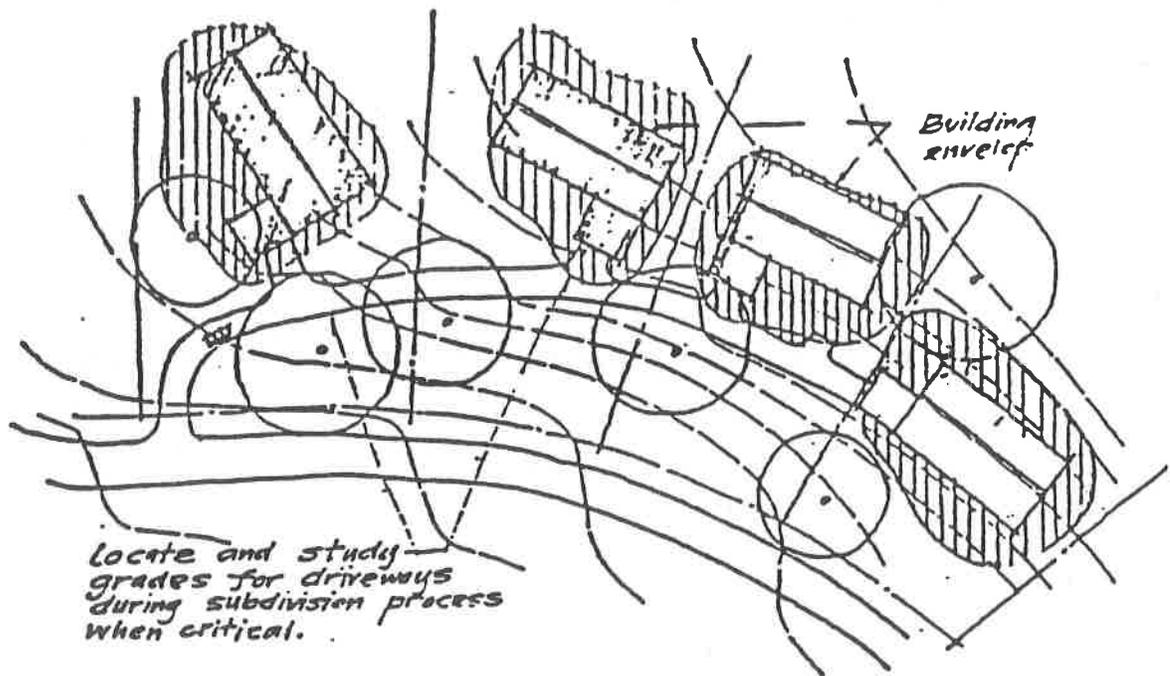


C. Building Site Placement

A building site or envelope must be defined for all lots in hillside subdivisions. This building envelope will define the area on a lot in which all site construction is to occur, including the construction of the principal and any accessory structures. The development standards of the underlying zoning district will play a role in establishing the size and placement of the building envelope, although these standards may be reduced when a substantially better design, given unusual site conditions, will result.

Generally, building sites should be selected so that construction occurs below the ridge of a hillside (but not on the "military crest") or far enough back from the top, so that the new construction can be screened by vegetation. The selection of the final building envelope is affected by many factors specific to each property and can only be established on a case-by-case basis. The following criteria are recommended:

1. The building envelope should be of sufficient size to adequately accommodate all aspects of the proposed construction.
2. Yards and setbacks should be established so that the new development is compatible with adjacent land uses and the privacy and views of others are not significantly compromised.
3. The building envelope should be selected so that construction will be as unobtrusive as possible and significant natural features and vegetation are retained in an undisturbed state whenever possible;
4. Direct and easy site access should be a priority in the selection of a building site; sites which would require significant grading for streets and driveways should be avoided. Where appropriate, multiple or "joint" driveways should be used in an effort to limit the amount of site disturbance.
5. The building location site must be consistent with the recommendations of any geotechnical study or other technical report.
6. The building site should be selected so that the minimum site disturbance will be necessary and significant site features and amenities are retained.



D. Building Design

1. Form

Hillside construction should harmonize with the natural characteristics of the property. A building should use a foundation type which will minimize cut and fill and the need for retaining walls, rather than being constructed with typical "bench cut" pads.

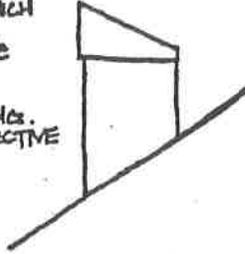
Building bulk is an especially sensitive issue, as the perceived size of a building is considerably greater when viewed from a lower elevation. The :HS Overlay District imposes a maximum height of 24 feet vertically above the natural grade at all points within the building site in an effort to limit the "downhill" bulk of structures.

1. Buildings should be designed to minimize cut and fill and harmonize with the natural form of the site; bench cuts generally should be avoided.
2. Buildings should be constructed within the established envelope generally in a stepped fashion to provide vertical relief for the downhill side.
3. Roof lines which approximate the slope of the hillside, avoiding the use of opposite pitches or gables counter to the topography, are encouraged.
4. Decks, balconies and other protrusions should be incorporated as strong elements punctuating the vertical plane of the building and should avoid a "tacked-on" or "jutting-out" appearance.
5. The form of the building should be a function of the natural topography and features of the site, should blend well with the established neighborhood character if evident, and should allow for easy and direct vehicular access.

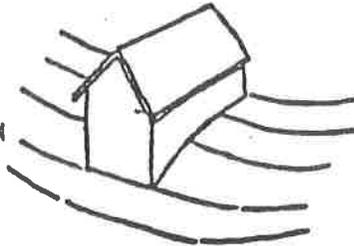
PRINCIPLE FOLLOW HILLSIDE CONTOURS AND SLOPE WITH BUILDING FORMS, PARTICULARLY ROOF FORMS, TO INCREASE THE INTEGRATION OF DWELLING AND SITE.

NO

- ANGULAR FORMS WHICH SLOPE IN OPPOSITE DIRECTION TO SLOPE OF HILL DESTROY RELATIONSHIP OF HILLSIDE AND BUILDING, AND INCREASE EFFECTIVE BULK.

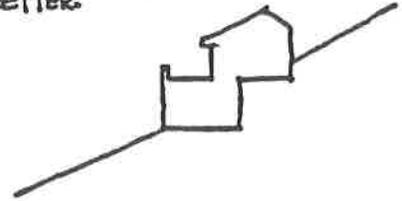


- AVOID LARGE GABLE ENDS ON DOWNHILL ELEVATIONS



YES

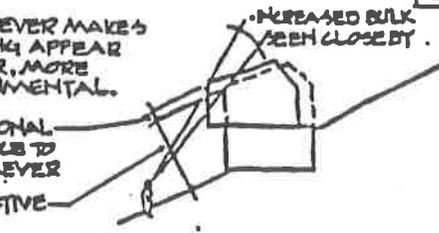
- ROOF SLOPE APPROXIMATES THAT OF HILLSIDE AND FOLLOWS ITS DIRECTION. BUILDING FITS GROUND FORM BETTER.



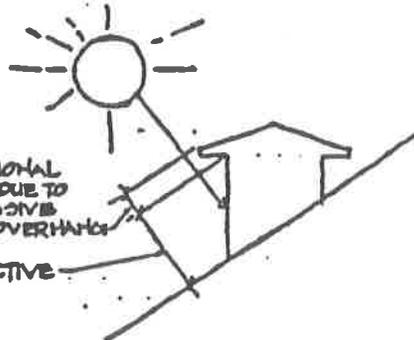
PRINCIPLE AVOID MASSIVE ROOF OVERHANGS AND CANTILEVERS ON DOWNHILL FACES OF BUILDINGS

NO

- CANTILEVER MAKES BUILDING APPEAR TALLER, MORE MONUMENTAL.
- ADDITIONAL BULK DUE TO CANTILEVER
- EFFECTIVE BULK

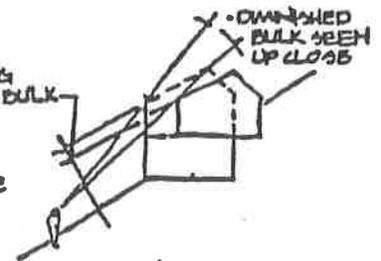


- ADDITIONAL BULK DUE TO EXCESSIVE ROOF OVERHANGS
- EFFECTIVE BULK



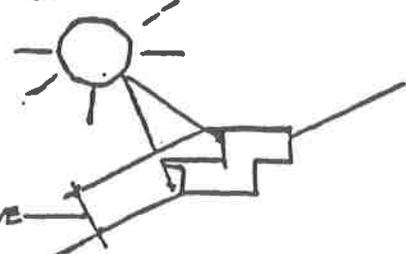
YES

- TERRACING REDUCES BULK
- EFFECTIVE BULK



- EFFECTIVE BULK

- SMALLER OVERHANGS FOR INDIVIDUAL FLOORS OR WINDOWS HELP BREAK-UP MASS, PROTECT AGAINST EXCESSIVE SUNLIGHT



## 2. Colors/Materials

The color of hillside structures and the materials used in their construction play a big part in their obtrusiveness. Natural colors and textures are generally appropriate and their use is encouraged. Reflective or obtrusive materials, such as metal siding, glossy tile, glass block, and some artificial rock and veneers are inappropriate building materials in most applications.

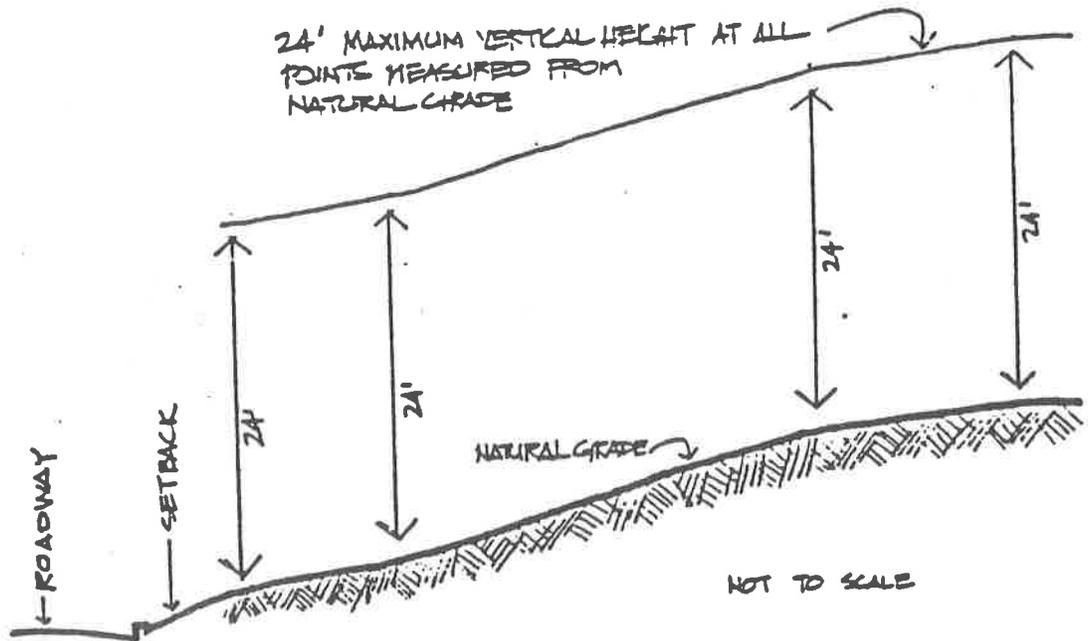
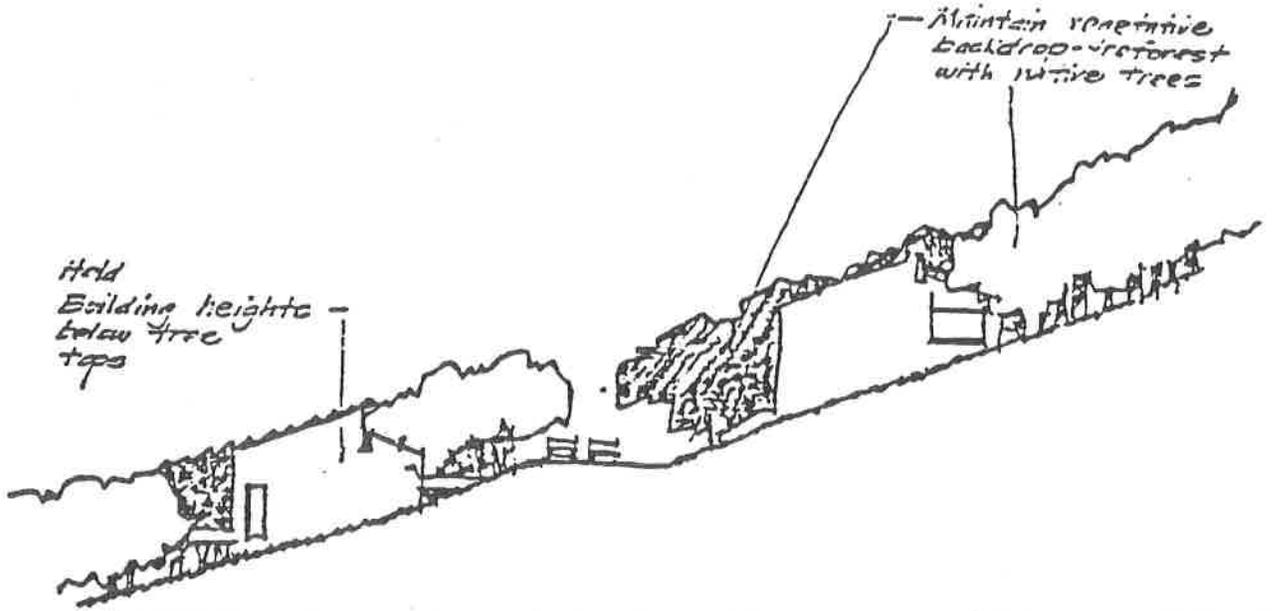
The color and materials selected should compliment the shape, form and texture of the building as well as the natural setting. The design of retaining walls should also respect the natural hillside setting; materials used in their construction should be selected with the same care as those selected for the main structure.

## 3. Glare

Glare and reflection from hillside developments can be annoying at a close distance and quite visible for a considerable distance. Large expanses of windows or other reflective materials should be avoided or appropriately designed to minimize glare. Reflective solar panels, skylights or other such ancillary reflective items should be substituted with non-reflective materials where possible.

## 4. Height

Each hillside site has different constraints and attributes. Generally speaking, however, building height should be held below the naturally occurring tree-top level so that the structure will more easily blend with the environment. In addition, maximum building height in the :HS District is limited to 24 feet at any point vertically above the natural grade of the building site unless an exception is approved by the Planning Commission with the findings specified in Section 30-263 of the Zoning Ordinance.



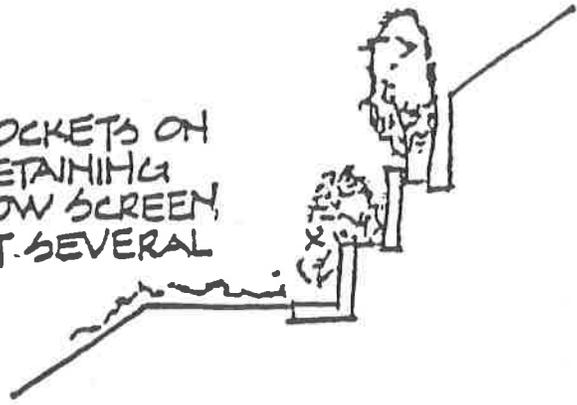
E. Landscaping

Landscaping plays a very important role on such varied aspects as: soil and slope stability, visual impact, fire potential and resource conservation. Professionally designed and appropriate landscaping can greatly enhance any project and is essential for sensitive hillside properties. The following should be considered in the landscape design for hillside sites:

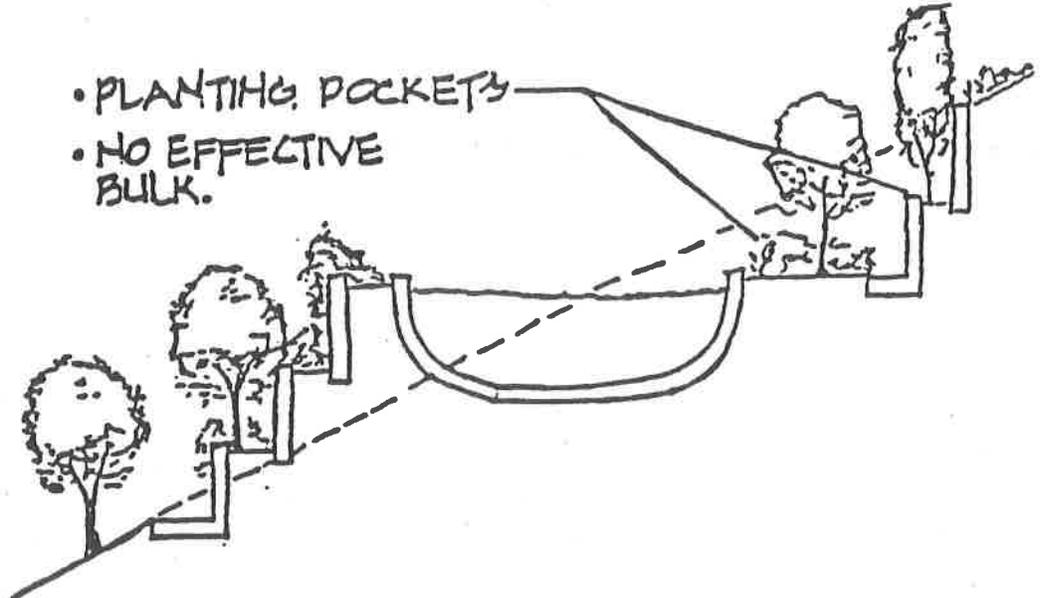
1. Existing significant native vegetation and natural site features should be retained and incorporated into the landscape design.
2. Native plant materials should be used to harmonize with the surrounding natural plant materials; and appropriate plant materials should be utilized on all cut and fill slopes and at the bases of structures to enhance slope stability, limit soil erosion and visually buffer the improvements.
3. The landscape plan should both enhance the design of the principal structure and serve to buffer and mitigate its intrusion on adjoining properties.
4. Decks, patios, pool areas, terraced gardens, lighting and other site improvements usually associated with landscaping should be designed with the same care that is a part of the planting plan and should also be designed to compliment the natural features of the site and to enhance the overall site design; exterior lighting should be designed so that the light is focussed downward and is shielded limiting glare and spill over to adjacent properties.
5. Planting design should consider wild fire control measures and plant material selection should be made with consideration given to the material's fire resistant qualities.

YES.

- PLANTING POCKETS ON STEPPED RETAINING WALL ALLOW SCREEN PLANTING AT SEVERAL LEVELS.



- PLANTING POCKETS
- NO EFFECTIVE BULK.



- ALTERNATE POSSIBILITY: RR TIES USED AS CRIBBING AND PLANTING.

