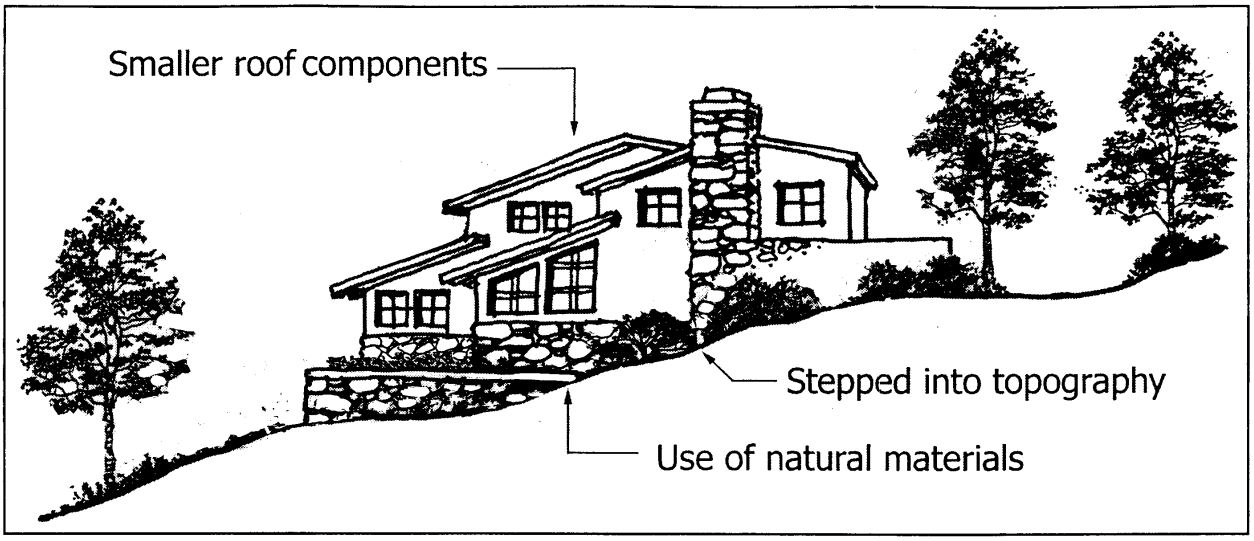
V. ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN

A. Design objectives.

The standards and guidelines in this section are intended to encourage architectural design that is:

1. in harmony and visually blends with the natural environment,
2. responsive to site constraints and opportunities,
3. compatible with the surrounding neighborhood and respectful of neighbors, and
4. respectful of the rural character of the hillsides.



Building form reflects hillside form/setting

B. Design to be neighbor friendly.

Protecting the privacy of neighboring homes is a high priority in the siting and design of a new house or addition. The following design standards shall be followed to the greatest extent feasible to ensure privacy to surrounding neighbors.

Standards:

1. Privacy impacts shall be addressed and resolved during the constraints analysis phase and initial design stage, not with mitigation measures imposed as an afterthought. Sight lines shall be studied so that windows and outdoor areas are placed to maintain privacy.

Guidelines:

1. The following design guidelines should be implemented to the greatest degree feasible where privacy impacts are of concern;

    a. Minimize second-story windows facing close neighboring properties.

    b. Orient upper floor windows, decks, and balconies to avoid impacting the privacy of neighbors.

    c. Incorporate screening measures (e.g., solid railing walls, lattice work, or planters) to obscure lines of sight to neighboring properties.

    d. Limit the size of decks and balconies to six feet in depth in areas where privacy is a concern. This will limit their use to passive activities.

    e. Use landscaping to screen views to your neighbor=s living areas most sensitive to privacy. Use evergreen trees and shrubs to provide year-round privacy.

    f. Existing vegetation that protects privacy should not be removed.

    g. Screen and control noise sources such as parking, outdoor activities, and mechanical equipment (e.g., air conditioning and pool equipment).

    h. Locate outdoor activity areas adjacent to neighbors= outdoor activity areas rather than in close proximity to their quiet areas (bedrooms).

C. Design for sustainability.

Sustainability and the conservation of natural resources are important issues to Los Gatos residents. Sustainability refers to the use of natural resources in a manner that insures their continued availability to future generations.

The term "green building" is often used to relate sustainability to development. Green building addresses a broad range of techniques to reduce the consumption of natural resources during construction and over the lifetime of a home. These include designing structures to be energy water efficient, utilizing building materials that reduce resource consumption and improve indoor air quality, and taking maximum advantage of renewable energy resources. Refer to Appendix B for additional information on green building.

Appendix B, Green Building Strategies and Materials, contains design strategies that maximize the use of renewable energy resources for heating, cooling and lighting, additional strategies that conserve energy and water, a list of building materials that reduce the consumption of nonrenewable resources and improve air quality, and a list of various sources for "green building" information and their web sites.

The following design guidelines are aimed at maximizing energy efficiency and reducing consumption of resources.

Standards: None.

Guidelines:

1. The design of each house should show evidence to the satisfaction of the deciding body that a significant effort has been made towards incorporating energy-conservation and water saving techniques above and beyond the minimum requirements of Title 24.

2. All homes over 3,500 square feet should incorporate a variety of green building strategies and materials (see Appendix B). Homes less than 3,500 square feet are also encouraged to incorporate additional energy and resource saving features.

3. Homes should be designed and located to take maximum advantage of passive solar heating (space and water), natural cooling and lighting. Houses should be designed to maximize the benefits of sun and wind as follows:

    a. Orient the house and arrange doors and windows to take advantage of prevailing summer winds for natural ventilation and cooling (also see Appendix B).

    b. Orient the house and the most used living areas to take advantage of passive solar heating. Orient the house on an east-west access and locate the most used living areas and the majority of windows on the south side (also see appendix B).

c. Landscaping should be used to control exposure to sun and wind (Refer to Chapter VI, Section B, Landscape Design Concepts for ways to meet this guideline.). Shading and solar access should be balanced when both heating and cooling is needed.

- Where protection from summer sun is needed, tall spreading deciduous trees should be planted to the south, east and west sides of pavement and buildings. Trees should be placed so they do not block winter sun.

- Where protection from winter wind is needed, plant dense evergreen trees and/or shrubs in random discontinuous groups. A distance of four to five times the ultimate height of the plants is recommended to allow light to penetrate into the home.

4. Selection of building materials that reduce the consumption of natural resources and are non-toxic is strongly encouraged. This includes, but is not limited to, salvaged or reused materials and products made from recycled materials (also see Appendix B).

D. Design for fire safety.

A home that is located, designed and maintained for fire safety will not only protect the individual homeowner, but will reduce the chance for a home fire to become a wildfire. Conversely, in the case of a wildfire, the home will have a better chance of surviving and may help limit a fires spread. See Chapter III, section D for guidance in choosing a building site to minimize exposure to potential wildfires. See Chapter VII, section A for guidance on how to landscape and maintain a site with fire safety in mind.

The following standards are intended to maximize protection from wildfires:

Refer to Chapter II section C

Standards:

1. Structures shall be designed to maximize protection from wildfires.

2. Roofs shall have a Class A covering or a Class A roof assembly.

3. Eaves and soffits shall be protected on the exposed underside with noncombustible material or by materials approved for a minimum one-hour rated fire resistive construction.

4. Gutters and downspouts shall be constructed of noncombustible material.

5. Exterior walls shall be constructed with noncombustible materials on the exterior side or materials approved for a minimum one-hour rated fire resistive construction.

6. Under floor areas and areas below decks shall be enclosed to the ground with noncombustible materials or with materials approved for a minimum one-hour rated fire resistive construction.

7. Attic and under floor vents shall be covered with corrosion-resistant mesh not to exceed ¼-inch.

8. Automatic fire sprinklers shall be installed in accordance with National and Fire Department Standards.

9. Roof skylights shall be tempered or have multi-layered glazing.

Guidelines:

1. Exterior windows should be tempered glass.

2. The size and number of windows on the side of the house that would likely be exposed to a fire approaching from the downhill side should be minimized.

3. Roof eaves should be designed with minimal overhang to prevent entrapment of heat and flames.

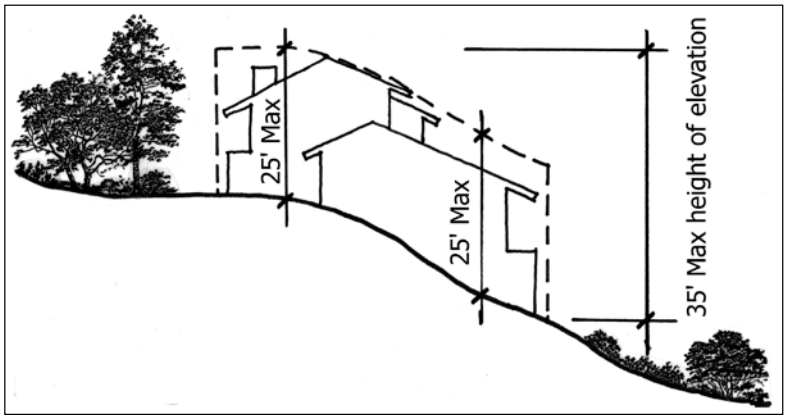
E. Building height.

Refer to Chapter II section C

Standards:

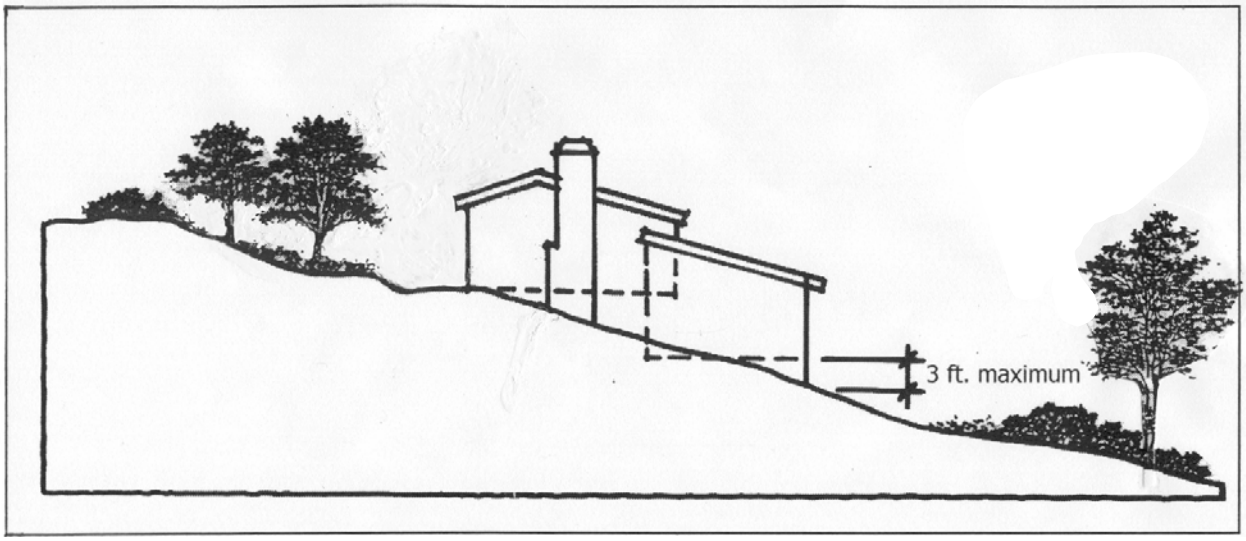
1. The maximum allowed height for homes in hillside areas shall be 25 feet. Building height shall be measured in compliance with provisions of the Town's Zoning Ordinance.

2. The maximum height of a building=s tallest elevation shall not exceed 35 feet measured from the lowest part of the building to the highest part, except buildings extending above a ridgeline or that are visible from a viewing platform where the maximum height from the lowest to highest points shall not exceed 28 feet.



3. Ridgeline and visible homes shall not extend more than 18 feet above the existing grade.

4. The height of the lowest finished floor(s) of a structure, excluding cellars, shall not be more than four feet above the existing grade to ensure that buildings follow slopes.



5. Three-story elevations are prohibited.

Guidelines: None.

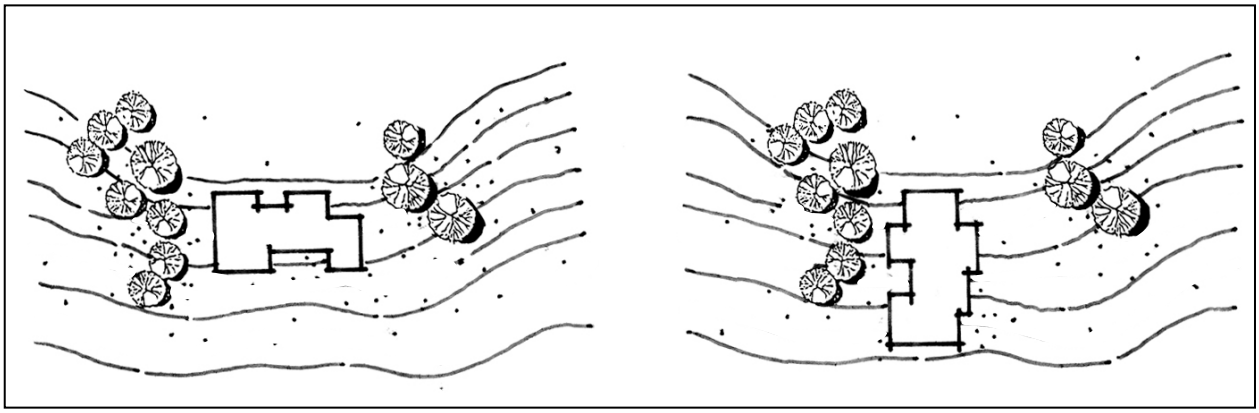
F. Minimize building bulk and mass

One of the primary concerns of Los Gatos residents is that some new houses in the hillsides appear overly large and bulky, resulting in high visibility from surrounding properties and the valley floor. The design standards and guidelines in this section address this issue.

Standards:

1. Buildings shall be designed to minimize bulk, mass and volume so as not to be prominently visible from a distance or from surrounding properties.

2. Buildings shall be designed to conform to the natural topography of the site and run with the contours. Blending with the existing terrain reduces the appearance of bulk.



Do this

Building is parallel with the contours.

Don't do this

Building is perpendicular to the contours

Guidelines:

1. The building design should incorporate but not be limited to, the following techniques to effectively reduce the appearance of mass, bulk and volume:

   a. Keep building forms simple.

   b. Avoid architectural styles that are inherently viewed as massive and bulky.

Don't do this

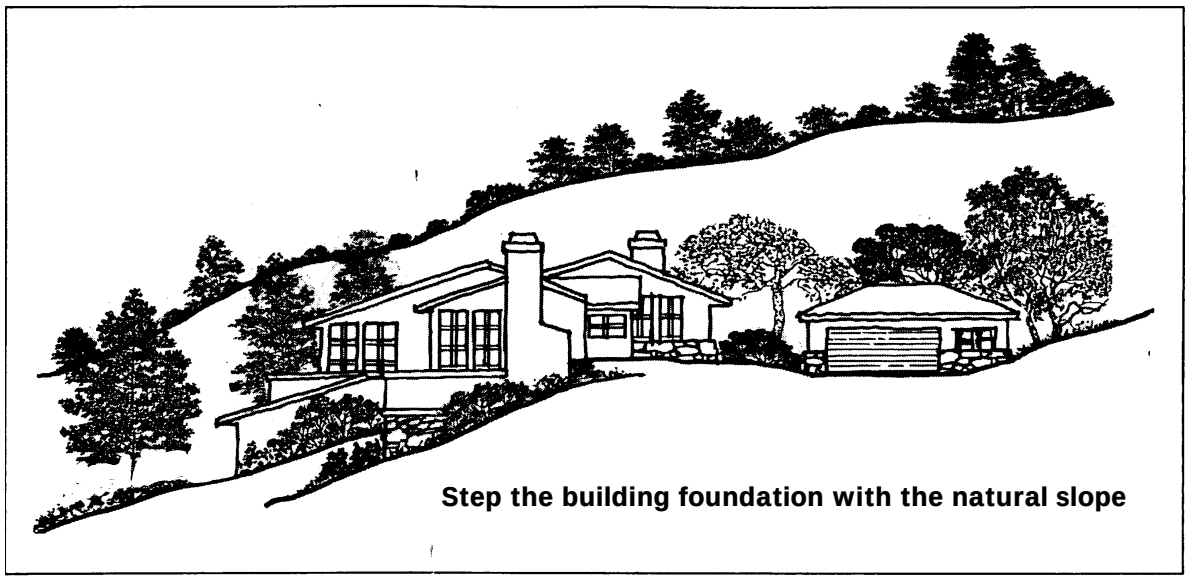
Don't do this

   c. Minimize square footage.

   d. Minimize volume; avoid large volume buildings.

   e. Avoid overhanging decks, large staircases and patios formed by retaining walls that make buildings appear more massive. Avoid use of balustrades and solid wall

railings that add to the mass of the design. *(Revised 2/22/05 by Council Resolution 2005-11)*



f. Step the building foundation and roofs with the natural slope.

g. Use horizontal and vertical building components to reduce bulk. Avoid two story wall planes.

h. Create light and shadow by providing modest overhangs, projections, alcoves, and plane offsets, and varying elevations such as stepping second stories.

i. Vary elevations, such as stepping back second stories, to conform with topography.

k. Excavate or use below-grade rooms to reduce effective bulk. The visual area of the building can be minimized through a combined use of grading and landscaping techniques.

l. Use vaulted ceilings rather than high walls and ceilings with attics above to achieve a feeling of volume.

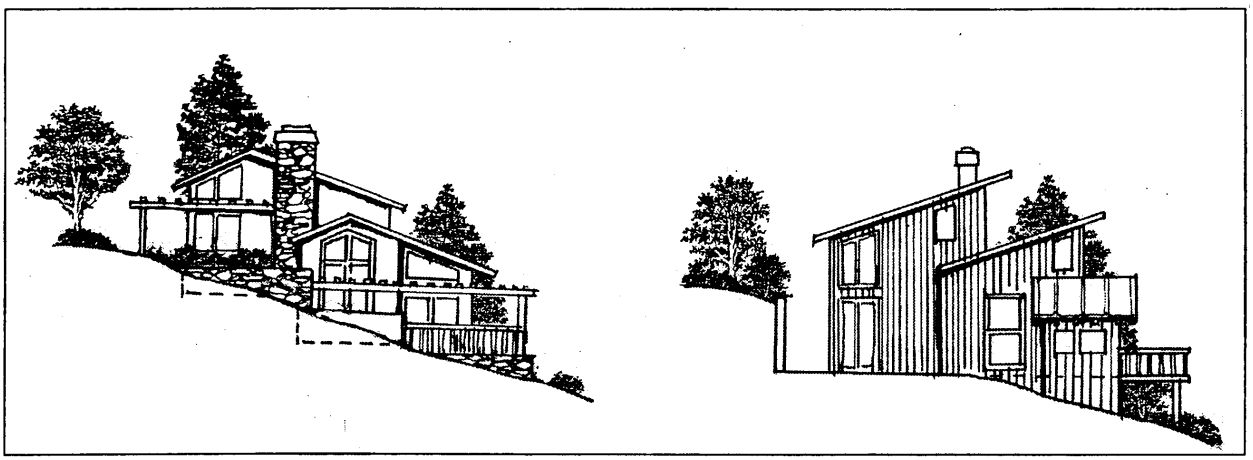
m. Second stories should be stepped back so the difference in wall planes is visible from a distance. *(Revised 2/22/05 by Council Resolution 2005-11)*

G. Roofs.

Standards:

1. Roof forms and rooflines shall be broken into smaller building components to reflect the irregular forms of surrounding natural features.

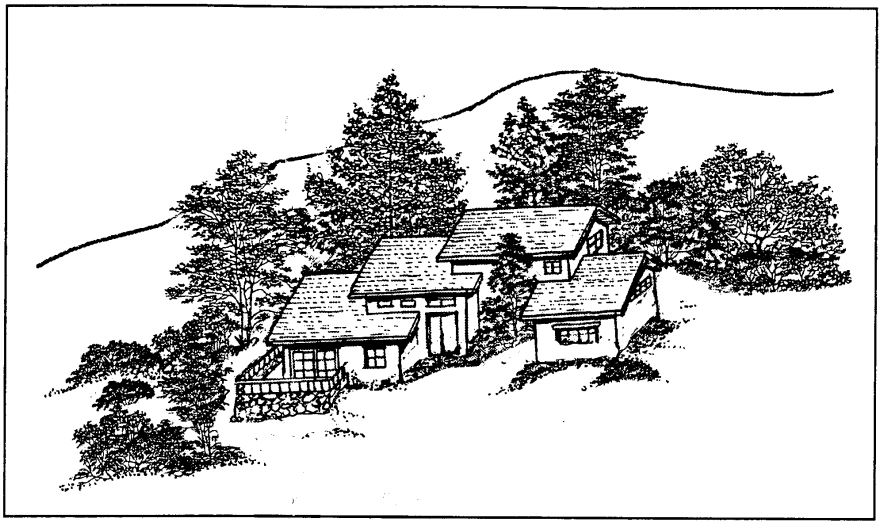
2. The slope of the main roof shall generally be oriented in the same direction as the natural slope of the terrain.



Do this **Don't do this**

Guidelines:

1. Large gable ends on downhill elevations should be avoided.



Roof forms are kept small and reflect the surrounding topography

H. Architectural elements.

Standards:

1. Exterior structural supports and undersides of floors and decks not enclosed by walls are prohibited unless it is proven that no alternative type of construction is feasible and that fire safety and aesthetic considerations have been adequately addressed (also see Chapter III section D.2).

Don't do this

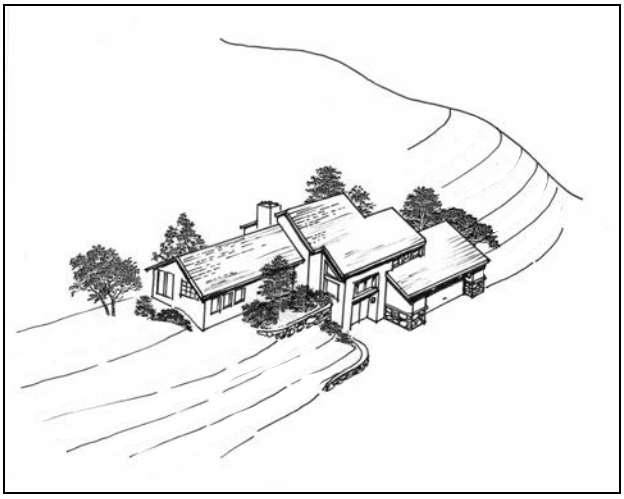
2. Skylight glazing material shall be selected to reduce glare at night. Large skylights with dome-style glazing should be avoided.

3. Architectural detailing shall be provided on all sides of the building. Elements of the architectural treatment used on the front facade shall be repeated on all sides of the building.

Guidelines:

1. The use of large windows and glass doors should be kept to the minimum to reduce the daytime glare and nighttime lighting emanating from large glazed areas, and to increase heating and cooling efficiency. Of particular concern is glare that impacts neighboring properties and is visible from the valley floor (also see Chapter V section I.).

2. The use of architectural features that increase visual prominence should be avoided. Massive, tall elements, such as two-story entries, turrets, and large chimneys should be avoided. Such elements on the downhill facade of the house is of particular concern.



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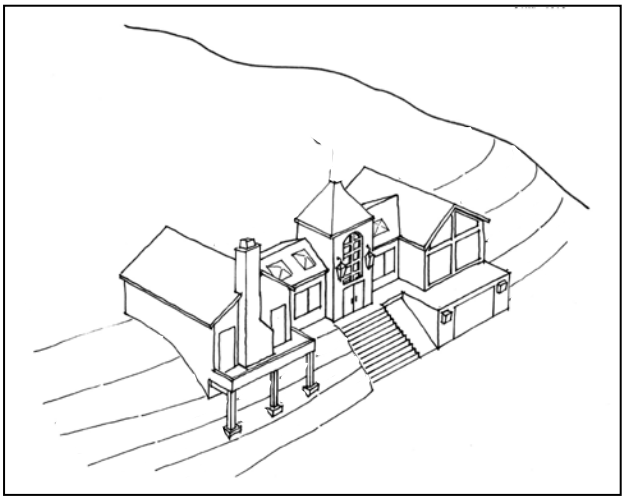

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I. Materials and colors.

Standards:

1. The contrast between manmade buildings and the environment shall be minimized. A buildings color and materials shall complement and blend with the predominant colors and values of the surrounding natural environment.

2. Exterior material colors for homes, with the exception of homes with any elevation that is more than 24.5% percent visible from the viewing platforms, may use color averaging of all exterior materials to meet the maximum light reflectivity value of 30 and shall blend with the natural vegetation. Roof materials shall be calculated separately and shall not exceed a light reflectivity value of 30.

3. Roofs shall be a dark earth tone color with a variety of shades of that color that blend with the environment.

4. Exposed metal surfaces shall be painted to compliment adjacent materials, be anodized a dark color, or have the ability to develop a patina (e.g., copper).

5. Mirror-like window tinting is prohibited.

6. Contrasting color accents shall be kept to a minimum.

Guidelines:

1. A variety of materials, textures, and architectural details compatible with the design theme of the house should be used to add interest and to mitigate the visual impact of large wall areas. Natural materials such as wood and stone will help soften the appearance of stucco and blend it with the natural setting. *(Revised 2/22/05 by Council Resolution 2005-11)*