

Design Guidelines -- A Guide to Residential Development

City of Laguna Beach



December 7, 2010



WELCOME TO LAGUNA BEACH
**Laguna Beach: “a paradise,
an inexhaustible source of
inspiration.”**

-artist Marco Sassone, 1979

Laguna Beach is widely known for its picturesque setting, distinct neighborhoods and quaint downtown. The characteristics which make Laguna a desirable place to live have been cultivated and protected by a unique review process and wide-ranging development standards that reflect community values and design traditions.

Whether you are new to the community and hoping to build your dream home or a long-time resident desiring to remodel or add onto an existing home, this guide will explain the process and provide you with an understanding of the important design criteria to consider. It will help you to design a project that meets your needs, while protecting the very characteristics that provided inspiration and drew you here initially.

Welcome!



**CITY OF LAGUNA BEACH
RESIDENTIAL DESIGN GUIDELINES**

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Adopted by City Council:
December 7, 2010
Resolution No. 10.117

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Section A

Introduction

The intent of these guidelines is to clarify the criteria that members of the community, the Design Review Board, the Heritage Committee, the Planning Commission, the City Council and design professionals use in the design review process. A series of public workshops and focus-group meetings contributed significantly to their content and structure. This document complements the zoning regulations and General Plan policies.

For ease of reference, the guidelines are divided into three sections and an appendix. This section (Chapters 1 and 2) summarizes the City’s design review process and outlines typical steps in planning a project.

Section B, “Design Review Criteria” (Chapters 3–16), explains the criteria and offers suggestions for meeting them. Section C, “The Entitlement Process” (Chapters 17 and 18), provides a comprehensive discussion of the City’s entitlement process, including design review and the roles of its approval authorities.

The Appendix contains a glossary of terms commonly used in the design review process.



Interactive exercises at the community workshops included public participation and produced information on community values.

Chapter 1

Design Review

The City of Laguna Beach is committed to protecting its unique character—a combination of spectacular natural features and a unique village atmosphere. Design review plays a large role in protecting the City’s character. Members of the Design Review Board review residential projects on a case-by-case basis using the criteria for sensitive urban design specified in Municipal Code §25.05.040(H), which emphasize respect for context, design creativity, compatibility of scale and the pedestrian experience.

The property development standards contained in the Municipal Code represent the potential maximum development for a given property. The actual development allowed will often be less than the maximum allowed by the code because of localized conditions identified during the design review process. A proposed development that has no variances from the development standards does not have any presumptive development right or “entitlement” to be built to the maximums specified.

In planning a project the applicant’s needs must be balanced with the goals and standards of the design review process. It is often helpful to hire a design professional who is familiar with the process and the criteria used to evaluate projects. Because the City has a wide range of neighborhood contexts (detailed in Chapter 11), thoughtful evaluation of site and neighborhood characteristics, site opportunities and constraints and their relation to project goals is crucial in the initial design stages. The steps outlined on the next page represent a generalized approach to the project planning process.



Hillside development is just one type of development that these design guidelines aim to address.

Step 1: Consider the regulatory framework and understand the design review process.

- Consult with City staff to determine the relevant development standards.
- Become familiar with the Design Review Board proceedings by observing a hearing.
- Understand the required approval process for the desired development (see Section C).

Step 2: Analyze the project context.

View the project from a variety of perspectives (from the street and adjacent residences, from streets below, from above) and consider:

- Overall character
- Natural features
- Built environment
- Village atmosphere
- Neighborhood character/streetscape
- Patterns of development (setbacks, building orientation, etc.)
- Lot orientation and configuration
- Public and private views
- Street-edge treatment (public/private space)
- Privacy
- Building mass, scale and form
- Landscaping

Step 3: Evaluate opportunities and constraints.

- Environmental context (watercourses, high-value habitat, fuel modification requirements, etc.)
- Geological conditions (topography, fault lines, soil conditions, etc.)
- Architectural considerations (historic designation, existing architectural style/features, building envelope, etc.)
- Lot orientation and configuration
- Public and private views
- Landscaping
- Easements
- Access
- Relationship to adjacent properties
- Other site-specific opportunities and constraints

Step 4: Consider the project's priorities and requirements.

- Define the scope of work and prioritize the goals and requirements of the project.
- Balance the project priorities and requirements with the City's regulatory standards and design review criteria.
- Consult with neighbors in a meeting on the site to gather information on and respond to concerns related to the desired project.

Step 5: Prepare a project submittal based on the above considerations.

Chapter 2

Village Atmosphere

Steep cliffs, water-etched coves, rolling hills and deep canyons surrounding a small, flat basin provide the City with much of its natural beauty and have kept it relatively isolated from the explosive growth in the South Orange County area. Citizens' efforts have created a surrounding greenbelt and limited high-rise development. The preservation of local landmarks, historical development patterns, diversity of design and pedestrian scale have contributed to Laguna's village atmosphere.

The Laguna Beach area was home to the Native American Ute-Azteca tribe and later the Shoshone-speaking people who inhabited the rich coastal strip. Excavations have revealed a Native American burial ground near Goff Island and a reed house near Crescent Bay.

The North Laguna area was originally part of the San Joaquin Ranch, a Spanish land grant. Downtown Laguna and South Laguna were never part of a Spanish or Mexican land grant and were available for government-sponsored homesteading. The Timber Cultures Act of 1872 was designed to encourage migration to the "Golden West" by granting 160 acres of land to anyone who planted 10 acres of trees. Families began to arrive in the area to stake out their claims and plant the requisite trees—here the Australian eucalyptus.



*Pacific Coast Highway, looking north, before 1939.
Source: Laguna Beach Historical Society.*

By 1888, there were about 15 permanent families in Laguna Beach, and the area had gained a reputation as a lovely seaside resort ideal for summer camping and vacationing. During the summers, seasonal vacationers pitched rows of canvas tents up and down the coastline.

The first noted artist to arrive was Norman St. Clair, who reached Laguna Beach in 1903 by train from Los Angeles and stagecoach from El Toro. He made numerous sketches of the surf, hillsides and lagoons. His fellow plein-air artists were so impressed with his work and his praise of the weather that they began to move to the area and a tradition was born.



Today, signs at the entrances to the City identify Laguna Beach as an artist colony.

The opening of Pacific Coast Highway on October 9, 1926, was a major catalyst for growth in both Laguna Beach and South Laguna. It attracted not only tourists and film celebrities but also more permanent residents. On June 29, 1927, with a population of 1,900 persons, Laguna Beach became the first incorporated city within south Orange County.

Almost every house built in Laguna Beach prior to 1927 represented vernacular cottage construction. The influence of artists and film people in the 1920s led to individualized architecture often based on styles popular on other continents. The result was an intimate, very low and human-scaled development contributing to a unique village atmosphere.

Infill development occurred in the post–World War II years. The scale and character of housing styles and overall density of the neighborhoods followed the precedent set in the 1920s. That early development established a tradition of custom-designed, human-scale homes constructed of natural materials—houses built in harmony with the natural topography and generously landscaped.

The City’s village atmosphere has been established over generations. Consideration of the village atmosphere is essential to a successful project. Municipal Code §25.05.040(H) defines “village atmosphere” as including

- Appropriately scaled development
- Diverse and unique architectural designs
- Pedestrian orientation
- Sensitivity to the natural conditions of the site

*Historic information provided by Karen Turnbull and the Laguna Beach Historical Society

Section B

Design Review Criteria

The Design Review Board reviews projects on the basis of the applicable property development standards and design review criteria.

The design review criteria that relate to residential development are listed in Municipal Code §25.05.040(H) as follows:

Access

Conflicts between vehicles, pedestrians and other modes of transportation should be minimized by specifically providing for each applicable mode of transportation. Handicapped access shall be provided as required by applicable statutes.

Design Articulation

Within the allowable building envelope, the appearance of building and retaining wall mass should be minimized. Articulation techniques including, but not limited to, separation, offsets, terracing and reducing the size of any one element in the structure may be used to reduce the appearance of mass.

Design Integrity

Consistency with the applicant's chosen style of architecture should be achieved by the use of appropriate materials and details. Remodels should be harmonious with the remaining architecture.

Environmental Context

Development should preserve and, where possible, enhance the City's scenic natural setting. Natural features, such as existing heritage trees, rock outcropping, ridgelines and significant watercourses should be protected. Existing terrain should be utilized in the design and grading should be minimized.

General Plan Compliance

The development shall comply with all applicable policies of the General Plan, including all of its elements, applicable specific plans and certified local coastal program.

Historic Preservation

Destruction or significant alteration to historic resources should be avoided whenever possible.

Landscaping

Landscaping shall be incorporated as an integrated part of the structure's design and relate harmoniously to neighborhood and community landscaping themes. View equity shall be an important consideration in the landscape design. The relevant landscaping guidelines contained in the City's "Landscape and Scenic Highways Resource Document" should be incorporated, as appropriate, in the design and planned maintenance of proposed landscaping.

Lighting and Glare

Adequate lighting for individual and public safety shall be provided in a manner which does not significantly impact neighboring properties. Reflective materials and appurtenances that cause glare or a negative visual impact (e.g., skylights, white rock roofs, high-gloss ceramic tile roofs, reflective glass, etc.) should be avoided or mitigated to a level of insignificance in those locations where those surfaces are visible from neighboring properties.

Neighborhood Compatibility

Development shall be compatible with the existing development in the neighborhood and respect neighborhood character. Neighborhood character is the sum of the qualities that distinguish areas within the city, including historical patterns of development (e.g., structural heights, mass, scale or size), village atmosphere, landscaping themes and architectural styles.

Privacy

The placement of activity areas, (e.g. decks, picture windows and ceremonial or entertainment rooms) in locations that would result in a substantial invasion of privacy of neighboring properties should be minimized.

Public Art*

Public art is encouraged and shall be displayed where feasible or required by the art in public places ordinance.

Sustainability

New development should consider architecture and building practices which minimize environmental impacts and enhance energy efficiency by: (1) reducing energy needs of buildings by proper site and structural design; (2) increasing the building's ability to capture or generate energy; (3) using low-impact, sustainable and recycled building materials; (4) using the latest Best Management Practices regarding waste and water management; and (5) reducing site emissions.

Swimming Pools, Spas, and Water Features

Swimming pools, spas and water features shall be located, designed and constructed where: (a) Geology conditions allow; (b) Noise produced by circulatory mechanical pumps and equipment is mitigated; and (c) Any associated fencing or other site development is compatible with neighboring properties.

View Equity

The development, including its landscaping, shall be designed to protect existing views from neighboring properties without denying the subject property the reasonable opportunity to develop as described and illustrated in the city's "design guidelines." The "design guidelines" are intended to balance preservation of views with the right to develop property.

Each of these criteria is covered in a chapter in this section.

* Residential subdivisions or development of more than four lots or units are subject to the Art in Public Places Ordinance [LBMC section 1.09].

Note: Sign Quality and Pedestrian Orientation are also listed as Design Review Criteria in the Municipal Code; however, they mainly pertain to commercial projects and are not discussed in this document.

Chapter 3

Access

“Conflicts between vehicles, pedestrians and other modes of transportation should be minimized by specifically providing for each applicable mode of transportation. Handicapped access shall be provided as required by applicable statutes.”

-LBMC §25.05.040(H)

In residential areas, access issues involve the movement of cars and people between public and private areas. Public circulation routes, including sidewalks and pathways, must remain accessible with any development. In addition, the orientation of a driveway and its width and surface materials must be designed to accommodate access requirements. Municipal Code §25.53, “Access and Improvement Requirements,” provides information on vehicular access, street improvements, drainage, underground utilities, trash and storage areas, landscaping, relocation or repair of existing improvements, coastal access and public access dedications.

Residential on-site parking generally requires curbcuts to allow for driveway access. Consideration of safe and adequate access should be part of the initial design of a project.

Design Objective: Vehicular access points and on-site parking spaces should be located to facilitate access by all users and to avoid impeding emergency access.

3.1 Design safe and adequate site access.

- Provide required Fire Department access around the site.
- Maintain a smooth surface transition where a sidewalk crosses the driveway.
- Provide the required backup distance and turnaround area.
- Locate the driveway entrance so as to minimize the loss of on-street parking.



Locating the required parking for this three-unit condominium in a below-grade auto court is an effective solution to minimizing the required curb cuts and providing on-site parking.



Locating a garage at the rear of a residence, where possible, minimizes traffic and enhances the streetscape.

3.2 Minimize paved parking areas.

- Avoid excessive driveway width.
- Use materials that reduce the amount of pavement.

3.3 Locate access points to minimize disruption of pedestrian circulation in neighborhoods with sidewalks.

3.4 Ensure adequate site visibility over vehicular traffic and pedestrian safety.

- Follow the City's corner-cutback design standards (see Municipal Code §25.50.006).
- Consider design solutions such as auto courts or shared driveways to minimize curb cuts and vehicular access points.

3.5 Follow the City's engineering standards (see Municipal Code Title 21).

3.6 Improve pedestrian circulation by providing sidewalks and public trails where appropriate.



An on-site turnaround area is required along primary arterials and highways.



Using a variety of materials on the driveway can reduce the amount of pavement.

Chapter 4

Design Articulation

“Within the allowable building envelope, the appearance of building and retaining wall mass should be minimized. Articulation techniques including, but not limited to, separation, offsets, terracing and reducing the size of any one element in the structure may be used to reduce the appearance of mass.” -LBMC §25.05.040(H)

A variety of design techniques can be used to reduce a structure’s perceived mass. These design techniques may apply to the primary building, accessory structures, retaining walls, landscaping and other site features. The appropriate combination of articulation techniques depends upon the neighborhood context and the design concept.

Site Design

Residential site design is equal in importance to the design of the building. In a hillside situation, articulation techniques are likely to include terracing and variation of both the building and the site.

Design Objective: The design of terracing and retaining walls should consider views from the neighboring properties and the public way.

4.1 Step a retaining wall to follow the natural topography.

- Consider using a series of terraced walls instead of one very tall wall.
- Design terracing and retaining walls to fit the neighborhood context and to preserve privacy.
- Avoid large retaining walls in a uniform plane.
- Break retaining walls into multiple elements and terraces.

4.2 Minimize visible retaining-wall height.

- Minimize exposed retaining walls along the perimeter of the building.
- Avoid large areas of fill that may require extensive retaining wall structures.

4.3 Use materials that complement the natural setting and help walls blend into their surroundings.

4.4 Plant trees, shrubs or vines to soften the appearance of a retaining wall.



These retaining walls were designed to follow the site topography in effort to minimize their visual impact.

Courtyards and Open Space

Courtyards, decks, terraces and other site features can be used to break up the perceived mass of a building and create spaces that provide privacy and interest.

Design Objective: Site and building design should be integrated to create areas of open space that reduce perceived building mass.

4.5 Give as much design consideration to outdoor areas as to indoor areas, considering existing development and neighboring properties.

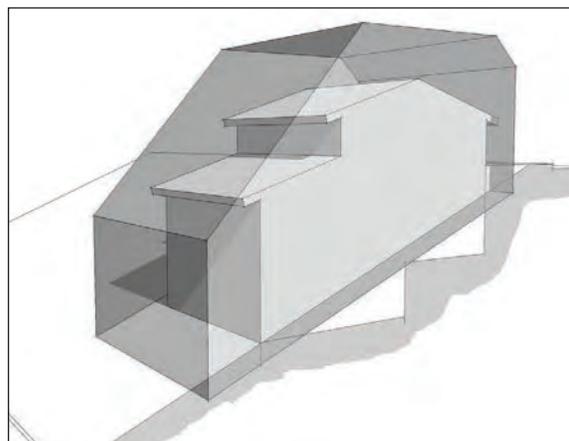


This small outdoor space has been designed to function as an exterior living area.

Building Mass, Scale and Form

Residences should be designed at an appropriate scale with respect to the existing natural and built environments. The mass and scale of proposed residences must be compatible with existing development in the surrounding neighborhood (Chapter 11).

A building envelope is the three-dimensional area that defines the maximum limits to which a structure may be built on a lot without the need of a variance. Building envelopes are defined in the Municipal Code. The actual development allowed **will typically be less than the maximum** designated by the general standards for the zone because of site-specific conditions identified during the design review process. Additional zoning regulations, such as building site (lot) coverage, floor area ratios, and landscaped-open-space requirements, will also impact the maximum building potential



The Design Review Board typically approves homes substantially smaller than the allowable building envelope.

Design Objective: Existing residential development in the vicinity of a project site should serve as a guide for appropriate building mass and scale. Excessive building mass must be avoided.

4.6 Divide a larger building mass into smaller modules.

- Provide variation in wall setbacks along all sides of the property.
- Avoid excessive numbers of roof planes.

4.7 Use building volumes efficiently.

- Consider locating some floor area below grade to reduce massing while avoiding excessive grading.
- Avoid creating large, unused under-floor area or attic space.



Dividing a building into sections or modules can help reduce its perceived mass.

- Avoid significant roof overhangs and cantilevers on the downhill side of a building, which markedly increase perceived mass.
- Limit the use of high ceilings or steep pitches across wide spans that may increase building mass.

Design Objective: Building and roof form should be designed in a manner that is consistent with the architectural style of the residence, minimizes its perceived mass, creates visual interest, reflects the site topography or other significant site features and contributes to the character of the streetscape.

4.8 Step a building with the site slope.

- Emphasize horizontal building form to integrate the building with the site's natural terrain.
- Use periodic vertical elements such as wall offsets, architectural projections, and variation in building materials or colors.
- Avoid excessive numbers of roof planes and structural cantilevers on the downhill faces of buildings.

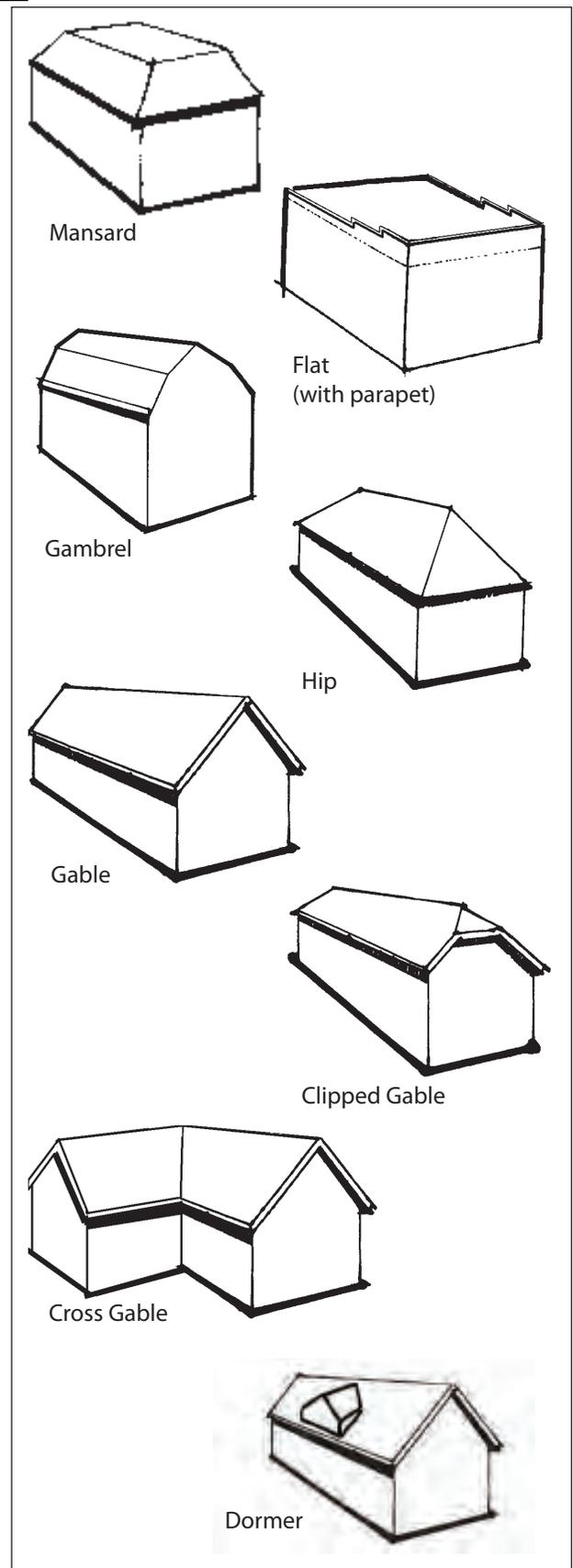
4.9 Use articulation techniques that are consistent with the architectural style of the residence (Chapter 5).

4.10 Choose appropriate roof forms.

- Design subordinate roof elements, such as dormers, cupolas and clerestories, to complement the architecture.
- Determine an appropriate roof form on the basis of the architectural style of the residence and the site and neighborhood context.
- Use roof forms that are consistent with the scale of the building.

4.11 Vary wall plane lengths and wall heights.

- Use combinations of one- and two-story elements, vary wall heights and offset wall planes to reduce building mass and a tunnel effect between buildings as seen from the street and to minimize adverse light and air impacts on adjacent properties.



Simplified examples of various roof forms.

- Avoid projecting a single wall or glass plane across the entire length of the building.
- Incorporate projections and recesses to create shadow and depth.
- Use low plate heights to reduce the perceived height of exposed walls.
- Avoid building forms that are overly complex, monumental or otherwise out of scale with the neighborhood context.

4.12 Design a roof to follow site contours.

- Avoid angular roof forms that slope in a direction opposite to that of the hill, which may increase mass and scale.
- Avoid large gable ends on downhill elevations.



The combination of materials on this façade provides architectural detail that reduces the perceived mass.

Building Composition, Architectural Features and Details

Architectural details, such as porches, balconies, architectural projections, entryways, materials, texture and color, create visual interest and can reduce the perceived mass of a structure. Windows and doors can be recessed or projected to create depth through movement, light and shadow.

Design Objective: Individual architectural elements and details should be designed to provide visual interest and reduce perceived building mass.

4.13 Use architectural elements and details to provide variation in building form and help achieve an appropriate scale.

- Incorporate details or architectural projections consistent with the architectural style that provide a variety along a wall surface.
- Articulate a building form with a porch, balcony or other appropriate architectural feature.
- Consider using a wrap-around porch to break up a vertical wall plane at the corner of a building.



The simple building form of this residence is enhanced with the trellis, covered porch, variation in building materials, balcony, extended eaves and window trim.



One- and two-story building elements, varied roof forms and building materials and authentic details enhance this structure in a manner that is consistent with its architectural style.

- Incorporate appropriate architectural enhancements on all building elevations, not just the front façade. “Four-sided architecture” is especially important where multiple building elevations are visible, such as on a corner lot or a hillside.
- Incorporate outdoor living space into the architectural composition.

4.14 Design windows and doors in a manner that enhances building articulation.

- Position or group windows to break a solid wall plane. Where privacy is a concern, consider alternative designs, such as clerestory or obscure windows.
- Avoid excessive banks of windows.
- Frame or project windows to create visual interest.
- Recess window openings to vary a wall plane and enhance the contrast of light and shadow.
- Consider articulation when placing and framing entranceways.



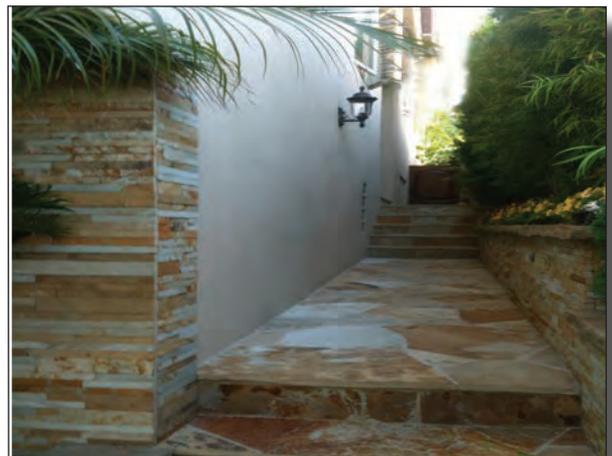
The windows in the garage door break apart the façade, and the blend of materials helps articulate the building.

4.15 Articulate building form through variation in materials, color and/or texture.

- Avoid large expanses of a single material on walls, roofs, or paving areas.
- Enhance a change in wall plane through color or material variation.
- Use changes in color value or shade to create harmonious variation.
- Use native and natural materials that blend with the natural context.
- Use materials that vary in texture.
- Carry each material to a logical point of termination—a change in wall plane, the point where the structure meets natural grade, or the intersection of significant architectural features—or, if there is no logical point of termination, apply it to the entire wall plane or architectural element.



The variation in materials on this residence adds character and helps to articulate the building.



The stonework matches the hardscape and terminates at a logical point (away from the immediate public view).

Garage Design

The volume of a garage space contributes to the scale of a structure. Covered parking exceeding the minimum requirement is subject to discretionary approval and can be approved only if justification is provided that it will not increase the appearance of mass. The placement of garage doors is an important consideration in minimizing mass.

Design Objective: Garages should be designed as an integral element of the residence, and their effect on building mass should be minimized.

4.16 Locate the garage to minimize its impact on the perceived mass of the building.

- Design garage doors that reduce perceived mass.
- Avoid solid-plane double garage doors where possible.
- Use a carport or an uncovered parking space if the mass of a three-car garage negatively impacts the neighborhood.

4.17 Consider alternative garage configurations to reduce the perceived mass of the building:

- Recessed: Pulling the architecture of the living space forward allows for a greater setback to the front of the garage.
- Offset: Garage doors may be separated and have varying setbacks from the property line.
- Turn-in: Rotating a garage to allow access by turning in reduces the visual impact of garage doors on the streetscape.
- Corner condition: A garage entered from a side street eliminates the garage and driveway from the front elevation.
- Detached: A garage may be detached from the primary structure and located toward the rear of the property.
- Rear-loaded: Where there is an alley, the garage can be located behind the residence.
- Tandem: Parking one car in front of another can minimize garage frontage on the residence. Tandem parking is subject to Design Review Board approval and is appropriate only in certain situations (generally when no other option is available).



Recessed garage.



Single-car garage with adjacent carport. The enclosed garage could be designed as a tandem configuration to allow parking for two cars.



Offset garage.



Turn-in garage.



Detached garage.



Rear-loaded garage.

Chapter 5

Design Integrity

“Consistency with the applicant’s chosen style of architecture should be achieved by the use of appropriate materials and details. Remodels should be harmonious with the remaining architecture.” -LBMC §25.05.040(H)

Integrity of a building’s design is a fundamental objective. Successful designs display consistency in building form, style, materials and details. Varied architectural styles are encouraged provided that neighborhood compatibility and architectural integrity are maintained.

Architectural Concept and Style

A coordinated approach including the initial concept, the neighborhood context and its various design elements is key to a successful design.

Design Objective: A consistent design concept should apply to the whole project, including structures, landscape elements and other site features.

5.1 Building forms, materials and details should be integrated in character and style.

5.2 Building form should be consistent with the chosen architectural theme and overall design concept.

- Use finish materials, roof style, window and door shape and placement, and other building details that reflect the chosen architectural style.

5.3 A building should be distinctive but also contribute to the character of the neighborhood.

- Avoid repeating the designs of neighboring structures.
- Consider distinctive designs that complement the neighborhood context (Chapter 11).

Architectural Details

Architectural details including ornamental features, materials, surface treatments and the placement of windows and doors—help articulate a building and provide visual interest.

Design Objective: Architectural details should be consistent with the design concept and display the subtle and creative use of materials and high-quality craftsmanship.

5.4 Select distinctive architectural details that are consistent with the chosen architectural style.

5.5 Use architectural details to provide a sense of scale and interest.

- Consider the scale of a detail relative to that of the details of other structures in the vicinity.
- Integrate details into the design rather than treating them as surface embellishments or afterthoughts.



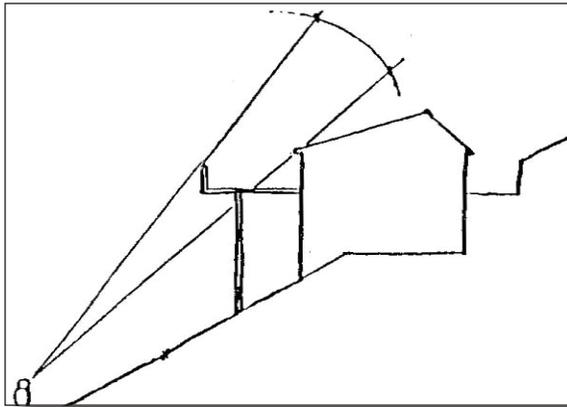
This home uses finish materials and window and door shapes that are consistent with the chosen architectural style.

Design Objective: Decks and balconies have a significant impact on the style of a residence and should be an integral part of the design.

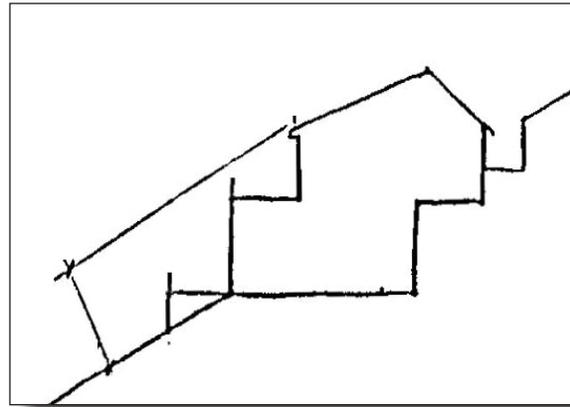
5.6 Determine whether a deck is appropriate, assessing its impact on views, privacy, light and shade (Chapters 12 and 15).

5.7 Minimize the impacts of a deck or balcony.

- Avoid overhanging decks on sloping lots.
- Consider dividing the total deck area into smaller spaces to reduce the perceived scale.
- Use lower-story rooftops as deck areas for upper floors and avoid top-story rooftop decks.
- Design access to the deck from an interior living space at the same floor level.
- Balance deck space with the overall built area.



Large overhanging decks will increase the perceived mass of a building from below and are discouraged.



Terracing decks can minimize the appearance of a structure from below and is encouraged.

Design Objective: Building materials should be used consistently throughout a project and selected with consideration for neighborhood context and durability in the local climate.

5.8 Use building materials in a consistent manner.

- Use heavier materials to support lighter ones.
- Avoid application of finish materials to the façade only, producing a “tacked-on” appearance.
- Design material transitions to occur at meaningful locations such as an inside corner or the confluence of two building features.

Accessory Structures

Accessory structures may include structures such as artist studios, detached garages, sheds, gazebos and swimming pools.

Design Objective: Accessory structures should be designed as an integral part and a visual asset of the project.

5.9 Design an accessory structure to be consistent with the primary structure and site features.

- Select appropriate building materials, details, and forms.
- Make accessory structures appear subordinate to the primary structure.

5.10 Design an attached garage to be an integral element of the architectural composition of the building.

- Use materials, textures and details that contribute to the visual interest of the building.
- Consider using two garage doors rather than one wide door or recessing the single door to create visual interest and minimize the garage's visual impact.

Chapter 6

Environmental Context

“Development should preserve and, where possible, enhance the City’s scenic natural setting. Natural features, such as existing heritage trees, rock outcropping, ridgelines and significant watercourses should be protected. Existing terrain should be utilized in the design and grading should be minimized.” -LBMC §25.05.040(H)

Designing with nature in mind is a local design tradition. Consideration of climatic and topographical characteristics and preservation of the natural environment are important factors in the design process. Ocean and atmospheric health, public safety, and natural habitat protection are concerns at both the local and the regional level.

Preservation of the Natural Setting

The existing terrain and its ridgelines, natural slopes, rock outcrops, and mature trees establish a natural context for neighborhoods. These natural elements need to be preserved and integrated into building and landscaping projects. Site conditions vary widely and must be addressed on a case-by-case basis. A preliminary site assessment should guide the basic building form.

Design Objective: Designs should respect the natural contours of the land and protect trees and natural landscapes.

6.1 Minimize alteration to the site’s significant environmental features.

- Assess and preserve unique environmental features such as prominent rock outcrops, mature trees, significant watercourses, ridgelines, and other distinctive features of the site.

6.2 Maintain natural slopes to the extent feasible.

- Avoid excessive exposed cuts or fills.
- Design building to conform to the sites’ natural contours.

6.3 Avoid building on the crest of knolls, ridgelines, and prominent locations.

6.4 Consider the location of trees and their root systems on and near the site when determining the building footprint.

- Provide adequate buffers between natural features and structures, site development and utilities.
- Avoid grading near significant natural features.
- Protect existing significant trees, with particular attention to their root zones and the root zones of trees on adjacent sites.



Buildings have been set back to preserve the ridgeline.

Grading

Working with the natural landscape is a fundamental consideration in site design. Alteration of the natural contours should be minimized. Steeply sloping lots will impose limitations on the size and placement of a proposed home. A balance must be achieved between perching a structure on top of a site and grading the site excessively. Geological issues and the protection of natural features need to be considered at the concept design stage.

Design Objective: Grading should be the minimum necessary to achieve an appropriate building mass while retaining natural features and significant vegetation. Site design should minimize modification of the natural landscape and slope.

6.5 Minimize grading.

- Design in a manner that follows the natural contours of the site.
- Step the foundation to follow the property's natural contours.
- Minimize grading outside the building footprint.
- Conduct a site-specific geotechnical investigation as an initial step in the design process.

6.6 Create smooth transitions in grade between buildings and between adjacent properties and natural grades.

Chapter 7

General Plan Compliance

“The development shall comply with all applicable policies of the General Plan, including all of its elements, applicable specific plans and certified local coastal program.” -LBMC §25.05.040(H)

The General Plan contains a vision for the future of a community and describes the desired future of development in general terms and through a series of policy statements.¹ It consists of seven state-mandated elements: Land Use, Housing, Open Space and Conservation, Safety, Noise, and Transportation and Growth Management. The City has also adopted two optional elements: Historic Resources and Human Needs.

Other resource documents that regulate development in the City are the City’s various Specific Plans, the Landscape and Scenic Highways Resource Document and the certified Local Coastal Program.

General Plan Elements

Land Use

The *Land Use Element* (adopted by City Council December 15, 2009) establishes land use policies addressing specific concerns identified by the community and the City Council. Land use districts are also defined in this element.

The Land Use policies specifically related to design review are as follows:

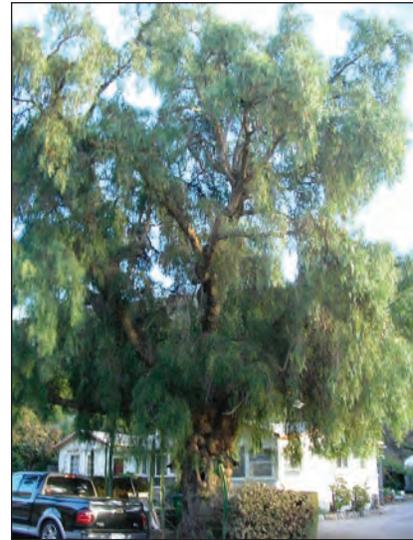
- Support design strategies and construction standards that maximize use of alternative energy sources and passive solar architecture (Policy 1.2).
- Support planning and design solutions that reduce water consumption and implement water conservation practices (Policy 1.3).
- Maintain the diversity and uniqueness of individual neighborhoods. Development standards and design review guidelines shall minimize the scale and bulk of new construction and/or renovation and require development to be compatible with the surrounding residences (Policy 2.1).
- Encourage the preservation of historically significant residential structures and protect the character-defining components of Laguna Beach’s traditional neighborhoods (Policy 2.2).
- Preserve and enhance the qualities that contribute to the character of the residential community, including quiet neighborhoods, pedestrian use of streets, and appropriate levels of illumination and nighttime activity and seek to mitigate the effects of high-volume thru-traffic (Policy 2.3).



Building design should be compatible with and preserve the character and quality of the neighborhood.

¹ Fulton, William. (1999). *Guide to California Planning*. Point Area, CA: Solano Press Books.

- Encourage the use of variable setbacks and building heights and innovative construction techniques, such as green building technology (Policy 2.5).
- Require the preservation of significant trees in conjunction with development proposals. The Design Review Board may grant exceptions to this provision when its strict enforcement would deny a property owner reasonable use of his/her property (Policy 2.6).
- Evaluate the impact of proposed development on hillsides and along ridgelines and require building design, location and arrangement to avoid continuous and intrusive impacts on hillside view areas and skyline profiles (Policy 2.7).
- Require building design and siting to be compatible and integrated with natural topographic features, minimize significant alteration of natural topography and/or other significant on-site resources, and protect public views as specified in the Design Guidelines and the Landscape and Scenic Highways Resource Document (Policy 2.8).
- Require the use of appropriate landscaping, special architectural treatments, and/or siting considerations to protect public views for projects visible from major highways and arterial streets (Policy 2.9).
- Maximize the preservation of coastal and canyon views (consistent with the principle of view equity) from existing properties and minimize blockage of existing public and private views. Best efforts should be made to site new development in locations that minimize adverse impacts on views from public locations (e.g., roads, bluff top trails, visitor-serving facilities, etc.) (Policy 2.10).
- Protect dedicated and accepted open space (Policy 7.1).
- Design and site new development to protect natural and environmentally sensitive resources, such as areas of unique scenic quality, public views and visual compatibility with surrounding uses and to minimize landform alterations (Policies 7.3 and 10.2).
- Ensure that development, including subdivisions, new building sites and remodels with building additions, is evaluated to ascertain potential negative impacts on natural resources. Any required mitigation shall emphasize impact avoidance over impact mitigation. Any mitigation should be located on-site. Any off-site mitigation should be located within the City's boundaries close to the project (Policies 7.4 and similar to 10.3).
- Require payment of an environmental impact fee for development whenever mitigation is not feasible and nexus exists (Policies 7.5 and 10.5).
- Implement individualized fuel modification programs whenever environmentally sensitive resources are present (Policy 7.6).
- Protect marine resources by implementing methods to minimize runoff from building sites and streets to the City's storm drain system (Policies 7.7 and 10.7).
- Require new construction and grading to be located in close proximity to preexisting development to minimize environmental impacts and growth-inducing potential (Policy 7.10).
- Require the construction of sidewalks and pathways and/or sidewalk widening on streets that carry significant pedestrian traffic (Policy 8.5).



This California pepper tree has been placed on the Heritage Tree list and requires City Council approval to be removed.

Housing

The *Housing Element* provides residents and public officials with an understanding of the housing needs of their community, sets forth the City's strategy for preserving and enhancing the community's residential character and expanding and maintaining housing opportunities.

The City is essentially built-out, offering limited new development opportunities. Most residential building sites are zoned for low-density residential development. Many of the existing multifamily residences are aged and in need of upgrading, remodeling or redevelopment. In most cases, existing density exceeds current standards and properties cannot be redeveloped with the same number of units. Where development standards allow and whenever possible, housing opportunities should be maximized. Potential housing opportunities include residential units, multifamily residential units, second residential units and artists' work-live units.

The Housing policies specifically related to design review are as follows:

- Encourage the preservation, rehabilitation and maintenance of historically significant residences (Policy 1.5).
- Encourage the preservation and expansion of rental housing opportunities in the City (Policy 1.6).
- Recognize and preserve the special character and quality of individual residential neighborhoods (Policy 1.10).
- Ensure that new housing is aesthetically compatible with the surrounding environment and consistent with the size, scale and character of development in the neighborhood in which it is located (Policy 1.12).



Alice Court provides low-income studio apartments and was designed to be compatible with the neighborhood.

Open Space and Conservation

The *Open Space and Conservation Element* identifies open space as an important asset to the community and discusses building sites in relationship with hillside and coastal settings, adjacent wildland areas and attendant natural features, and natural hazards associated with the City's environment.

The Open Space policies specifically related to design review are as follows:

- Require the use of drought-resistant planting and natural vegetation to reduce irrigation practices (Policy 1B).
- On blufftop projects, require that water runoff be conveyed to the street whenever possible (Policy 1C).
- As best possible, preserve the quality of public views from the hillsides and along the City's shoreline (Policy 7A).



This trailhead abuts residential parcels on Alta Laguna Boulevard and provides access to open space surrounding the residential neighborhood.

- Discourage ridgeline development (Policy 13C) and preserve public views from ridgelines (Policy 13H).
- Require grading projects to minimize earth-moving operations and encourage preservation of the natural topographic land features (Policy 14F).
- Unless overriding environmental, public viewshed or safety concerns suggest otherwise, new construction and grading should be located in close proximity to preexisting development in an effort to minimize impact and growth inducing potential. Street and driveway length and width should be evaluated for potential creation of new building sites. (Policy 14L).
- Require the dedication and improvement of public trail easements as a condition of development approval (Policy 6D).
- Ensure that new development does not encroach on access to trails nor preclude future provision of trails (Policy 6F).
- On building sites zoned RHP (Residential Hillside Protection), the design review process is to consider the treatment of the urban edge between development and open space (Policy 7G).
- Prohibit the intrusion of fuel modification programs into environmentally sensitive areas, including chaparral and coastal sage scrub (Policy 8N).



The combination of landscaping includes drought-tolerant plants.

Noise

The *Noise Element* includes policies aimed at protecting residents from excessive noise intrusions.

The Noise policy specifically related to design review is as follows:

- Encourage acoustical mitigation design in new construction (Policy 2.3).

Safety

The *Safety Element* aims to reduce the loss of life, injury, damage to property, and economic or social dislocation resulting from natural and man-made hazards.

The Safety policies specifically related to design review are as follows:

- Restrict projects that will cause hazardous geologic conditions or that will expose existing development to an unacceptable level of risk until the causative factors are mitigated. (Policy 3E).
- Require that new development adjacent to wildland areas incorporate adequate fuel modification measures, consistent with adopted City standards (Policy 4H).



This home is built in a fuel-modification zone with fire-resistant materials like stone, stucco and tile.

- Encourage property owners to consider “firewise” planting, especially in landscapes adjacent to wildland areas (Policy 4P).
- Contain and utilize runoff from impervious surfaces to the greatest extent possible. Transmit excess runoff to the nearest street or drainage facility (Policy 5D).
- Enforce building setback standards on local beaches to prevent exposure of structures to large sea waves of seismic or storm origin (Policy 6D).
- Prevent shoreline development which would place structures in danger of wave attack or degrade natural means of shoreline protection (Policy 6E).

Historic Resources

The *Historic Resources Element*, together with the Historic Preservation ordinance (Municipal Code LBMC §25.45), incorporates preservation measures into the design review process and establishes a program of incentives for property owners to maintain and preserve historic structures.

The Historic Resources policies specifically related to design review are as follows:

- Protect historic buildings through the implementation of incentive measures designed to encourage rehabilitation and preservation (Policy 1.3).
- Continue the current city policy to discourage the demolition of historic resources by providing incentives for relocation (Policy 1.7).



This historic house, built in 1927, was the second home built in Three Arch Bay and was preserved and relocated to North Laguna in 1989.

Transportation and Growth Management

A primary goal of the *Transportation and Growth Management Element* is to ensure that the planning, management and implementation of street and access-related improvements are adequate to meet the current and projected future needs of residents and visitors. It includes discussion of various related topics including parking, safety and pedestrian circulation.

The Transportation policies specifically related to design review are as follows:

- Discourage driveway access on Coast Highway and Laguna Canyon Road (Policy 2A).
- Require a traffic impact study in conjunction with new commercial development and major commercial renovations (Policy 2E).
- Continue to require on-site turnaround capability on residential collector streets (Policy 2J).
- Balance the need for sidewalks with preservation of neighborhood character (Policy 3D).
- Ensure adequate pedestrian/driver visibility at corners (Policy 9G).
- Require the use of landscaping, special architectural treatments and siting considerations for projects visible from major highways and arterial streets (Policy 11E).

Specific Plans

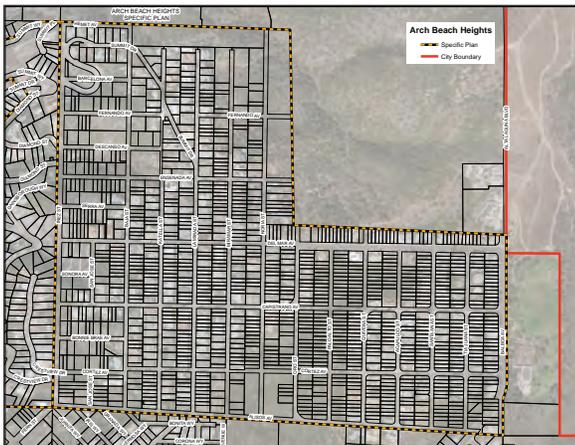
Specific plans contain development standards for specific areas that require special regulation to maintain their neighborhood character and development patterns.

Arch Beach Heights Specific Plan

Arch Beach Heights is a neighborhood of single-family homes characterized by narrow lots, steep topography, and a constrained street system. The neighborhood has specific development constraints related to the visibility of the area from below, its interface with adjacent open-space areas, its historic development pattern and the potential for fire. The Arch Beach Heights Specific Plan includes design standards to address the density, privacy, parking and safety issues specific to this neighborhood.



In Arch Beach Heights the homes are narrow and step down with the hillside topography.



The Arch Beach Heights Specific Plan area was subdivided on a grid system. Most lots are 25' X100'.



The City's specific plan areas are indicated on this aerial photo.

Diamond/Crestview Specific Plan

The Diamond/Crestview area, located in a hillside area, faces many development constraints including steep and varied topography, ridgelines and rock outcroppings, sensitive geological areas and biological habitats, lot configuration and a constrained street system. The Diamond/Crestview Specific Plan was created to protect and promote the rustic character of the neighborhood and views and to allow for the safe and orderly development of this unique area.



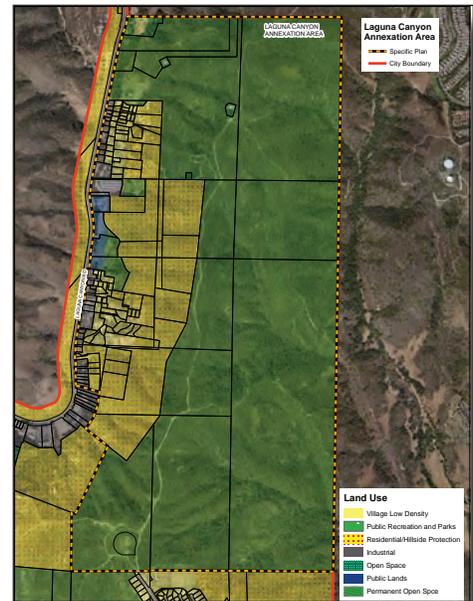
Preserving views is very important in designing in the Diamond/Crestview area.

Laguna Canyon Annexation Area Specific Plan

The Laguna Canyon Annexation Area Specific Plan was developed to protect this unique 890-acre area from development and economic pressures. Existing development is a unique mix of residential uses, light industrial development and home occupations. The neighborhood has specific development constraints related to localized environmental hazards, including flood, mud and fire.



The Castle Rock neighborhood in the Laguna Canyon Annexation Area enjoys canyon and ridgeline views. Fire prevention is part of residential design.



The Laguna Canyon Annexation Area Specific Plan contains a variety of land uses.

Treasure Island Specific Plan

The Treasure Island Specific Plan includes design standards for this mixed-use hotel, park, condominium, and single-family residential development. Ocean views and public access are of paramount concern for this area.



Homes in the Treasure Island Specific Plan area are designed to have a low profile and preserve ocean views.



Sarah Thurston Park Specific Plan

The Sarah Thurston Park Specific Plan addresses capital improvements for the area, preservation of neighborhood character, lower-income housing opportunities and economic revitalization.

Signs in Sarah Thurston Park identify the pedestrian walkways that contribute to the unique character of this neighborhood.

Local Coastal Program

The City's certified Local Coastal Program is made up of the following documents:

- General Plan Land Use Map, excluding Blue Lagoon and Three Arch Bay
- Land Use and Open Space/Conservation General Plan Elements
- Zoning Map
- Downtown Specific Plan
- Laguna Canyon Annexation Specific Plan
- Municipal Code Title 25, "Zoning"
- Municipal Code Chapter 12.08, Preservation of Heritage Trees Ordinance
- Municipal Code Chapter 14.78, Geology Reports – Preparation and Requirements Ordinance
- Municipal Code Title 21, Plats and Subdivision
- Municipal Code Title 22, Excavation and Grading
- Shoreline Protection Guidelines (as adopted by Resolution 88.43)
- Residential Design Guidelines
- South Laguna Community Design and Landscape Guidelines (as adopted by Resolution 89.104)
- Fuel Modification Guidelines (of the Laguna Beach General Plan Safety Element)
- Summer Festival Parking Agreements
- Municipal Code Title 16, Water Quality Control (as approved in the LCP amendment approved in 2004).

Design Objective: Designs must comply with the General Plan, any applicable specific plan and the Local Coastal Program.

7.1 Create a design that satisfies the letter and the intent of the General Plan, any applicable Specific Plan and the certified Local Coastal Program.

- Research the relevant documents before designing the project.
- Where the scope of the project calls for it, arrange a pre-application site meeting with city staff for clarification of policy issues.

Chapter 8

Historic Preservation

“Destruction or significant alteration to historic resources should be avoided whenever possible” -LBMC §25.05.040(H)

Historic structures mark the stages of evolution of Laguna Beach and contribute to the City’s character. It is important to preserve them. Owners of historic structures who are contemplating modifications to them are encouraged to engage licensed architects, historical resource consultants and design professionals with experience working within the constraints of a historic project to assist in concept development.

Before demolishing a historic structure or altering it in any way, it is important to contact the Zoning or Planning Division to determine the correct procedures. Most projects will require environmental review, a historical report and Heritage Committee review.



This home at 820 Catalina Street was built in the eclectic Tudor style around 1929. The home is in good condition and maintains a E rating on the city’s historic register.

Design Considerations for Modifications to a Historic Residence

Chapter 1 outlines general methods and approaches to the project planning process. The following additional steps should be considered when designing modifications to a historic residence:

Step 1: Consider professional design assistance.

Property owners are encouraged to engage licensed architects, historical resource consultants and design professionals with experience working within the constraints of a historic project to assist in concept development.

The National Park Service has drafted an excellent supplemental resource for the treatment of historic properties. Both the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and the Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Structures should be considered in conjunction with the City's regulations.

Step 2: Research City regulations.

Zoning and Planning Division staff can provide information about specific regulations that may affect the project's design. Structures listed on the City's Historic Register are eligible to apply for preservation benefits.

Please reference Chapter 1 and Chapter 17 for more project planning and Design Review information.

Character-Defining Features

Design Objective: Character-defining features should be retained and, if necessary, repaired to preserve the integrity of the structure.

8.1 Preserve historic architectural features and details.

- Avoid adding elements or details that were not part of the original building and are not authentic elements of the building's historic architectural style.
- Protect architectural details from environmental damage, such as moisture accumulation, that may cause damage.
- Avoid deviation from original colors and materials. Vinyl is not typically appropriate.

8.2 Repair rather than replace architectural details whenever possible.

- Repair only features that have deteriorated or need to be repaired in effort to avoid deterioration.
- Use methods that minimize damage to the original materials when disassembling a historic element during restoration.
- Use appropriate procedures for cleaning, refinishing, and repairing architectural details that will maintain the original finish.
- Avoid harsh cleaning methods such as sandblasting, which can damage historic materials and change their appearance.

8.3 When restoration is not an option, replace historic features in-kind.

- When reconstruction of an element is impossible, develop a new design as an authentic representation of the historic element.

8.4 Preserve primary historic building materials to the extent feasible.

- Retain and preserve original wall and siding materials.
- Do not cover or obscure original façade materials.
- Consider removing stucco if it covers the original siding,
- Restore mortar joints only where there is evidence of moisture problems or when much of the mortar is missing.
- Maintain protective coatings to retard drying and ultraviolet damage.
- Plan repainting carefully.

8.5 Repair rather than replace original materials that have deteriorated over time whenever possible.

8.6 When repair is not an option, replace original building materials in-kind.

Design Objective: Porches on historic residences should be retained and repaired in-kind rather than removed or replaced.

8.7 Preserve a porch in its original form.

- Maintain an original porch.
- Avoid enclosing a porch with materials that destroy its openness and transparency.
- Repair a deteriorated porch or elements thereof instead of removing or replacing it.
- Consider restoring an altered porch to its original design and configuration.

8.8 Replace a missing porch with one similar to that seen historically.

- Consider the character, design, scale, materials and details of the building in designing an authentic porch replacement (Chapter 5).
- Design adequate porch supports.

Design Objective: The pattern of windows and doors—their proportions, spacing, and detailing—should be preserved.

8.9 Preserve the historic window size, shape, style/operation (bay, bow, single-hung, double-hung, casement, fixed, picture, transom, clerestory, etc.), design (divided lights, mullions, stained glass, etc.), and, on a primary façade, arrangement.



Buildings on the Historic Register feature a plaque that identifies their, approximate date of construction and architectural style.



The additions and modifications to this 1935 historic residence were designed to preserve its historically significant features, including windows, doors, chimney and materials.

8.10 Carefully repair a deteriorated window or door rather than replacing it or completely closing the opening.

- Repair windows and doors in a manner that reflects high-quality craftsmanship.

8.11 Replace a window or door that is damaged beyond repair with one that reflects the historic character of the residence.

- Match the replacement to the original design as closely as possible.
- Make new openings architecturally similar in location, size, and type.
- Finish new windows and doors with elements like those used traditionally.

8.12 In adding new window or door openings on a character-defining façade, keep them consistent with the historic structure's architectural style.

Design Objective: Original and early garages should be retained or repaired as necessary to maintain the historic integrity of the property.

8.13 Preserve historic garages.

- Respect the character-defining features of a historic garage, such as the primary materials, roof form, location, windows, second door openings and architectural details.
- Avoid moving a historic garage from its original location.

Design Objective: Where original or early landscaping contributes to the historic setting of a property, it should be respected and maintained. Reinstatement of an original planting design is encouraged in circumstances where it has historical significance.

8.14 Preserve historic landscape and streetscape features.

- Preserve existing fences, sidewalks, trees, lights, and hitching posts and protect them during construction.
- Preserve existing native planting, including historically significant trees, shrubs, and garden designs, in place.

Design Objective: Maintaining the historic roof form, profile, and materials and repairing as necessary is important in preserving a property's historic significance.

8.15 Preserve the original roof form and scale.

- Preserve the original eave depth.
- Minimize the visual impacts of skylights or other rooftop devices as seen from the street.

8.16 Use roof materials in a manner similar to that seen historically.

- Preserve original roof materials.
- Replace roof materials, where necessary, with roof materials similar in scale and texture to those used traditionally.



The front porch of this 1915 Revival cottage is a distinctive architectural feature that contributes to the historic significance of the residence.

Building Relocation

Design Objective: Relocating historic structures should be regarded as a measure of last resort. When building relocation is required, siting, height, orientation and new foundation design and materials should respect the original as much as possible.

8.17 Relocate a historic structure only when this is the only viable option for preservation.

- Site the structure in a position similar to its historic orientation.
- Design the new foundation to appear similar to the historic foundation and attempt to locate the structure at its approximate historic elevation above grade.



The original garage door has been maintained on this 1935 cottage.

Common Historic Terms

Preservation - Maintenance and repair of existing historic materials and retention of the property as it has evolved over time. New exterior additions are not within the scope of this treatment; however, the limited and sensitive upgrading of mechanical, electrical and plumbing systems and other code-required work to make properties functional is appropriate within a preservation project.

Rehabilitation - Alteration or addition to a historic property to meet continuing or changing uses while retaining the historic character.

Restoration - Depicting a property at a particular period of time in its history while removing evidence of other periods. Form, features and character can be modified to reflect a specific time period. The limited and sensitive upgrading of mechanical, electrical and plumbing systems and other code-required work to make properties functional is appropriate within a restoration project.

Reconstruction - Re-creation of non-surviving portions of a property to replicate the appearance at a specific period of time in its historic location.

“In-Kind” Replacement - Repairs which use the same materials in the same location which comply with the currently adopted code. Replacement of features must be identical to the existing features including same type, materials, operation and configuration.

Chapter 9

Landscaping

“Landscaping shall be incorporated as an integrated part of the structure’s design and relate harmoniously to neighborhood and community landscaping themes. View equity shall be an important consideration in the landscape design. The relevant landscaping guidelines contained in the City’s ‘Landscape and Scenic Highways Resource Document’ should be incorporated, as appropriate, in the design and planned maintenance of proposed landscaping.” -LBMC §25.05.040(H)

The City’s reputation as one of Southern California’s most picturesque communities depends in large part upon the distinctiveness and diversity of its physical setting, both natural and man-made. Hilltop neighborhoods have a semiarid climate and shallow soil and areas where views and erosion control are important. Coastal and oceanfront neighborhoods are more temperate, and the marine environment influences landscape choices. Canyon neighborhoods have landscaping that tends to be less formal, and the interface with adjacent wildland areas and fire safety is of particular importance.

Neighborhood character and established landscape patterns are important considerations in landscape design. Other issues associated with landscape include Heritage Trees, water conservation, view preservation, fuel modification, hardscaping, erosion control and maintenance. The City’s Landscape and Scenic Highways Resource Document addresses many of these issues and contains landscape recommendations for specific neighborhoods.

Existing Significant Vegetation

Design Objective: Existing significant trees and other vegetation should be preserved where feasible.

9.1 Preserve significant trees and other mature vegetation.

- Identify significant vegetation assets early in the design process.
- Begin site design with the idea of protecting significant vegetation resources; design and locate structures and landscape projects with this principle in mind.
- Identify the location of any Heritage Tree, candidate Heritage Tree or other mature vegetation required to be preserved on all site plans, grading plans and landscape plans. (A list of Heritage Trees, and Candidate Heritage trees can be found in the *Landscape and Scenic Highways Document* or at City Hall. Note that not all significant vegetation has been placed on the lists of Heritage and Candidate Heritage trees.)



Landscaping can enhance the architectural theme of a house as well as the streetscape.

- Consult with an arborist or landscape architect to determine appropriate setbacks and methods and strategies for protection of significant trees during construction (protected root zones, watering, monitoring, protective fencing, etc.) and include these requirements in the project construction documents.
- Identify any vegetation to be preserved because of its status as high-value habitat*, very-high-value habitat* or sensitive biological resources.
- Place vegetation locations on all site plans, grading plans and landscape plans.
- Propose methods of protection for vegetation to be preserved for the construction phase.
- Identify significant vegetation on adjacent property and take measures to mitigate impacts of construction activities.
- Avoid planting the entire parcel and leave large areas for native and natural landscaping.

New Plant Materials

Design Objective: When new plant materials are introduced, they should be chosen for their appropriateness for the location.

9.2 Use plant materials that thrive in the natural setting.

- Use drought-tolerant plants whenever feasible.
- Use California natives that are indigenous to the area, especially for neighborhoods having a wildland interface.
- Avoid plants that require significant applications of pesticides or fertilizer.
- Avoid plants that require extensive or frequent pruning.
- Choose plants that are appropriate for given soil types.
- In windy bluff areas, choose plants that are known to withstand wind and salt air.
- Consider plants that attract and benefit local birds (habitat, food sources, etc.).

9.3 Design with view equity in mind.

- Plant landscaping so it does not grow into view corridors of neighboring properties.
- Consider a variety of view types including ocean, horizon, hillsides, streetscapes and/or city lights.

9.4 Consider visual contributions to street and neighborhood.

- Allow visual access to private property to contribute to neighborhood character and to a sense of continuous visual open spaces.
- Avoid tall hedges enclosing the property.
- Consult the Landscape and Scenic Highways Resource Document for suggestions specific to the neighborhood, including street trees.
- Use planting or hardscape elements to screen service areas.
- Choose and locate plants to contribute positively and interestingly to an overall eclectic character while remaining harmonious and compatible with the neighborhood.
- Avoid jarring, distracting designs that may appear out of place and not neighbor-friendly.

9.5 Use planting to soften, integrate or otherwise enhance the building in its setting.

- Soften bare walls with plant materials of appropriate size and character.
- Use plant materials in association with architectural elements to identify entrances, frame focal elements, create outdoor rooms and balance mass.
- Use planting to connect the site to the neighborhood and/or to significant adjacent natural areas.

* Certain building sites have been flagged as potentially containing environmentally sensitive habitats. A detailed environmental assessment may be required on a site-specific basis for these properties.

9.6 Choose and locate plants for fire safety.

- Avoid extensive use of highly flammable plant materials close to the building.
- Avoid using tall plants under eaves and decks.
- Avoid using plants that generate excessive litter and debris.
- Avoid placement of trees that would overhang property lines onto neighboring properties.
- In areas with a Fuel Modification designation, use the Laguna Beach Fuel Modification Guidelines for plant selection, spacing and maintenance.

9.7 Be aware of site geotechnical and erosion issues.

- Choose and locate plants to minimize surface erosion during irrigation or rain events.
- On slopes, choose plants having a variety of root depths, with preference for plants known for their erosion control qualities and plants that are native to the area.
- Use drought-tolerant plants to the extent feasible.

Hardscape and Accessories

Design Objective: Hardscape elements and materials should make a positive contribution to the neighborhood.

9.8 Consider hardscape elements that complement the site design.

- Make walls, hardscape elements and accessories appear as extensions of building character or of the natural context.
- Balance hardscape with significant planting elements so that the overall impression is predominantly soft and vegetated, especially as seen from the street.

9.9 Locate outdoor use areas to avoid unreasonable impacts to neighbors.

- Locate patios and high-use areas away from quiet areas of neighboring properties.
- Screen or control active spaces and possible noise pollution areas.
- Locate pools and spas to minimize noise impacts on neighbors.
- Design outdoor fireplaces and barbecues with consideration of smoke and site wind patterns and setbacks.

Water Management in the Landscape

Design Objective: Landscapes should be designed to conserve water and minimize runoff. (See chapter 14 for additional ocean water quality management objectives)

9.10 Design with consideration for proper management of stormwater and irrigation.

- Minimize irrigation.
- Eliminate irrigation runoff by providing on-site infiltration.

9.11 Design planting and irrigation systems to conserve water.

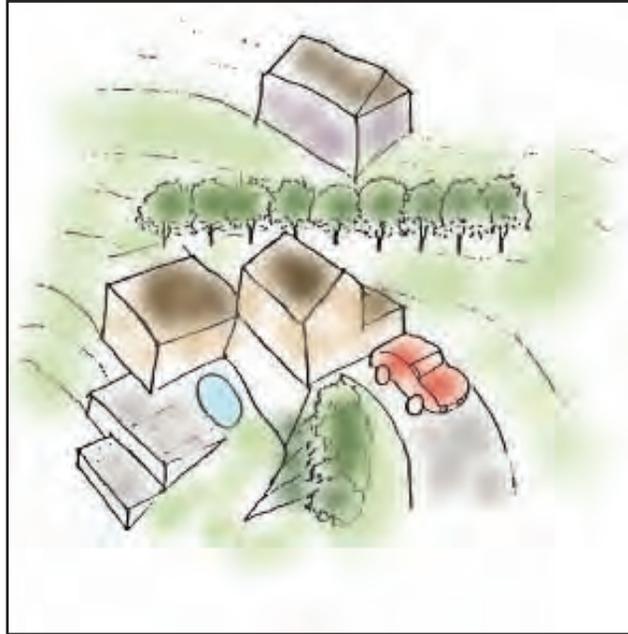
- Use drought-tolerant plants to the extent feasible.
- Consider planting California natives that are indigenous to the area, especially in neighborhoods with a wildland interface.
- Consider using weather-based or “smart” controllers that can irrigate various planting areas according to their particular needs.
- Incorporate low-volume irrigation heads and elements that minimize runoff and overspray onto hardscape or into drain inlets.

9.12 Design planting and irrigation systems to preserve water quality.

- Avoid plants that require significant applications of pesticides or fertilizer.
- Incorporate low-volume irrigation heads and elements that eliminate runoff and overspray onto hardscape or into drain inlets.

9.13 Engineer site drainage to retain water on-site.

- Avoid directing runoff onto adjacent properties.
- Design drainage systems to avoid hillside erosion.
- Consider allowing stormwater to run onto permeable planting areas before collecting it in drain inlets and discharging it from the site.
- Maximize permeable surfaces (planting areas, permeable hardscape) where soil conditions allow.
- Consider using stormwater catchment systems to collect water for irrigation use.
- Use permeable paving in large paved areas such as driveways, parking areas and patios.



This new dwelling screens active areas from the existing dwelling with the house and landscaping.

Mechanical Equipment and Service Areas

Design Objective: Screen mechanical equipment and service areas and minimize their noise impacts.

9.14 Locate utility elements or mechanical equipment to minimize visual and noise impacts.

- Locate mechanical equipment inside of the structure or at the rear or sides of a property, observing required setbacks and maximizing distance to neighboring properties.
- Direct venting away from nearby neighbors.
- Design enclosures for mechanical equipment or service yards to be consistent or complementary to the structure's architectural style.
- Screen trash and service areas from view, using a fence, hedge or other appropriate enclosure, and make them large enough to enclose all necessary trash and recycling containers.
- Screen enclosure walls with landscaping.
- Minimize noise from mechanical equipment or service yards and ensure that it does not exceed City maximums (see Municipal Code §7.25) by locating equipment away from neighbors, using noise-dampening enclosures, vaulting the equipment or using state-of-the-art quiet equipment.

Landscape Lighting

Design Objective: Landscape lighting should enhance select features, landscape and/or building elements. Lighting shall provide minimum illumination for functional aspects of the projects such as safety and pedestrian access while minimizing impacts on neighboring properties and the neighborhood.

9.15 Minimize glare and light trespass onto other properties.

- Direct lights away from other properties and the public right-of-way.
- Use low-lumen fixtures.
- Use full-cutoff baffles and hood accessories to direct light.
- Avoid fixtures for which the design does not shield or hide the actual lamp.
- Avoid excessive lighting of the project. Light for functional purposes as needed and highlight only the elements deemed most important.
- Turn landscape lighting off during late-night and early-morning periods or install timers to do so.
- Avoid uplighting.

Chapter 10

Lighting and Glare

“Adequate lighting for individual and public safety shall be provided in a manner which does not significantly impact neighboring properties. Reflective materials and appurtenances that cause glare or a negative visual impact (e.g., skylights, white rock roofs, high-gloss ceramic tile roofs, reflective glass, etc.) should be avoided or mitigated to a level of insignificance in those locations where those surfaces are visible from neighboring properties.” -LBMC §25.05.040(H)

Lighting is important for the safe and efficient use of a residence, but light spillage and glare can have adverse impacts on adjacent properties. Reflective building materials may reflect the sun throughout the day, creating safety issues and discomfort for neighbors. Excessive illumination is wasteful of energy in addition to detracting from the enjoyment of viewing the night sky and stars. Building and lighting design should be appropriate and subtle to eliminate adverse effects on neighbors and light pollution of the night sky. Careful design can reduce lighting impacts and at the same time increase energy efficiency.

Design Objective: Lighting should be designed as a visual asset to the property and the City’s character, giving attention to intensity, spread and direction.

10.1 Minimize glare.

- Select exterior building materials with matte, nonreflective finishes.
- Avoid highly reflective materials such as glass or polished metal as primary building materials.
- Position reflective surfaces (including windows and skylights) to minimize glare.
- Recess windows.
- Avoid large expanses of floor-to-ceiling glass and picture windows.
- Select roof materials that minimize glare.

10.2 Minimize visual impacts of exterior lighting.

- Minimize lighting impacts of lighting on neighboring properties and public views.
- Confine building or landscape lighting to specific features rather than washing an entire building façade in light.
- Use low-lumen lighting for accenting structures or vegetation.
- Design light sources to be low-level, shielded and directed downward.
- Use low-lumen exterior lights where needed for safety and efficient operation in outdoor activity areas, such as entries, gates, terraces, walkways, stairs and patios.
- Where safety and security are concerns, use motion-activated shielded lighting.
- Turn landscape lighting off during late-night and early-morning periods or install timers to do so.



Excessive lighting of a property can have adverse effects on neighboring properties.

10.3 Prevent light trespass.

- Avoid excessive illumination (750 lumens or less).
- Design exterior lighting to be fully shielded and directed downward.
- Minimize or avoid bulbs that emit white light in favor of low-power bulbs.
- Conceal skylights to the greatest extent possible.
- Use nightshades or exterior louvers on skylights.

Examples of Acceptable / Unacceptable Lighting Fixtures

Unacceptable / Discouraged

Fixtures that produce glare and light trespass

Unshielded Floodlights or Poorly-shielded Floodlights

Unshielded Wallpacks & Unshielded or Poorly-shielded Wall Mount Fixtures

Drop-Lens & Sag-Lens Fixtures w/ exposed bulb / refractor lens

Unshielded Streetlight

Unshielded Security Light

Unshielded PAR Floodlights

Unshielded 'Period' Style Fixtures

Drop-Lens Canopy Fixtures

Acceptable

Fixtures that shield the light source to minimize glare and light trespass and to facilitate better vision at night

flat lens

Full Cutoff Fixtures

Fully Shielded Wallpack & Wall Mount Fixtures

front shield

Fully Shielded Fixtures

Full Cutoff Streetlight

Fully Shielded Security Light

Fully Shielded 'Period' Style Fixtures

Shielded / Properly-aimed PAR Floodlights

Flush Mounted Canopy Fixtures

BC 10/02

Source: Branford Planning and Zoning Department, Branford, Connecticut.

Chapter 11

Neighborhood Compatibility

“Development shall be compatible with the existing development in the neighborhood and respect neighborhood character. Neighborhood character is the sum of the qualities that distinguish areas within the City, including historical patterns of development (e.g., structural heights, mass, scale or size), village atmosphere, landscaping themes and architectural styles.” -LBMC §25.05.040(H)

Laguna Beach is a collection of loosely defined but distinct neighborhoods. Recognizing the unique “personality” of the particular neighborhood and maintaining and/or enhancing it are crucial in the design of a project.

Site Analysis

Careful analysis of a site is necessary to establish the nature of the neighborhood in which it sits. A “neighborhood” can be a street, a block or a whole section of town. Topography, street layout, landscape patterns, the presence of older homes and the boundaries of a subdivision may define the limits of a neighborhood. The designer needs to look for common qualities that distinguish the properties surrounding the site from other neighborhoods.

Neighborhood compatibility can also include the impact that the development will have on the City as a whole, especially when a site is visible from a distance

Design Objective: An initial assessment of the characteristics that help to define the neighborhood context should take place early in the design process.

- 11.1 Prior to beginning design, make a thorough reconnaissance of the area surrounding the site noting the particular characteristics that make the neighborhood special.
- 11.2 Check to see if the site is important to public views or visible from areas outside of the immediate neighborhood.
- 11.3 Contact affected neighbors early to receive input about neighborhood values and issues.



These homes are neighborhood compatible in that they maintain similar heights, setbacks and access points.

Architectural Compatibility Without Conformity

The mix of old and new, large and small, traditional and contemporary, in differing ratios throughout Laguna's various neighborhoods reflects a tolerance for architectural diversity that contributes to the village atmosphere.

Maintaining architectural compatibility within a neighborhood does not mean replicating what already exists. Rather, each project should be designed to contribute distinctively to the character of the neighborhood and to avoid negative impacts on the surrounding properties. The result should be a rich variety of unique architecture and landscaping sharing the qualities common to the neighborhood.

Design Objective: Residential design should pursue compatibility through relationships of scale, siting, detail and materials.

11.4 Design a unique building that reflects the best qualities of the surrounding neighborhood.

- Use materials and colors that complement the prevailing architectural theme of the neighborhood.
- Choose an architectural style that respects the predominant massing, scale and level of articulation in the neighborhood.

Historical Presence

The presence of a significant number of older homes in some neighborhoods is an important part of Laguna's charm. Maintaining the sense of history and diversity that this presence imparts is crucial to preserving the village atmosphere.

Design Objective: Historic structures should be maintained and respected to protect the character of their neighborhoods.

11.5 Design additions to and around historic structures to complement the character of the structure.

- Maintain the current relationship to the neighborhood when adding or altering a historic structure.
- Where the project is located next to a historic structure, choose an architectural style that allows respect for the massing, scale and level of articulation of the historic neighbor.

Lot Coverage

The balance of building area to open space can be a key feature of neighborhood character. Maintaining a sense of open space that is appropriate to the neighborhood requires balancing the size of the building's footprint with the mass of the structure and the size of the lot. When the typical lot coverage in a neighborhood is less than the maximum allowed by code, the footprint approved will often be below the code maximum.

Design Objective: When a pattern of lot coverage exists in a neighborhood, the footprint and placement of a building should maintain the balance of building area to open space that is typical of the neighborhood.

11.6 Design a structure with a footprint that maintains the pattern of open space existing in the neighborhood.

11.7 Locate the structure on the site to maintain the neighborhood pattern of open space location.

Building Mass, Height and Setbacks

Building mass, height and setbacks often contribute to the definition of the character of a neighborhood.

Design Objective: When building mass is a component of the character of the neighborhood, new development should complement the typical building mass in the neighborhood.

11.8 Design new development in such a way that visible mass conforms to the scale of the neighborhood.

Design Objective: Building height should be appropriate to the neighborhood; structures that exceed the typical height can interfere with views from homes above, increase the appearance of mass, and block sun, light, and air to surrounding houses.

11.9 Maintain building heights that are appropriate to the neighborhood.

- Locate and orient the structure in such a way that it does not exceed the appropriate height for the neighborhood.
- Design the structure of a size that does not require it to exceed the appropriate height for the neighborhood.
- Avoid architectural styles that require roofs that will exceed the appropriate height for the neighborhood.
- Design a building with a perceived number of stories that is consistent with the neighborhood pattern.

Design Objective: When the existing pattern of building setbacks has created a desirable effect in a neighborhood, that pattern should be respected in order to maintain that benefit and minimize or eliminate impacts to views, light, air and privacy.

11.10 Consider the existing setback pattern in the neighborhood.

- Maintain consistent setback patterns in the neighborhood.
- Stagger front yard setbacks if variation is characteristic of the neighborhood.

11.11 Maintain the predominant spacing pattern of side yards.

- Make side yard setbacks similar to others on the block as seen from the street.

11.12 Avoid long, uninterrupted wall planes and provide open space.

- Stagger setbacks with respect to adjacent properties to avoid an undesirable tunnel effect.
- Articulate side wall planes to create variety and reduce perceived scale.

11.13 Incorporate landscaping into required setback areas.

- Locate the building to provide opportunities for maintaining landscape themes in a neighborhood.
- Coordinate the side yard space in relation to that of adjoining properties to maximize the perception of open space and the potential for shared open-space area.

Landscape and Hardscape Design

Landscape and hardscape are substantial components in the character of a neighborhood. The diversity of these elements between neighborhoods is one of Laguna's most distinctive characteristics (Chapter 9).

Design Objective: Landscape and hardscape design should be appropriate to the neighborhood.

11.14 Choose planting that complements the scale and height of the landscaping in the neighborhood and avoid sharp variations in vegetation types between properties.

11.15 Design hardscape to complement the neighborhood's character and scale.

- Choose hardscape materials that are consistent with the neighborhood.
- Maintain retaining walls and terracing on a property at a scale consistent with the neighborhood.
- Maintain or enhance the neighborhood's typical street-edge treatment.



The garden adds to the streetscape in this neighborhood and contributes to the village atmosphere.

Garage Design, Placement and Scale

The location of garages and the appearance of the garage doors affect the pedestrian experience and contribute to the character of a neighborhood. Consistent garage access and design may help a dwelling blend with the neighborhood.

Design Objective: Garage design, placement and scale should complement and enhance the character of a neighborhood.

11.16 Locate garages and driveways in a manner compatible with the established neighborhood pattern.

- Where there is an alley, locate the garage to take access from it.
- On a through lot, provide access from the same side of the street as is typically used by other properties in the vicinity.
- Where site and access constraints require placement of the garage facing the street, articulate the garage and garage doors carefully to complement the neighborhood character.

11.17 Design garages to preserve the existing scale of the neighborhood.

- Consider recessing the garage to the rear of the property when this configuration is typical in a neighborhood.
- Consider a side-access garage in areas where garages are typically not facing the street.
- Consider separate single-car garages or split single doors where the scale of a typical two-car garage door does not fit the neighborhood.
- Use a carport, tandem parking or an uncovered parking space for a third parking space if the mass of a three-car garage would negatively impact the scale of a neighborhood (see Chapter 3).

Chapter 12

Privacy

“The placement of activity areas, (e.g. decks, picture windows and ceremonial or entertainment rooms) in locations that would result in a substantial invasion of privacy of neighboring properties should be minimized.” -LBMC §25.05.040(H)

Maximizing the sense of visual and acoustic privacy between neighboring structures is an important objective in the design review process. A sense of privacy benefits the property owner considering development as well as the surrounding neighbors. With careful design a level of privacy consistent with the existing pattern of development in the immediate neighborhood can be maintained.

The site and building design, location of indoor and outdoor activity areas and landscape design directly impact privacy. Outdoor living spaces and circulation within a structure need to be carefully planned to maintain privacy between neighboring properties.

A realistic analysis of the project site configuration, surrounding context and pattern of development must be done early to understand and design to the general level of privacy in the area.

Design Objective: When lot size permits, new structures should be articulated within the allowable building setbacks to enhance privacy between neighboring properties.

12.1 Site a building with maximum consideration for privacy issues.

- Maintain adequate setbacks from neighboring properties.
- Avoid placing building mass and upper levels close to property lines where window openings would compromise privacy.



Landscaping can help separate outdoor areas and create privacy for neighbors.

Design Objective: The location of indoor activity areas should be carefully considered for potential privacy impacts.

12.2 Consider the floor plans of the subject property and adjacent residences.

- Organize the internal floor plan to place activity areas (living area, kitchen, etc.) away from the more private areas of a neighboring residence, especially the bedrooms.
- Avoid designing large windows that compromise neighbors' privacy.
- Locate windows and glass doors where they are not immediately adjacent to the windows and doors of adjacent residences.
- Consider fixed shutters, translucent glass and other design techniques to help obscure and mitigate privacy issues.
- Use recessed or clerestory windows, dormers and skylights to allow light and ventilation while reducing or eliminating views into neighboring properties.

Design Objective: Outdoor living spaces should be placed so as not to reduce the visual and acoustic privacy of nearby homes.

12.3 Give thoughtful consideration to the siting and design of outdoor spaces.

- Locate outdoor activity areas away from noise- or view-sensitive portions of adjacent properties.
- Enclose courtyards to create secluded outdoor space.
- Screen adjacent properties with walls or solid railings.
- Focus activity away from neighbors or mitigate impacts through landscape or structure design.
- Use solid walls, which block sound transmission more readily than fences.
- Consider surrounding topography and lot configuration when designing outdoor living areas. (A roof or trellis over a deck or patio may limit sound transmission but may also impact neighbors' views.)
- Articulate wall and roof shapes to reduce reflection of sound from activity areas toward neighbors.

Design Objective: Landscape design should be used to effect visual screening, reduce noise reflection, and create a sense of separation, giving attention to the impacts of these measures on views.

12.4 Design landscape to mitigate noise and privacy impacts.

- Use trees, shrubs and hedges to create effective visual screens between activity areas and neighboring properties without affecting views.
- Screen views into neighboring houses and yards with planters along upper-level decks.
- Articulate landscape and hardscape to minimize sound reflection onto adjacent properties.
- Use soft ground covers or paving materials on activity areas to minimize noise generation and transmission.

Chapter 13

Public Art

“Public art is encouraged and shall be displayed where feasible or required by the art in public places ordinance.” -LBMC §25.05.040(H)

In 1986, the City adopted an Art in Public Places ordinance (Municipal Code §1.09) to provide permanent outdoor artworks that are easily accessible to the general public. The program is a collaboration between developers, artists and the City aimed at enhancing property values, encouraging pride in ownership and adding value to the community.

Residential as well as commercial development projects that meet certain density or valuation thresholds are subject to the ordinance.

Design Objective: Public art should be installed as appropriate to enhance the identity of Laguna Beach as a center for creativity.

13.1 Locate public art to be visible from the street or other significant public right-of-way.

- Position public art to give identity to an area, such as a neighborhood gateway, key street intersection or public plaza.
- Link artwork in terms of scale, material, form and content to the immediate and adjacent buildings and landscaping so that it complements the site and the surrounding environment.
- Place public art to be appreciated from multiple vantage points.
- Use public art as an accent to a public space.
- Avoid obscuring significant building fronts; public art should enhance the site and building architecture.
- Avoid locations that impede convenient flow.

13.2 Use materials that will be resistant to vandalism, theft and weather and facilitate maintenance.



“Steps in the Sand,” 2001, by Marsh Scott is located at the entrance to a multi-unit condominium complex at 1575 North Coast Highway.

Chapter 14

Sustainability

“New development should consider architecture and building practices which minimize environmental impacts and enhance energy efficiency by: (1) reducing energy needs of buildings by proper site and structural design; (2) increasing the building’s ability to capture or generate energy; (3) using low-impact, sustainable and recycled building materials; (4) using the latest Best Management Practices regarding waste and water management; and (5) reducing site emissions.” -LBMC §25.05.040(H)

Materials

The production, distribution, use and disposal of building materials exhausts significant quantities of energy and resources. Selecting materials with low embodied energy reduces the City’s carbon footprint. Many traditional materials, such as wood, stone and brick, have relatively low levels of embodied energy as well as contributing to the integration of new structures into the natural environment. Some nontraditional materials also have low levels of embodied energy or are sustainable because they have recycled content, are themselves easily recyclable, or are particularly durable. Designing buildings that stand up well to the elements reduces maintenance costs and environmental impacts.

Design Objective: Building materials should stand up well to the elements, last a long time, age gracefully and require relatively little energy to produce.

14.1 Select materials with relatively low levels of embodied energy.

- Consider using natural instead of synthetic stone.
- Use locally manufactured or locally sourced building materials when possible.

14.2 Select building materials that will withstand local environmental conditions.

- Choose products on the basis of their total life-cycle cost and long-term environmental impact.
- Use exposed exterior nonferrous metal such as brass, bronze, stainless steel, and anodized aluminum instead of plated or painted steel.
- Consider using nonstructural ferrous steel intentionally left to rust, which does not require ongoing painting, where leaching and staining of walkways and other surfaces can be mitigated.



Natural stone, stucco and metal capped glass railings were selected on this oceanfront home to withstand the harsh coastal environment.

Heating, Cooling and Lighting

Residential structures account for a significant portion of energy consumption. Using fossil-fuel-based energy to heat, cool and operate our homes is a major contributor to air pollution and global environmental impacts, including climate change. Using passive solar and sustainable design principles can offset the need for mechanical heating, cooling and lighting, lower a building's lifetime operating costs, reduce the City's carbon footprint, and help meet state-mandated carbon-reduction requirements.

Rather than using mechanical and electrical devices such as pumps, fans, or controls to move solar heat, passive solar design involves the design of windows, walls, and floors to collect, store, and distribute solar energy in the form of heat in winter and to reject solar heat in summer.

An efficient roof design can reduce energy consumption, maintenance costs and air pollution. Cool roof systems and green roofs are alternatives to conventional roof designs. They employ materials that effectively reflect the sun's energy, reducing the roof surface temperature and thereby reducing the heat transferred into the building, often obviating the need for air conditioning. Because of the steep local topography, roofs are often highly visible, and considerations of energy efficiency need to be balanced against aesthetic criteria.

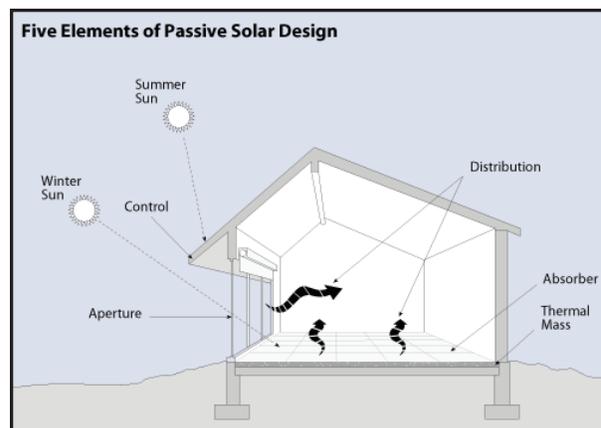
A green roof can be designed in a number of ways and include a range of materials. Generally a green roof consists of vegetation and soil (or other growing medium) planted over a drainage layer and waterproof membrane. A green roof can reduce stress on storm sewer system loads by retaining rainwater. It can insulate a building and protect the underlying roof membrane from the sun's ultraviolet rays and extreme temperatures. It may also contribute to the natural habitat, help to reduce the urban heat-island effect, increase biodiversity and improve air quality by trapping gaseous and particulate pollutants and converting carbon dioxide to oxygen.

In our moderate climate, well-designed buildings can produce all the clean, renewable energy the occupants need. Achieving this requires site-sensitive design using renewable energy sources such as solar or wind. California's solar access laws encourage the use of solar energy systems including solar electricity and solar water heating, and the City supports their site-sensitive installation. Small micro-wind generators may be incorporated where appropriate.

Design Objective: Buildings should be sited and constructed to minimize energy use for heating, cooling and lighting.

14.3 Incorporate passive solar orientation and design.

- Manage summer sun heat gain through the use of east and west exterior awnings, roof overhangs, trellises, deciduous trees and other architectural and landscaping techniques.
- Consider using low-SHGC (solar heat-gain coefficient) glass in appropriate locations.



Incorporate passive solar orientation and design.

14.4 Capture natural daylight.

- Consider the use of solar tubes, clerestory windows, dormers and skylights to bring natural daylight into interior spaces and minimize the need for electrical lighting during daylight hours.
- Design and position skylights to avoid their contributing to the overheating of interiors.

14.5 Use natural cooling techniques in place of air conditioning.

- Catch prevailing breezes and provide natural ventilation with operable windows and skylights.
- Use thermal mass to moderate fluctuations of interior temperature during the day.

14.6 Install cool roof systems or green roofs.

- Use matte finishes on cool roofs to minimize glare.
- Install a radiant barrier with an adjacent air space under all roofing substructures.
- Retrofit accessible attics with either spray foam insulation or a radiant barrier where appropriate.
- Consider views from the public right-of-way and from other properties when designing a green roof.
- Choose neighborhood-compatible or low-water-use plants for green roof applications.

14.7 Maximize the use of energy-efficient products and systems.

- Specify high-performance lighting such as compact fluorescent lights (CFCs) or light emitting diodes (LEDs) instead of incandescent lighting.
- Use exterior light fixtures that are Dark-Sky compliant and that do not allow light trespass beyond the property.
- Mitigate phantom-load leaks by installing dedicated switches for entertainment and computer stations.
- Use Energy Star and other high-performance products for mechanical systems, appliances and programmable thermostats.
- Increase the efficiency of existing or proposed air conditioning compressors by shading the units and providing adequate airflow.

14.8 Minimize visual impacts of solar or wind devices as seen from the public right-of-way and adjacent properties.

- Choose hardware, frames and piping that have a matte finish and are consistent with the color scheme of the primary structure.
- Screen support structures with landscaping that does not interfere with operational efficiency.

14.9 Maintain solar access for neighboring properties.

- Design and site the building and its landscaping to minimize shading of neighboring properties.

Ocean Water Quality

Maintaining a healthy, clean and vibrant ocean alive with marine life is of the utmost importance. Toxins in runoff will eventually enter the ocean and marine life ecosystem. Controlling stormwater runoff, toxicity and the effects of runoff on adjacent properties and ultimately the ocean is an important element of project design. Appropriate development choices for buildings and landscapes can significantly reduce the quantity and greatly improve the quality of runoff. Runoff and erosion can be mitigated by reducing impervious areas, using green roofs, detaining rainwater for controlled dispersion, and other applicable Best Management Practices. A water quality management plan is required for all priority development projects (see Municipal Code §16.01.020).



Maintaining a healthy, clean and vibrant ocean is of the utmost importance.

Design Objective: The impact of development on ocean water quality and the implications of drainage onto surrounding properties must be evaluated and mitigated in site and building design. (See chapter 9 for more water quality and landscaping objectives.)

14.10 Design the site with consideration for stormwater management.

- Capture and then slowly release stormwater where conditions allow.
- Avoid sending high concentrations of runoff into pipes or ditches.
- Route stormwater through landscaping prior to discharging it from the site.
- Use permeable surfaces for driveways, walkways, and other outdoor surfaces where conditions allow.
- Consider using a potable roof, one that does not leach asphalt, lead, or other contaminants.
- Install a green roof where appropriate.

14.11 Minimize the use of irrigation water, pesticides, and fertilizer.

- Incorporate native and climate-appropriate landscaping that will thrive with minimal supplemental irrigation and in the specific environmental conditions of the site without the need for chemical fertilizers and pesticides.
- Where irrigation is necessary, use water-efficient systems and weather-based or “smart” controllers that customize irrigation schedules to actual site conditions.
- Incorporate mulch into landscaped areas to increase moisture retention and reduce the need for irrigation.
- Minimize or eliminate lawns, which by their nature are water- and chemical-fertilizer-intensive.

Air Quality

Laguna Beach enjoys relatively good air quality due in large part to its coastal location, physical setting and lack of large sources of pollution. Even with residential development, it is important to consider impacts on local air quality.

Volatile organic compounds (VOCs) and other hazardous chemicals are contained in many construction materials and furnishings, posing a risk to the general population, especially children. Today a number of low- and no-VOC building materials are available, including less polluting paints, adhesives, solvents, cleaning agents, caulks, wood products, carpets and sealants. Using these low-VOC materials for new construction and remodeling projects can significantly reduce the emission of smog-forming compounds. New homes and commercial building generally have VOC concentrations that are two to ten times higher than comparable older structures. These elevated levels have been linked to eye and respiration irritation, headaches, fatigue, and other symptoms associated with “sick building” syndrome. Cleaner indoor air quality as well as reduced smog-forming chemical emissions can be realized by simply using low-VOC building materials.

Design Objective: New fireplaces and outdoor fire pits should be gas-burning rather than wood-burning, and consideration should be given to reducing the air-quality impacts of existing ones.

14.12 Make all new fireplaces gas-burning rather than wood-burning.

14.13 Use EPA-approved fireplace insert retrofits for existing wood-burning fireplaces.

14.14 Consider converting existing wood-burning fireplaces to gas.

14.15 Consult the Community Development or Fire Departments for current regulations pertaining to outdoor fire-pits/fire places especially if located within a fuel-modification designated area.

Design Objective: Investigate and utilize building materials with low-level volatile organic compounds in the design of the structure and decorating choices.

14.16 Select building materials containing low-levels of volatile organic compounds (VOCs).

Chapter 15

Swimming Pools, Spas and Water Features

“Swimming pools, spas and water features shall be located, designed and constructed where: (a) Geology conditions allow; (b) Noise produced by circulatory mechanical pumps and equipment is mitigated; and (c) Any associated fencing or other site improvements are compatible with neighboring properties.” -LBMC §25.05.040(H)

Outdoor water structures should be made compatible with the site, building, and neighborhood context while meeting functional requirements. Privacy, noise from swimming activity, noise from water movement, noise from equipment and visual access to equipment are issues that must be addressed by choosing appropriate locations for elements and creating appropriate buffers.

Design Objective: Design of outdoor structures that include water and water-related activities should minimize visual and noise impacts to neighbors and the surrounding neighborhood.

15.1 Design pools and spas to relate closely to the topography of the site.

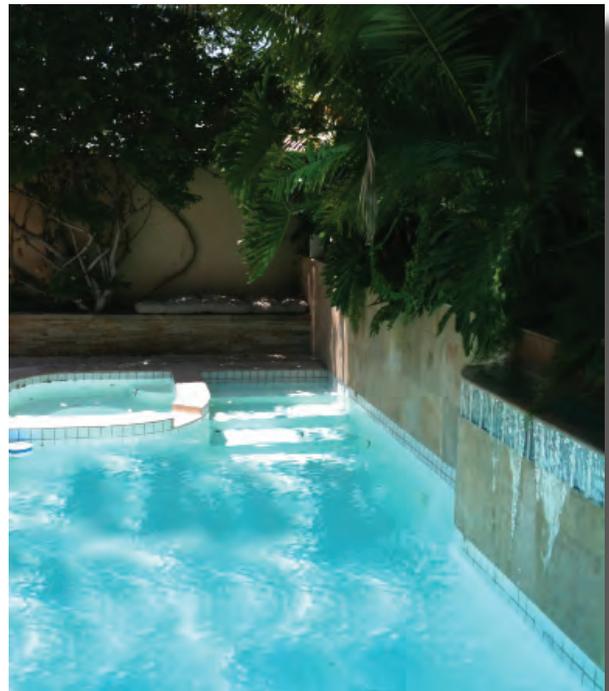
- Consider geotechnical and grading issues early in the design process.
- Design pool structures and associated walls to appear as extensions of the architecture and/or site topography.
- Consider articulation (Chapter 4) and the environmental context (Chapter 6) in the design of terracing and retaining walls.

15.2 Minimize acoustic impacts of water features on other properties.

- Locate mechanical equipment to minimize impacts on neighbors.
- Visually buffer equipment with screens, walls or plant material.
- Use equipment with low-noise operating specifications and/or provide acoustical enclosures.
- Consider using programmable controllers that allow pumps and water features to be turned off overnight.

15.3 Screen pools, spas and water features from adjacent properties.

- Locate pools, spas and water features to minimize use-related impacts on neighbors.
- Increase setbacks and screening for pools with raised bond beams (above-ground foundation).
- Use fences, walls and plant materials that are consistent with the building and landscape design.



This pool and spa area is screened with walls and landscaping.

Chapter 16

View Equity

“The development, including its landscaping, shall be designed to protect existing views from neighboring properties without denying the subject property the reasonable opportunity to develop as described and illustrated in the city’s ‘design guidelines.’ The ‘design guidelines’ are intended to balance preservation of views with the right to develop property.” -LBMC §25.05.040(H).

Enjoying views is a well-established tradition in Laguna Beach. It also is a topic of considerable discussion and debate and is a key consideration in the design review process. Many homes enjoy coastal views. Many homes also enjoy the serene views of the surrounding hillsides and canyons. Residents cherish their views and want to protect them from encroaching development.

The concept of view equity is an approach to dealing fairly and equally with all concerned. The intent of design review with regard to views is to “balance preservation of views with the right to develop property.” It is recognized that each property is a part of the view dynamic. A property may enjoy a specific view today, but that experience may change as surrounding properties are developed. A balance of interests should be achieved in which all those who enjoy the view (new or existing) retain some access to it.

Each property owner may seek to maximize view opportunities, but these opportunities must be balanced with the rights of others already in the neighborhood and of those yet to come. Development should be designed to anticipate the potential for development on nearby properties. Development may have visual impacts well beyond the property boundaries, and these will be fully assessed during design review. During the initial design process, applicants should consider the proposed project from a variety of off-site perspectives that honor the public and private views.



This home was built to step down with the topography of the hillside and preserves ocean and Catalina Island views.

Types of Views

There are many types of valued views, and some are considered more important than others in terms of the places from which they are experienced. The quality of a view is more important than its “quantity.” A sole view of coastal white water from a room’s small window can be just as important as a panoramic view from a large living room window or outdoor deck.

Private views are the most guarded. These views from within a residence and/or an outdoor space may range from a panoramic vista of the coastline to a small canyon view. Private views are very specific and personal in nature and can be evaluated only on a case-by-case basis.

Public views are enjoyed by visitors and residents alike from public places throughout the City—a City park, a public street or a trail. At upper elevations, view corridors between structures may visually connect the street with the ocean below or the other side of a canyon.

View Equity

View equity means achievement of a fair, reasonable and balanced accommodation of views and competing obstructions such as structures, trees and/or vegetation, privacy and the use and enjoyment of property. Development, including its landscaping, shall be designed to maximize views from and sunlight to neighboring properties without denying the subject property the reasonable opportunity to develop as described and illustrated in the City’s design guidelines.

In evaluating view equity, the following unranked criteria shall be considered:

- (1) The vantage point(s) from which the view is obtained or received;
- (2) The extent of the view obstruction;
- (3) The quality of the view, including the existence of landmarks or other unique view features, and/or the extent to which these views are blocked by the proposed design;
- (4) The extent to which the view and/or sunlight access is diminished by factors other than the proposed design;
- (5) The extent to which the proposed design provides:
 - (a) Screening or privacy,
 - (b) Energy conservation and/or climate control,
 - (c) Aesthetics,
 - (d) Community/neighborhood quality, value or significance, and
 - (e) Blending, buffering or reduction in the scale and mass of architecture.

Design Considerations

The position of a building, the location of parking and service areas, and the design of outdoor patios and balconies can have substantial effects on views. Landscape design components, including plant materials, gazebos and other outdoor structures, can likewise have impacts.

Front Yards

Generally, multilevel buildings not only create mass but have the potential to create view issues. When a building is two or more levels at the street, it will more than likely block views. Therefore, it is ideal to create a low profile at the street front when potential views are in play.

Side Yards

Maintaining a view corridor through the side yards between structures may provide an amenity from the public way.

Rear Yards

Patios, decks and balconies can provide prime view opportunities. Locating these areas so that they have minimal impact on adjacent properties is important. Designing them to be integrated into the building form helps reduce their perceived mass and potential view obstruction. Materials selection can also impact views. Using railings that are transparent can permit views through the structure. However, highly reflective materials can contribute to glare that may diminish a view experience.

From Inside the Building

Window design and placement are important to consider. Although having a large window looking onto an important vista is often desirable, a window oriented toward a neighboring property can potentially impact privacy. Orienting windows away from active areas of neighboring properties and making them smaller may be appropriate.

Design Objective: The design of a building should contribute to view equity in the neighborhood.

15.1 Locate and design new buildings or site development to facilitate view equity, anticipating future views from neighboring potential development and to vacant or undeveloped land.

15.2 Avoid blocking neighbors' primary views.

- Locate major building masses and outdoor space to maintain primary views through and across the site from other properties.

15.3 Organize buildings to maximize views.

- Follow hillside topography or step a building down on a site with less topography to allow for view opportunities.
- Avoid cutting into the horizon line of a neighbor's view whenever possible.

15.4 Minimize mass to maintain neighborhood views.

- Create low-profile structures.
- Use transparent materials when feasible.
- Use a compact building footprint to maintain views above and along the sides of a structure.

15.5 Design landscaping to maintain views.

- Avoid tall trees that block views.
- Use landscaping to "frame" a view.

15.6 Maintain view corridors when feasible.

- Consider opportunities for public views.
- Locate a building to retain view opportunities through side yards.

15.7 Design balconies and decks to balance view interests.

- Position decks or balconies to minimize view impacts on neighbors while maximizing privacy.
- Use materials that will enhance views.

Section C

The Entitlement Process

These design guidelines are intended to bridge the gap between the development standards in the Municipal Code and the discretionary process of design review. Different types of development call for different types of review. This section details the various development paths and their governing documents.



The Community Development Department is located at City Hall, at 505 Forest Avenue, Laguna Beach, California 92651.

Phone: 949-497-0713, Lagunabeachcity.net

Chapter 17

Governing Documents and Resources

The City's regulations are found in multiple documents and resources. In addition to the General Plan, the Specific Plans, and the Local Coastal Program (see Chapter 7), the following documents contain information that is essential for designing a residential project.

Laguna Beach Municipal Code

The Laguna Beach Municipal Code is the governing document of the City. The Zoning Ordinance (Title 25) implements goals and policies of the General Plan. It defines terms, identifies specific development standards for the City's various zoning districts, details procedural requirements and identifies special development standards.

Laguna Beach GIS Database

The City's GIS (geographic information system) Database is a valuable resource that can be accessed on the City's web site. The vast array of information available in the database includes:

- Capital Improvement Program
- City Maintained Trees
- City-Owned Property Inventory
- Environmental Constraints
- FEMA 100-Year Flood Plain
- General Plan and Local Coastal Plan
- Geotechnical Reports
- Noise Contours
- Parcels
- Safety Districts
- Storm Drain Systems
- Trail Network
- Wastewater System
- Zoning

Landscape and Scenic Highways Resource Document

This detailed resource extends and updates the earlier General Plan Scenic Highways Element. It describes the City's landscape and scenic profile, discusses issues and policies related to landscape and provides an implementation program. The report also includes extensive appendices which cover Pruning and Maintenance Guidelines, Recommended Plants for Specific Needs, Heritage Tree and Candidate Heritage Tree Lists, Scenic Highway Landscapes, Urban Design Details (street furniture) and Specific Neighborhood Landscapes. It is important to reference this document when planning a landscape design.

California Building Standards Code *

The California Buildings Standards Code is a compilation of three types of building standards:

- Building standards that have been adopted by state agencies without change from building standards contained in national model codes;
- Building standards that have been adopted and adapted from the national model code standards to meet California conditions; and
- Building standards, authorized by the California legislature, that constitute extensive additions not covered by the model codes that have been adopted to address particular California concerns.

* Reference the California Building Standards Code website at: <http://www.bsc.ca.gov>

State Historical Building Code

The California Office of Historic Preservation* oversees building regulations for the rehabilitation, preservation, restoration or relocation of buildings or structures designated as historic buildings. The code provides flexibility so historic structures can be updated for modern needs and requirements, including disability access and safety issues pertaining to fire, seismic activity or other hazards.

* Reference the California Office of Historic Preservation website at:
http://ohp.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=21410

The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties *

The National Park Service has established guidelines for Preserving, Rehabilitating, Restoring and Reconstructing Historic Buildings. These four historic treatment approaches are intended to guide preservation practices in order to protect national historic resources. The standards and guidelines are organized in a manner that promotes a consistent approach in the selected preservation technique.

*Reference the National Park Service website at:
<http://www.nps.gov/history/hps/tps/standguide/index.htm>

California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) *

The California Environmental Quality act is the foundation of environmental protection in California. CEQA seeks to identify and protect physical, biological and cultural resources associated with development. Every project is subject to CEQA unless identified as exempt. If a project is not exempt, typically additional studies will be required to help identify and minimize the projects impacts.

* Reference the California Natural Resource Agency website at:
<http://ceres.ca.gov/ceqa/>

Chapter 18

Administration

The approval authorities for the City's entitlement process include the City Council, the Planning Commission, the Design Review Board and the Heritage Committee.

The City Council is an elected body consisting of five local representatives. Each member serves a term of four years and may be reelected without limitation. The City Council appoints the members of the Planning Commission, the Design Review Board and the Heritage Committee. Members of the City Council, Planning Commission and Design Review Board typically represent a cross section of community interests. Heritage Committee members share a specific interest in the preservation of historic structures.

All of these groups meet regularly every month. City Council, Planning Commission, and Design Review Board meetings are televised on the local Laguna Beach channel for the benefit of the public and accessible for viewing simultaneously or later on the City's web site.

The Design Review Board consists of five members. Each Board member serves a two-year term. The Design Review Board also functions as the Board of Adjustment for the purpose of considering variance requests. It is the responsibility of the Board of Adjustment/Design Review Board to consider development applications, requests for coastal development permits, and variance applications.

The Heritage Committee is composed of nine members serving two-year terms. This Committee serves as an advisory body to the City Council and the design review authority on matters pertaining to historic preservation in the City. Its scope of review includes evaluation of alterations to historic structures, requests to place structures on the Historic Register and recommendations of properties for Mills Act contracts.

The Planning Commission is made up of five members who serve two-year terms. A commissioner's responsibility is to review ordinance revisions, subdivisions, lot line adjustments, conditional use permits, coastal development permits and temporary use permits. The commission also oversees design review for projects within the boundaries of the Downtown Specific Plan area and for commercial projects that require a Conditional Use Permit.

The Design Review Process

The Design Review Board takes a discretionary approach in the framework of the applicable policies, regulations and guidelines. In each case, board members familiarize themselves with the application and the subject property prior to the meeting through site visits and review the plans submitted. Neighbors, applicants and their agents (architects or contractors) with concerns about a proposed project may contact the board to request a site visit to their property to consider their individual concerns. Applicants, their agents, interested neighbors and all concerned citizens are given an opportunity to address the board on the proposed project during the scheduled public hearing.

The Laguna Beach Municipal Code identifies development standards that represent the maximum allowable building potential for land within specific zones; however, these standards may not represent what is acceptable or approvable on a particular project site, depending on local conditions. It is the responsibility of the Design Review Board to assess specific issues related to a project, including but not limited to neighborhood conditions, view and privacy impacts, in terms of the established design review criteria. The board may, at its discretion, impose additional development restrictions as necessary and appropriate.

Attending one or more Design Review Board meetings to familiarize oneself with the board and its procedures may be beneficial when preparing a project for submittal.

The first step in the design review process is the development of the framework for a project. The unique character and diverse geography of the city requires an applicant to investigate all applicable policies, ordinances and guidelines that will affect a project prior to putting pencil to paper.



The Laguna Beach City Council Chambers are located at 505 Forest Avenue, adjacent to City Hall.

Many areas of the City have specific design issues, opportunities and constraints that are unique to particular neighborhoods. Some areas of the City have organized neighborhood associations. A list of neighborhood associations is available through the City Clerk's office.

It may also be beneficial to seek professional guidance in the early stages of project development.

Pre-Application Site Development Meeting

Depending upon the proposed scope of work (Design Review Process Flowchart), development projects may be subject to either a standard or a staff-assisted review. Projects requiring a staff-assisted review must submit an application and the applicable fee for a preapplication site development meeting. The applicant will then be contacted to schedule the required meeting. Staff will meet with the designer and property owner at the site to provide them with a preliminary evaluation of the project's development potential in relation to the City's regulations, guidelines and community and neighborhood standards as generally applied by the Design Review Board.

The intent of this meeting is to assist applicants in formulating projects that are more likely to meet with the Design Review Board's approval before substantial time and resources have been expended.

Zoning Plan Check

Following the meeting, the applicable filing fees, required drawings and additional information can be submitted, as in standard review, for zoning plan check. The project is then reviewed by staff for compliance with City ordinances, policies and guidelines. If additional clarification or information is required to complete the review, staff will prepare comments and corrections for the applicant. Staff will also indicate what discretionary approvals are required. Upon resubmittal, staff will review the revised information and determine if the project is ready to be scheduled for design review.

The Design Review Hearing

Projects that are exempt from design review may be cleared to the Building Division for structural plan check. Following clearance from zoning and structural plan checks and submittal of all required fees and plans, studies and reports, the applicant may obtain the necessary building permits through the Building Division.

Projects that require design review may be subject to either administrative design review or design review. Minor projects may be reviewed through the administrative design review process, which is conducted weekly by staff. Other projects are subject to a public hearing before the Design Review Board, which is conducted Thursday evenings in the Council Chambers.

During the Design Review Board hearing, an application may be continued, tabled, approved or denied.

Projects may be continued at the request of the applicant or at the direction of the Design Review Board. An applicant may request a limited number of continuances without the project being heard, and these requests must be approved by the board. Furthermore, projects heard by the board may be continued in order for the applicant to address specific board-member comments or neighbor concerns. In most cases, continued projects are not required to be renoticed. Some projects may be required to be restaked.

The applicant is strongly encouraged to follow the direction of the Board. Projects are regularly held to a maximum of two hearings. If the applicant has followed the direction of the board and an additional hearing is in the best interest of the community, one additional hearing may be granted.

A project requiring significant changes may be tabled for a maximum of six months in order to allow the applicant time to address the board's comments prior to the next hearing. A tabled project is required to be renoticed.

Any decision of the Design Review Board may be appealed to the City Council within 14 days.

Following the required appeal period, a project that has been approved by the Design Review Board may be submitted to the Building Division for structural plan check. If the project was approved with specific design review conditions, those conditions must be incorporated into the construction plans.

All Design Review Board approvals have an expiration date. A copy of the City's Construction Work Commencement Policy may be obtained from the Community Development Division. Information regarding effective and expiration dates may be found in Municipal Code §25.05.

Appealing a Decision

Decisions of the Board of Adjustment/Design Review Board may be appealed, subject to the provisions of Municipal Code §25.05.070.

Coastal Development Permits

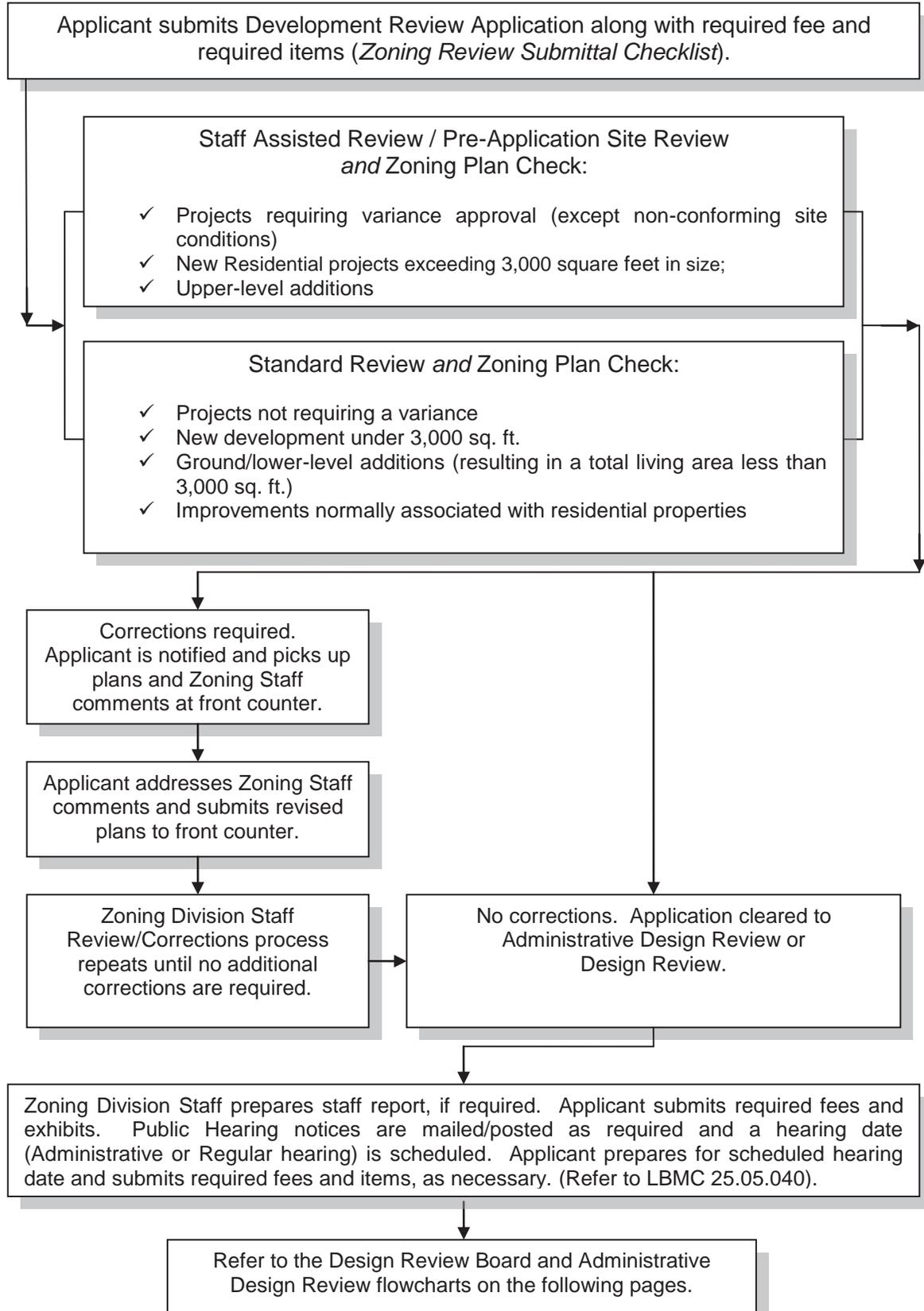
With the exception of certain gated communities within the City, the California Coastal Commission has granted the City the authority to review and approve a coastal development permit (CDP). When a coastal development permit is required for a project located in a noncertified area, the applicant must apply directly to the California Coastal Commission for permit approval, following Design Review Board approval and the associated appeal period. A building permit will not be issued until Coastal Commission approval has been secured.

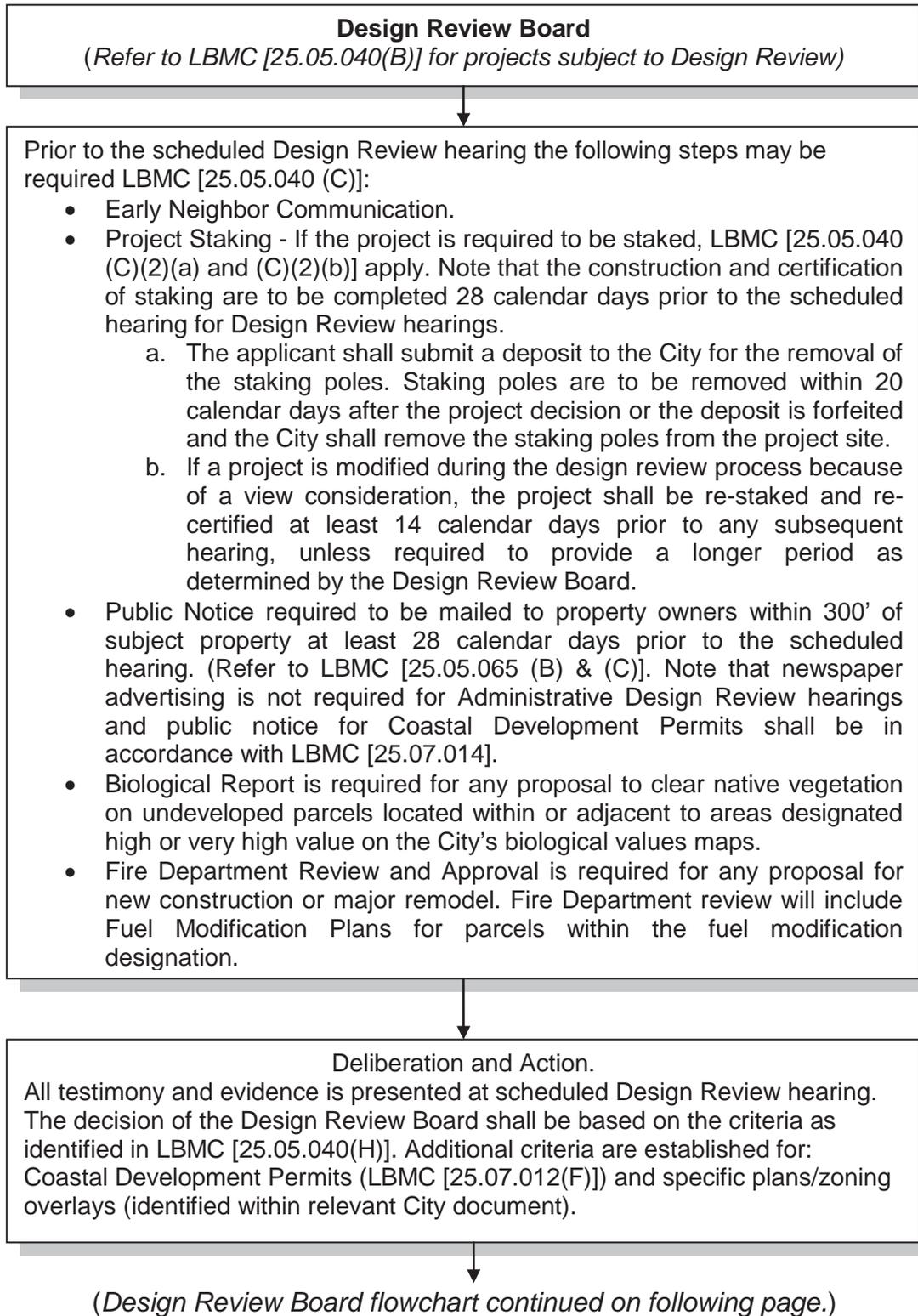
A CDP is required for all new development and for certain additions, depending on the scope of work and project site location. The design review authority is required to make findings to grant a CDP. These findings include:

1. The project is in conformity with all the applicable provisions of the general plan, including the certified local coastal program and any applicable specific plans.
2. Any development located between the sea and the first public road paralleling the sea is in conformity with the certified local coastal program and with the public access and public recreation policies of Chapter 3 of the Coastal Act.
3. The proposed development will not have any significant adverse impacts on the environment within the meaning of the California Environmental Quality Act

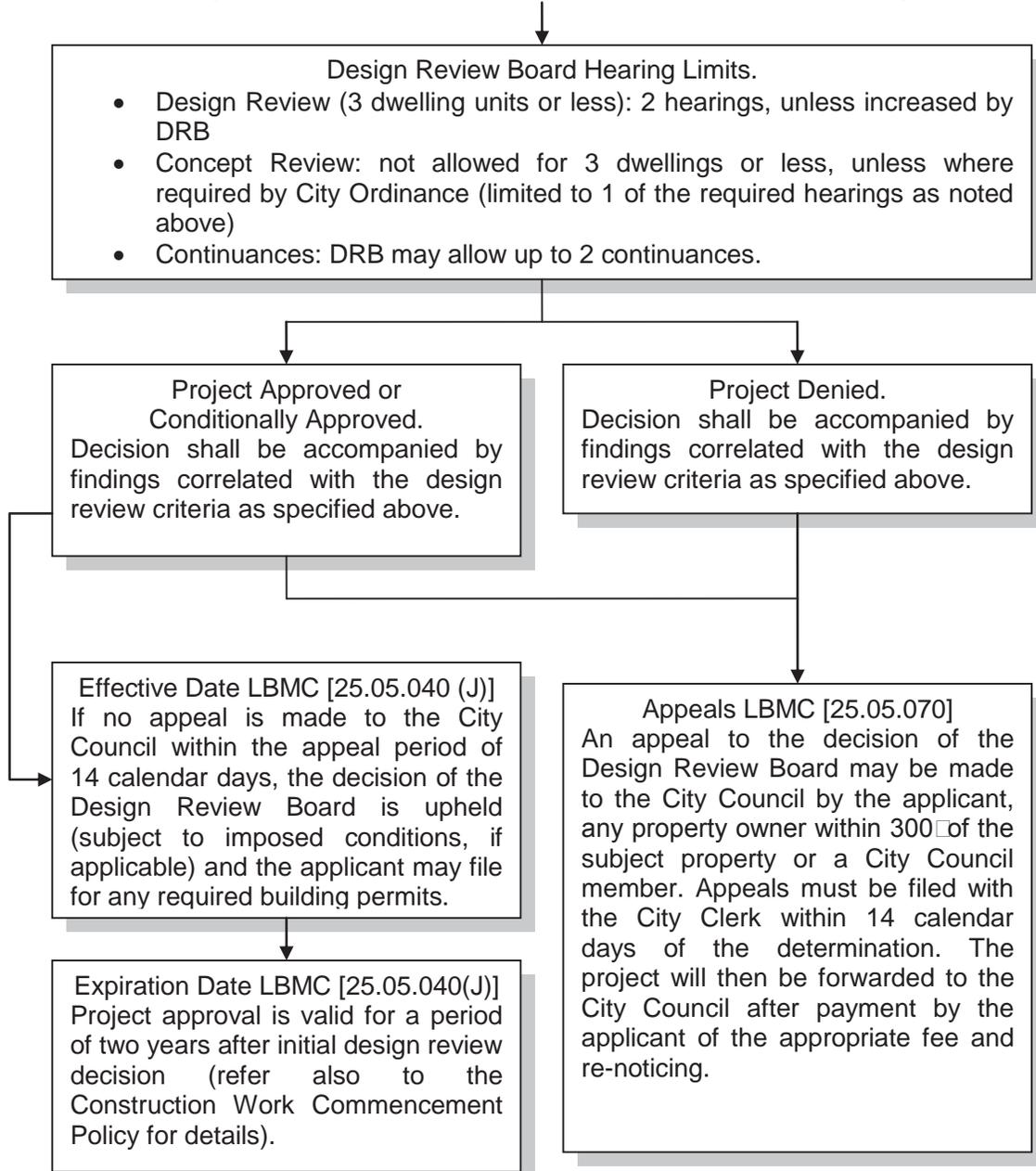
Appeal procedures for projects subject to a Coastal Development Permit are set forth in the Laguna Beach Municipal Code §25.07.016.

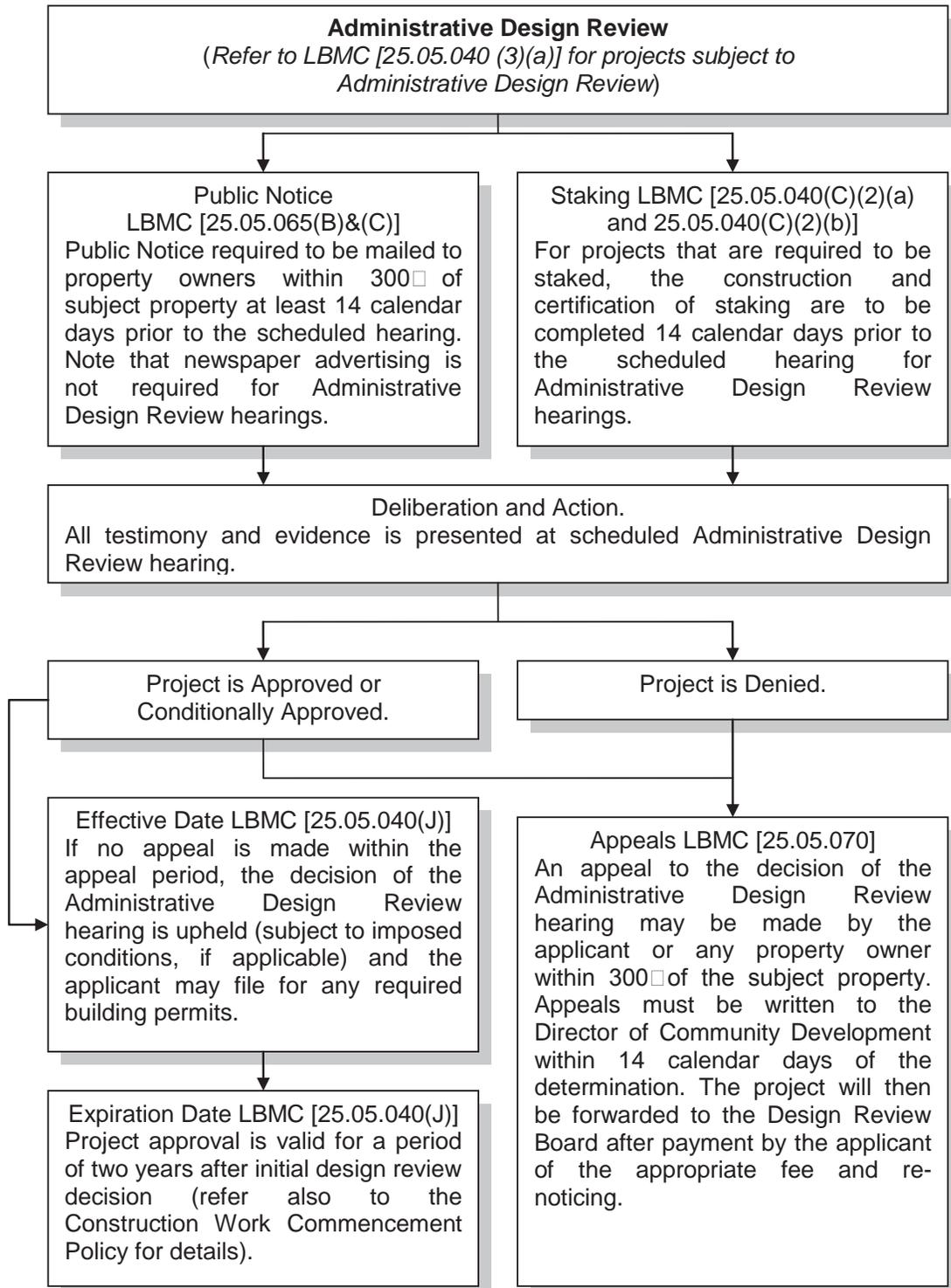
Design Review Process Flowchart





(Design Review Board flowchart continued from previous page)





Variations

The Design Review Board also acts as the Board of Adjustment and as such is responsible for the review and approval of certain requests for a variance from the zoning regulations. (Municipal Code §25.05.020). A variance may be granted if the board can make the required legal findings.

Authority for Variations

Variations are discretionary entitlements that permit a property to depart from ordinarily applicable development standards. California Government Code §65906 establishes the statutory authority for the granting of variations:

“Variations from the terms of the zoning ordinances shall be granted only when, because of special circumstances, applicable to the property, including size, shape, topography, location of surroundings, the strict application of the zoning ordinance deprives such property of privileges enjoyed by other property in the vicinity and under identical zoning classification.

Any variance granted shall be subject to such conditions as will assure that the adjustment thereby authorized shall not constitute a grant of special privileges inconsistent with the limitations upon other properties in the vicinity and zone in which such property is situated.

A variance shall not be granted for a parcel of property which authorizes a use or activity which is not otherwise expressly authorized by the zone regulation governing the parcel of property. The provisions of this section shall not apply to conditional use permits.”

The courts acknowledge the need or desirability for variations because within a given zone there will be individual tracts or lots having a peculiar shape, unusual topography or other similar unique features that prevent the property from being put to productive use if all development standards are strictly applied. The general purpose of a variance is to put the owner of the atypical property on a par with other property owners whose lots conform to the overall pattern envisioned by the zoning ordinance. A variance is not intended to place the applicant in a better position than that enjoyed by his or her neighbors.

Standards for Variations

The standards for granting a variance contained in California Government Code §65906 are restated in substance in Municipal Code §25.05.025(F). Before a variance may be granted, all of the following findings must be made:

1. There are special circumstances applicable to the property involved, including size, shape, topography, location of surroundings which cause the strict application of the zoning ordinance to deprive such property of privileges enjoyed by other property in the vicinity and under identical zoning classification.
2. Such variance is necessary for the preservation and enjoyment of a substantial property right of the applicant, which right is possessed by other property owners under like conditions in the same vicinity and zone.
3. The granting of the variance will not be detrimental to the public health, safety, convenience and welfare or injurious to property or improvements in the vicinity in which the property is located.
4. The granting of such a variance will not be contrary to the objectives of the zoning ordinance or the general plan.

The fact that another property has been granted a variance does not set a precedent for the granting of a future variance for a different property. Each application must be considered on a case-by-case basis in light of its individual circumstances and merit.

Certain criteria or standards applied by local agencies in justifying a variance have been held improper by the courts. For example, findings that the proposed development has attractive features, would be a benefit to the community, would serve community needs, is highly desirable, would be unprofitable or less profitable absent a variance, would incorporate superior building standards, or would otherwise have practical difficulties are not legally relevant.

Findings for Variances

Decisions on a variance application must be supported by findings of fact in support of the action whether a variance is granted or denied. Findings must be clearly articulated and based on evidence in the administrative record of the proceedings, such as staff reports, testimony, photographs, and documents. Findings are not sufficient if they merely recite the very language of the standards set forth in the local ordinance or state statute.

Appendix Glossary

Abbreviations

ABH	Arch Beach Heights Specific Plan
BMP's	Best Management Practices
BSC	Building Site Coverage
CEQA	California Environmental Quality Act
DCSP	Diamond/Crestview
DSP	Downtown Specific Plan
EIR	Environmental Impact Report (California)
FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Act
LBMC	Laguna Beach Municipal Code
TAB	Three Arch Bay
UBC	Uniform Building Code
WQMP	Water Quality Management Plan

A

Access: The place or way by which vehicles shall have safe, adequate and usable ingress and egress to a property and or use.

Accessory building: A separate building the use of which is subordinate and incidental to that of the main building, structure or use on the same lot. (An accessory building may not include a bathroom or kitchen.)

Acre: A unit of land area equal to 43,560 square feet. There are 640 acres to a square mile.

Adverse impact: A negative consequence for the physical, social or economic environment resulting from an action or project.

Affordable housing: Housing for sale or rent that is made available at below-market prices.

Alley: A public or private vehicular way that affords a secondary means of access to abutting property and that is not more than twenty feet nor less than ten feet in width.

Alteration: A change made to a structure, including the construction of additions. Normal maintenance and repairs are not considered alterations.

Ambiance: The atmosphere or tone of a setting, as determined largely by style of architecture, amount of activity, density of use and related factors. Frequently, ambiance is the quality of a space, and a principal concern is preservation of those factors responsible for this unique quality.

Ambient: Completely enveloping or encompassing (used to describe measurements of existing conditions with respect to traffic, noise, air and other environments.)

Annex: To incorporate a land area into an existing district or municipality, with a resulting change in the boundaries of the annexing jurisdiction.

Arcade: An arched roof or covered passageway.

Arch: A curved opening constructed without the use of a supporting horizontal beam.

Architectural features: Projections or appurtenances on buildings which provide visual variation and/or relief but do not serve as living or working space.

Articulation: Clear and distinct separation between design elements, achieved through various techniques that break up plain, monotonous areas and create patterns of movement, light and shadow.

Artists' working and living unit: A physically connected dwelling unit and working space, occupied and utilized by a single housekeeping unit that has been structurally modified or designed to accommodate joint working activity and residential occupancy and which includes the following: (a) working space reserved for and regularly used by one or more occupants of the unit; (b) complete kitchen space and sanitary facilities.

Atrium: A courtyard completely surrounded by a building that is either open to the sky or covered with a roof, often made of glass

B

Backfill: (1) Material such as earth and broken stone used to fill the part of an excavation between the outside foundation wall of a structure and a desired grade level or to cover a trench in order to restore the grade over it. (2) The process of refilling an excavation to restore it to a desired level.

Balcony or deck: A platform extending out from the wall of a building, usually guarded on the free sides by a protective and ornamental balustrade or railing. Balconies can be supported by columns, brackets or cantilevered.

Basement: The lowest story of a building located completely below the natural or finished grade, whichever is more restrictive. If any portion of the lowest level daylights, the structure is not considered a basement (see "Daylight Basement").

Bay window: A multipane window with at least three panels set at different angles to create a projection from the face of a building.

Beam: A horizontal, transverse timber in the roof of a building or between the floor of a building. Beams function as main horizontal supporting timbers for the floor joists.

Bearing wall: A wall that supports vertical loads as well as its own weight.

Bedrock: The solid rock that underlies the soil or other unconsolidated materials such as loose rock or sand.

Below-market rate: (1) A housing unit specifically priced to be sold or rented to low- or moderate-income households for an amount less than the fair-market value of the unit; (2) The financing of housing at less than prevailing interest rates.

Belt course: A horizontal layer of stone, brick, pre-cast concrete or other decorative material flush with or projecting from a wall used to mark a floor line or to visually reduce the perceived height of a building.

Bench mark: A permanent marker that serves as a reference point for an elevation, usually elevation above sea level. A bench mark may be carved into stone or metal and is sometimes designated on a survey with the initials TBM, PBM or BM.

Berm: (1) A shelf, ledge or bench that is approximately horizontal and is cut into an embankment partway up a slope to help to stabilize it, collect any material or debris that may fall from a higher point up the slope and control drainage. (2) An earth mound designed to divert and control surface runoff or to serve as a visual buffer.

Best Management Practices (BMP's): Practices used to reduce water pollution derived from site runoff. BMPs may include structural controls, nonstructural controls and procedures for the operation and maintenance of land uses.

Biotic community: A group of living organisms characterized by a distinctive combination of animal and plant species in a particular habitat.

Blue line stream: A watercourse shown as a blue line on a U.S. Geological Service topographic quadrangle map.

Board-and-batten: A type of exterior siding or interior paneling that has alternating wide boards and narrow wooden strips, called battens.

Bollard: A vertical, freestanding short post used as a barrier to vehicles.

Bosque: A space defined by a geometric grouping of trees.

Bowstring: A roof structural system composed of parallel trusses that resembles a bow with the string parallel to and nearest to the ground.

Bracket: A support element designed to bear a projected weight, often used more decoratively than functionally.

Breezeway: A roofed passageway, open on at least two sides, containing a roof that is structurally integrated with the structure to which it is attached. A breezeway is considered as part of the building to which it is attached.

Buffer zone: An area of land separating two distinct land uses that acts to soften or mitigate the effects of one land use on another.

Buildable area: The area of any given lot that is not part of a required front, side or rear yard, as set forth in the property development standards of the applicable zone for said lot.

Building envelope: The three-dimensional area that defines the maximum limits within which a structure may be built on the lot.

Building site coverage (also BSC or Lot Coverage): The proportion of the surface of a lot that is covered by buildings or permitted to be covered by buildings. Coverage requirements are intended to preserve open space, limit the intensity of development and limit the amount of impermeable surface that may be created.

Built environment: All elements of the man-made environment that, by definition, involve some application of human effort and technology toward their design, construction or manufacture.

C

California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA): A state law requiring state and local agencies to regulate activities with consideration for environmental protection.

Candidate heritage tree: Trees identified that could qualify to be designated as heritage trees but do not enjoy the same protection as those designated as heritage trees under the city ordinance.

Canopy: A projection over a door, window, niche, or other architectural feature.

Cantilever: A horizontal projection from a structure, such as a step, balcony, beam or other architectural element that projects beyond a supporting element without support from directly below.

Capital improvements program: A program established by a City and approved by the City Council that schedules public improvements to fit the projected fiscal capability of the local jurisdiction. The program generally is reviewed annually for conformance to and consistency with the General Plan.

Carport: A permanent roofed structure with not more than two enclosed sides, used for automobile shelter.

Carrying capacity: (1) The level of land use, human activity or development for a specific area that can be accommodated permanently without an irreversible change in the quality of air, water, land or plant and animal habitats. (2) The upper limits of development beyond which the quality of human life, health, welfare, safety or community character within an area will be impaired. (3) The maximum level of development allowable under current zoning.

Caseament window: A window hung vertically, hinged one side, so that it swings inward or outward.

Clapboard: Overlapping horizontal boards that cover the timber-framed wall of a structure.

Clerestory: An upward extension of a single-story space used to provide windows for lighting and ventilation.

Clerestory window: A window within a high wall along the very top. The clerestory wall usually rises above adjoining roofs.

Colonnade: A row of columns supporting a roof structure.

Concept review: Review by the decision-making authority for the purpose of providing the applicant with the authority's preliminary reaction to the general design concept of a proposed project. Such review does not include a formal decision or guarantee of future approval of the application by the decision-making authority.

Conditional use: A land use that is not permitted by right but which may be appropriate within a given zoning district under certain circumstances. The use may occur only upon approval of a Conditional Use Permit, pursuant to the procedures set forth in the Laguna Beach Municipal Code.

Condominium: A structure of two or more units where the interior spaces of which are individually owned while the balance of the property (both land and building) is owned in common by the owners of the individual units.

Conforming structure: A structure designed and built for a use permitted in the zone and complying with the property development standards of the zone in which such structure is located.

Contemporary interpretation: An architectural and urban design approach that reflects the historic scale building mass, building form and architectural features of an earlier stage but updates its style through the use of modern building materials.

Contour lines: Lines that appear on topographic maps linking points of an equal elevation above sea level and providing a clear picture of the slope configuration.

Cool roof: A roof designed to reduce building cooling loads and the urban heat-island effect.

Corbel: A projecting bracket of stone or brick that supports a cornice or arch.

Corner cutback: The provisions for and maintenance of adequate space for safe visibility to protect vehicular and pedestrian traffic at all intersections of streets, alleys and/or private driveways, as provided in the zones. Such space will be kept free of buildings, structures and landscaping which would constitute a visual obstruction.

Corner lot: See “Lot, corner”

Cornice: A decorative projection at the top of a wall, arch or building.

Courtyard: An outdoor space enclosed on two or more sides by a building.

Covenants, Conditions and Restrictions (CC&Rs): Limitations placed on a property and its use, usually as conditions of holding title or lease.

Cross section: Usually referred to as a “section.” A representation of a vertical slice through a structure taken at a point that illustrates as many elements of interior construction, engineering or architectural treatment as possible and clarifies design, construction details and slope profile.

Culvert: A drain constructed from stone or brick in the form of a tunnel that provides a channel for carrying water. (See “Swale” for an alternative environmentally-sensitive design solution.)

Cumulative impact: The total environmental impact resulting from the accumulated impacts of individual projects or programs over time. (Typically assessed during a CEQA environmental review.)

Cupola: A small decorative structure, sometimes rectangular but usually round in plan, projecting from the ridge of a roof and opened by windows or columns.

D

Datum: A fixed element on or immediately adjacent to a project site undisturbed by development used as a reference, as in surveying, mapping, or geology. (Generally a manhole cover, an existing wall or utility meter, or a surveyors spike.) An assumed elevational height is assigned to the datum point (i.e., elevation 100.0) and the heights of buildings, walls, roofs, etc. are calculated relative to this point.

Daylight basement: A full or partial basement that is partially above ground, allowing larger windows exposed to daylight, or a walk-out basement that has a walkway or lower patio.

Deciduous tree: A tree that drops its leaves each year at a particular time.

Dedication: The transfer of an interest in property by an owner or developer of private land for public use and the acceptance of land for such use by the governmental agency having jurisdiction over the public function for which it will be used. Dedications for roads, parks, open space, school sites, or other public uses are often made conditions for approval of a development by a City or County.

Defensible space: A minimum area of noncombustible surfaces that separates urban and wildland areas.

Density, residential: The number of permanent residential dwelling units per acre of land.

Density bonus: The allocation of development rights that allows a parcel to accommodate additional square footage or additional residential units beyond the maximum for which the parcel is zoned in return for the long-term restriction of certain percentages of units for very-low or low-income households or senior-citizen households. (See the Housing Element and the California Density Bonus law for additional information).

Design articulation: Accentuation of the visible aspects of the different parts of a building to minimize the perceived mass of a building.

Design integrity: Consistency with the chosen architectural style.

Design review criteria: Standards upon which the approval or denial of a design review application is based.

Design review: The comprehensive evaluation of proposed projects and their impact on neighboring properties and the community as a whole.

Development: The physical extension and/or construction of land uses, including but not limited to structures, landscape, hardscape and grading.

Divided light window: A window glazed with small panes of glass separated by glazing bars arranged in a decorative pattern often dictated by the architectural style.

Dome: A hemispherical roof or ceiling that adds light, color and drama to the structure.

Dormer: A vertically framed window that protrudes from a sloping roof and has a roof of its own, creating usable space in the roof of a building by adding headroom and enabling addition of windows.

Double-hung window: A window with an upper and a lower sash arranged so that each slides vertically past the other.

E

Easement: An interest in land created by grant, agreement, or other lawful means that confers a right upon owners, including a public agency, to some profit, benefit, dominion or lawful use of or over the estate of another; it is distinct from ownership of the soil. Easements are generally granted for ingress/egress (access) or utility purposes.

Eave: The structure under a sloping roof that overhangs a wall.

Egress window: A window compliant with Building Code standards allowing occupants to escape it in an emergency.

Elevation: (1) A scale drawing of the view of one side of a structure that indicates location and dimensions of doors and windows, floor to floor heights, natural grade and the final grade level of the ground adjacent to the building in relation to the floor level. Elevations also show the types of wall finishes and architectural details. The outside of the building below the grade line may also be shown. A set of working drawings will include a separate elevation for each side of the structure. An elevation may also be used to show the relationship among buildings, as along a street, or the relationship of one site to another along the same plane, as when showing the distance between two separated sites on the same block. (2) The height of a structure relative to a specified datum.

Encroachment: An illegal or unauthorized intrusion upon an adjoining public street, highway or adjoining private property, reducing the size of the invaded property. The encroachment may take the form of a fixture, such as a wall or fence, or a part of the real estate, such as an overhanging roof that extends beyond the property line.

Energy Star: Energy Star is a joint government program created by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the U.S. Department of Energy that certifies products that use less energy, save money and are contribute to protecting the environment.

Environmental context: The natural environmental setting where a property is located. Environment features can include existing heritage trees, rock out-cropping, ridgelines and significant watercourse should be protected.

Evergreen: A plant in which the leaves remain green throughout the year.

Excavation: (1) The process of removing materials, such as soil or rock, from the ground to create a depression. (2) The depression left in the ground after materials have been removed from it.

F

Façade: (1) An exterior front or principal face of a building. (2) Any side of a building that faces a street or other open space or has been given special architectural or design treatment to make it more attractive.

Fascia: A horizontal band covering the joint between the top of a wall and the projecting eaves.

Fenestration: The arrangement, proportions and design of windows and doors in a building.

Fill: (1) In grading, the amount of material that must be added to depressions or low-lying areas to achieve the contours specified in a grading plan. (2) Material that has accumulated or is disposed of at a site and has the effect of raising the ground elevation, or that is deliberately added to a site to improve its suitability for construction.

Findings: The substantial evidence or facts upon which a decision is based.

Finial: A vertical ornament at the top of a gable or tower.

Floodplain: The low and generally flat land areas adjoining a body of water that often floods or has the potential of flooding.

Floor area ratio (FAR): The ratio between the amount of floor area permitted to be constructed on a building lot and the size of the lot.

Floor plan: A horizontal cross section of a building, as seen from above, taken at a height above the floor that enables maximum detail to be illustrated. It will show the location of outside and inside walls and their thicknesses, lengths and construction materials; all door and window openings in the walls; locations of stairs and elevators; the directions in which doors swing; and other data pertaining to built-in features and fixtures. A separate floor plan is drawn for each building level.

Footing: The part of a building foundation (typically underground) that distributes the loads of bearing walls, piers or columns to the soil, rock or piles on which the structure rests and is usually constructed of concrete.

Footprint, building: The outline of a building at all points where it meets the ground.

Foundation: The part of a building, usually below the ground, that transfers and distributes the weight of the building onto the earth.

Frontage: The width of a lot extending along a street.

Fuel modification plan: A plan that identifies zones or strips of land where combustible native or ornamental vegetation is proposed to be partially or totally replaced with drought-tolerant, low-fuel-volume plants to create a defensible space for fire protection and fire fighter access.

Fully shielded: A barrier which does not allow any light dispersion to shine above the horizontal plane from the lowest light emitting point of the light fixture.

Full cut-off: A luminaire that allows no direct light emission above a horizontal plane through the luminaire's lowest light-emitting part.

G

Gable: The triangular part of an exterior wall created by the angle of a pitched roof. The base of the triangle is not completed by any horizontal member as with a pediment.

Gambrel roof: A symmetrical, two-sided roof with a broken slope creating two pitches between eaves and ridges.

General Plan: A compilation of city goals and policies adopted by the City Council and approved by the Office of Planning Research regarding long-term development.

General Plan compliance: Conformity to the polices and regulations set forth in the General Plan.

Glare: Stray or unshielded light that strikes that is reflected off of a surface or emitted from a light source.

Grade: The gradient or rate of incline of the land expressed as a percentage of vertical to horizontal distances.

Grade, finish: The natural or artificial slope of the land as it is to be maintained upon completion of the structure.

Grade, natural: The established slope of the land prior to grading by artificial means. Grades resulting from previous approved grading activities shall be considered to be natural grades.

Grading: The movement and reshaping of earth to create new contours.

Greenhouse: A one-story accessory building devoted to horticulture.

Green roof: A roof surface that is planted with vegetation over a waterproof membrane.

Ground cover: Plant material grown in order to minimize soil erosion from both wind and water and for landscaping purposes.

Groundwater: Water that occupies the spaces in underground geological structures.

H

Habitat, high value: An environmentally sensitive area dominated by indigenous plant communities, which posses good species diversity. A detailed environmental assessment may be required on a site-specific basis for properties, which contain or are adjacent to these habitats.

Habitat, very high value: An environmentally sensitive areas containing habitats of endangered, rare or locally unique native plant species. A detailed environmental assessment may be required on a site-specific basis for properties, which contain or are adjacent to these habitats.

Hedge: Generally dense vegetation so aligned as to form a physical barrier, fence or enclosure.

Heritage tree: A tree or stand of trees that has been placed on the Heritage Tree List by the City Council.

Hip roof: A roof that slopes downwards to the walls on all sides.

Historic structure: A historic building or site that is noteworthy for its significance in local, state or national history or culture, its architecture or design, or its works of art, memorabilia or artifacts.

Historic preservation: Maintenance and repair of existing historic materials and retention of the property as it has evolved over time. The limited and sensitive upgrading of mechanical, electrical, and plumbing systems and other code-required work to make properties functional is appropriate within a preservation project.

Historic Register: Historic structures are identified as historically significant. These properties were voluntarily placed on the register and are eligible to receive incentives for development.

Historic rehabilitation: The act or process of making possible a compatible use for a property through repair, alterations and additions while preserving those portions or features that convey its historical, cultural or architectural value.

Historic restoration: The act or process of accurately depicting the form, features and character of a property as it appeared at a particular period of time by means of the removal of features from other periods in its history and reconstruction of missing features from the restoration period.

Historic reconstruction: The act or process of depicting, by means of new construction, the form, features and detailing of a non surviving site, landscape, building, structure or object for the purpose of replicating its appearance at a specific period of time and in its historic location.

Human scale: The appropriate relationship or scale between human beings and the size of the surrounding buildings. Buildings scaled to human physical capabilities have steps, doorways, railings, work surfaces, seating, shelves, fixtures, walking distances, and other features that fit well to the average person.

I

Impervious surface: A surface through which water cannot penetrate.

Improvements: Permanent additions to real property that are designed to make the property more useful or to increase its value.

Infill development: New construction within an existing developed area.

Infiltration: The process by which soil absorbs water percolating through it. This phenomenon allows soil to function as a reservoir that gradually releases water to aquifers and surface streams.

Infrastructure: Facilities and services needed to sustain industrial, residential and commercial activities such as water/sewer lines, streets and fire stations, etc.

In-lieu fee: A cash payment made instead of complying entirely with the code requirements. Fees are attributed to funds for parking, park land, affordable housing or art in public places.

Irrigation: Water applied to landscaping, additional to the water provided by rainfall.

J

Jalousie window: A louvered window made up of parallel slats that open and close like a Venetian blind, using a crank or lever.

Joist: One of a series of parallel beams oriented horizontally that support the floorboards of a floor or roof above.

K

Kalvin: A unit increment of temperature.

L

Landmark: (1) A building, site, object, structure or significant landscape feature having historical, architectural, social or cultural significance. (2) A visually prominent or outstanding structure or natural feature that functions as a point of orientation of identification.

Landscape architecture: The art and science of reshaping land for practical or aesthetic purposes, including the redesign of a site to accommodate specific land uses, buildings and structures and the selection and placement of landscape features such as trees, other plantings and ponds.

Landscaping: Plants, trees and shrubs planted on a property.

Landslide: Downslope movement of soil and/or rock, which typically occurring during an earthquake or after heavy rainfall.

Lighting and glare: The amount of light that is emitted or reflected from a property.

Light trespass: Light that shines beyond the property of where it is installed.

Liquefaction: The transformation of loose, wet soil from a solid to a liquid state, often as a result of ground shaking during an earthquake.

Lintel: The horizontal member above a door or window that supports the wall above the opening.

Loggia: An entertainment or recreation room that is open on one or more sides, sometimes pillared.

Lot: An area of land under one ownership that has been lawfully created by means of a subdivision map, parcel map, record of survey or metes-and-bounds description. Such a lot may or may not be a building site.

Lot coverage: See Building Site Coverage.

Low embodied energy: The total energy consumed by a product during its life or complete life cycle. It includes all the energy used during mining or milling the raw materials, manufacturing the raw materials into a product, transporting the product, and installing the product, as well as finally removing or recycling the product.

Lumen: A measurement of light energy generated by a light source.

Luminare: The entire light fixture including the lamp, bulb and power supply connections.

M

Mansard roof: A roof with two slopes on each of the four sides. The lower slope is steeper than the upper slope. The upper slope is usually not visible from the ground.

Mansionization: Conversion of older small homes on small lots to new, larger homes.

Map scale: A description of the relationship between the size of objects or physical features on a map and their size in life.

Mass: The visual appearance of size.

Mills Act: A state law allowing cities to enter into contracts with owners of historic structures. A reduction in property taxes is granted in exchange for a binding preservation and maintenance schedule of the historic property.

Mitigate: To improve, alleviate or avoid to the extent reasonably feasible.

Monochromatic: Having a single color scheme.

Mullion: A vertical divider in a multipane window.

N

Niche: A recess in a wall usually made to contain a sculpture.

Nonconforming lot: A parcel of land that does not conform to the lot area and the lot dimension standards for the zone in which it is located

Nonconforming structure: A building or portion thereof that does not comply with one or more of the property development standards of the zone in which it is located.

Nonconforming use: A use of a building or land that does not conform to the uses permitted in the zone in which it is located.

O

Objective: A specific statement of desired future condition toward which effort should be expended as an intermediate step in striving to achieve a broader goal. An objective should be achievable and, where possible, measurable and time-specific.

Ordinance: A law or regulation set forth and adopted by the City.

Oriel window: A window with many panels that projects from the wall supported by brackets or corbels, and does not extend to the ground.

P

Palladian window: A three-part window with central, top-arched portion and long, narrow rectangular windows on either side.

Paper street: A street that appears on the official map of a community but has never been built or improved.

Parapet: A low wall that rises above the edge of a roof, generally used as a decorative architectural feature or to screen mechanical equipment.

Parcel: An area of land under single ownership. A parcel may or may not be a legal building site.

Passive Solar: Design that collects, stores and distributes solar energy without involving the use of mechanical and electrical devices such as pumps, fans, or electrical controls to move the solar heat.

Pedestrian scale (also 'human scale'): The appropriate relationship or scale between human beings and the size of the surrounding buildings. Buildings scaled to human physical capabilities have steps, doorways, railings, work surfaces, seating, shelves, fixtures, walking distances, and other features that fit well to the average person.

Pediment: A low-pitched gable over a portico taking the shape of a triangle and formed by the sloping roof and a horizontal cornice at the base of the triangle.

Percolation: Downward movement of water through rock or soil interstices.

Pergola: A covered walk in a garden; usually formed by a double row of posts or pillars with joists above and covered by climbing plants.

Permeable surface: A surface that allows water to be absorbed rather than repelled.

Pilaster: A column slightly projecting from a wall, primarily decorative.

Pitch: The slope of a roof expressed in terms of a ratio of height to span.

Plate or top plate: An upper wall plate that is nailed along the top of the wall studs before the wall is lifted into position and to which the platform of the next story or the ceiling and roof assembly is attached.

Porch: A covered entrance to a building that is open or partially enclosed.

Porte-cochere: A covered structure extending from the side or front entrance of a home over an adjacent driveway to shelter those entering or exiting a vehicle.

Portico: A covered porch or walk consisting of a roof supported with columns.

Preserve: To keep safe from destruction or decay or to maintain or keep intact.

Primary arterial: Primary regional accessways to the city that conduct traffic volumes in the order of 20,000 to 65,000 trips per day.

Priority Development Project: Substantial development as classified by the Water Quality Department that are required to include Treatment Control BMPs in project design. Please see the Water Quality department for the priority project thresholds.

Public notice: A legal document announcing the opportunity for the public to present their views to an official representative or board of a public agency concerning an official action pending before the agency.

Q

Quoin: Dressed stones or bricks at the corner of a building laid so that their faces are alternately large and small; originally used to add strength to the masonry wall, later used decoratively.

R

Rafter: A structural member of the roof that extends from the ridge to the eaves and is used to support the roof deck, shingles or other roof coverings.

Remodeling: Any change or alteration to a building, interior or exterior that alters its original state.

Retaining wall: A wall constructed to hold back a solid material, usually earth.

Retrofit: Addition of materials and/or devices to an existing building or system to improve its operation, safety or efficiency.

Ridge(s): The point where the highest sloping roof line(s) on a building intersect.

Ridgeline: A line connecting the highest points along a ridge.

Right-of-way: The right of use or to cross over the property of another.

Rock outcrop: Bedrock that is visible above the earth's surface.

Runoff: Surplus water that does not seep into the earth but flows overland and ultimately into significant bodies of water.

S

Sense of place: The quality of a location that makes it readily recognizable and different from other locations.

Setback: The minimum required distance between the property line and the building line.

Scale: Scale refers to the structure as it relates or compares to surrounding properties in the neighborhood.

Screening: The use of landscape planting, fences or other structures to obscure unsightly or undesirable land use, lighting from neighboring properties or to create privacy. Screening can also be used to reduce the effects of high winds or to block strong sunlight.

Shed roof: A sloping, single-planed roof.

Shiplap siding: A horizontal siding, usually wood, with a beveled edge to provide a weather-tight joint.

Shielding: A method of controlling or diverting light rays to avoid light trespass or glare.

Shore protective device or (seawall): Any bulkhead, retaining wall, seawall, revetment, fence, berm or other structure separating land and water areas primarily designed to prevent erosion or other damage due to wave action, including any structure or partition to retain or prevent sliding of the land, or any device for the purpose of protecting the upland against damage from wave action.

Significant natural watercourse: A watercourse in its natural condition and which serves a distinct functional, scenic or ecological purpose.

Significant modified watercourse: A watercourse that has been altered from its natural condition but continues to serve a distinct functional, scenic or ecological purpose as defined under “significant natural watercourses.” Significant modified watercourses include those that have been channelized, piped, culverted or otherwise improved or diverted.

Site design: The arrangement of buildings, structures, lot lines, roads, utilities and plantings on a particular site.

Site plan: An accurately scaled development plan that illustrates the existing conditions on a land parcel as well as the details of proposed development.

Siting: Situating on a property.

Slope: The natural or artificial incline of a property.

“Smart” controller: A device that considers local weather and landscape conditions to customize irrigation schedules for actual site conditions.

Soffit: The finished underside of an eave.

Solar access: Availability of direct sunlight so that it is possible to use solar collectors and solar energy systems for a given project.

Solar energy: The electromagnetic radiation that the sun emits.

Solar reflectance (albedo): The degree of absorption of solar radiation by a subject surface expressed as a decimal or percentage between zero and one.

Solid waste: Any unwanted or discarded material that is not a liquid or gas, including organic wastes, paper products, metals, glass, plastics, cloth, brick, rock, soil, leather, rubber, yard wastes and wood but does not include sewage and hazardous materials.

Specific plan: Land use and development standards written for a specific neighborhood or location to address unique local conditions and characteristics.

Story: The portion of a building included between the upper surface of any floor and the upper surface of the next floor above, except that the topmost story shall be that portion of a building included between the upper surface of the topmost floor and the ceiling or roof above. If the finished floor level directly above a usable or unused under-floor space is more than six feet above the adjacent ground elevation for more than 50% of the total perimeter or is more than twelve feet above the adjacent ground elevation at any point, such usable or unused under-floor space shall be considered as a story.

Street: A public or private thoroughfare that affords a primary means of access to abutting property. Street includes, in addition to the paved travel way, all land within the street right-of-way.

Street plan line: A line delineating the proposed right-of-way for a planned street and appearing in a precise street plan adopted by the city.

Streetscape: All the elements that normally contribute to the physical makeup of a street and that, as a group, delineate its character.

Structure: Anything constructed or built, any edifice or building of any kind or any piece of work artificially built up or composed of parts joined together in some defined manner, which requires location on the ground or is attached to something having a location on the ground, except outdoor areas such as patios, paved areas, walks, tennis courts and other similar recreation areas.

Subsidence: The sudden sinking or gradual downward settling and compaction of soil and other surface material with little or no horizontal motion.

Swale: A graded and engineered landscape feature vegetated with flood-tolerant, erosion-resistant plants to promote the conveyance of stormwater at a slower, controlled rate, filter pollutants and allow stormwater infiltration.

T

Tandem parking space: A parking space so located that it is necessary to move one or more other automobiles in order that the automobile occupying the tandem space may gain access to or from the space.

Thermal mass: Large quantities of heavy or dense material with a high heat capacity, used in solar buildings to absorb heat that can be stored and re-radiated as needed for heating and cooling.

Toe of slope: The point or line of initial break where the terrain changes to an upward direction.

Top of slope: The point or line of initial break where the terrain changes to a downward direction.

Topography: Configuration of a surface, including its relief and the position of natural and man-made features.

Transom: The horizontal member across the top or middle of a window or door.

Transom window: A window located above a door within its vertical frame.

Truss: A number of timbers joined together to form a frame to carry other timbers, as in a timber truss roof.

U

Urban design: A process that treats the development of the built environment in a comprehensive manner as a means of achieving a unified, functionally efficient and aesthetically appealing physical setting.

Urban heat island (UHI): A metropolitan area that is significantly warmer than its surrounding rural areas, especially at night and in winter because of modification of the land surface by urban development and secondary waste generated by energy usage.

V

Variance: Approval to depart from the zoning requirements for a specific parcel without changing the zoning ordinance or the underlying zoning of the parcel.

Very high-value-habitat: See “habitat, very high value.”

Veneer: A very thin layer used as a facing.

View corridor: The line of sight identified as to height, width and distance of an observer looking toward an object of significance to the community (e.g., ocean, coastal whitewater, Catalina Island, canyon, ridgeline, historic building, downtown).

Viewshed: The area within view from a defined observation point.

Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs): Emitted as gases from certain solids or liquids. VOCs include a variety of chemicals, some of which may have short- and long-term adverse health effects. VOCs can be found in paints and lacquers, paint strippers, cleaning supplies, pesticides, building materials and furnishings.

W

Wall: Any structure or device forming a physical barrier which is so constructed that 50% or more of the vertical surface is closed and prevent the passage of light, air and vision through the surface in a horizontal plane.

Wastewater irrigation: The process by which wastewater that has undergone appropriate treatment is used to irrigate land.

Watercourse: Natural or once naturally flowing (perennially or intermittently) water, including natural waterways that have been channelized but does not include manmade channels, ditches and underground drainage and sewage systems.

Water feature: Any permanent structure that contains three hundred gallons or more of water and contains water over eighteen inches deep, and has non-submersible circulatory mechanical pumps or equipment.

Water Quality Management Plan: A plan containing practicable and enforceable policies to minimize the effects of urbanization on site hydrology, urban runoff flow rates or velocities and pollutant loads.

Watt: A unit of electric power flowing into a bulb or lamp.

Weatherboard: Overlapping horizontal boards that cover the timber-framed wall of a structure.

Y

Yard: Any open space other than a court on the same lot with a building or a dwelling group, which space is generally open from ground to sky, except for the projections and/or accessory buildings permitted by this title.

Yard, front: A space extending the full width of the lot, between the front lot line or the street plan line and a line parallel thereto at a distance equal to the depth of the required front yard for the zone in which the lot is located.

Yard, rear: A space extending the full width of the lot between the rear lot line and a line parallel thereto at a distance equal to the depth of the required rear yard for the zone in which the lot is located.

Yard, side: A space extending from the front yard to the rear yard, between the side lot line or the street plan line and a line parallel thereto at a distance equal to the depth of the required side yard for the zone in which the lot is located.

Z

Zone: A land area shown on the official districting (zoning) map of the city of Laguna Beach to which uniform regulations apply.

Zoning map: A map delineating the zoning areas or districts within the City.