

# PART V

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## DESIGN GUIDELINES FOR NEW RESIDENTIAL BUILDINGS - SINGLE FAMILY ON HILLSIDE SITES



DESIGN GUIDELINES FOR NEW RESIDENTIAL BUILDINGS - SINGLE FAMILY ON HILLSIDE SITES  
**TABLE OF CONTENTS PART V**



Neighborhood Compatibility and Character..... 76  
Site Planning and Development..... 78  
Physical Design Components..... 81  
Streetscape and Landscape..... 86



# DESIGN GUIDELINES FOR NEW SINGLE-FAMILY RESIDENCES ON HILLSIDE SITES

## NEIGHBORHOOD COMPATIBILITY AND CHARACTER

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### Design Guidelines for New Single-Family Residences on Hillside Sites

The South Pasadena Zoning Code includes general Design Guidelines and Zoning Restrictions for Hillside Development. The Zoning Code, Section 36.340.040 should be referred to in conjunction with these design guidelines when planning new residential construction on a hillside site, or when planning alterations or additions to existing hillside homes in South Pasadena.

A significant portion of homes in South Pasadena are built on hillside lots that have a steep cross slope. New residences should be sensitively designed to be compatible with the hillside slopes, the surrounding neighborhood structures and the design quality found in the traditional residential neighborhoods of South Pasadena. These guidelines expand on the objectives for hillside development outlined in the Zoning Code, including: protection of views, sensitive terrain alteration, site layout, grading and location of structures, appropriate massing, quality architectural design features and properly designed landscaping and landscape features.

### Neighborhood Compatibility and Character

New hillside homes or additions and alterations to existing hillside homes should be designed with consideration for the character and scale of the existing development in the vicinity. Compatibility should be developed in the design of a residence following a review of existing site conditions, visibility of the site, and the size, scale, and character of existing development within 500 feet of the site.

Additionally, consideration should include the traditional residential neighborhoods in South Pasadena, which include homes with a variety of traditional architectural styles and a high level of quality to the design, materials and craftsmanship. Hillside development in the City should duplicate this level of quality in the architectural design and craftsmanship of new hillside homes, and contribute to the overall character of the City.



This newer hillside house embraces modern materials and architectural vocabulary while blending with the surrounding hillside



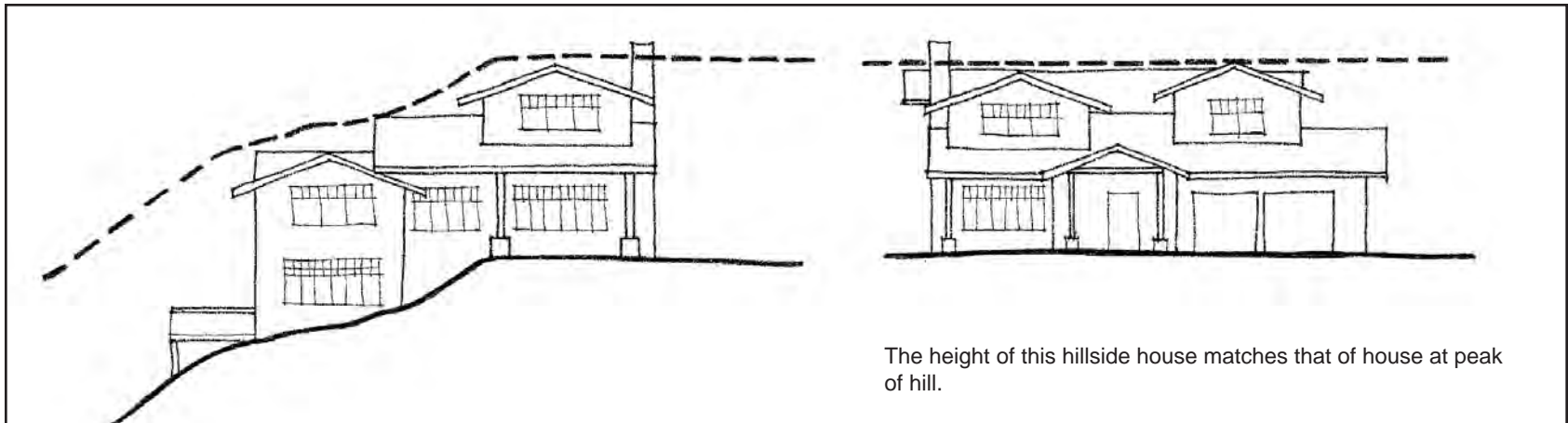
This rendering clearly illustrates the modern aesthetic of this proposed house and how it will step up the hillside.

# DESIGN GUIDELINES FOR NEW SINGLE-FAMILY RESIDENCES ON HILLSIDE SITES

## NEIGHBORHOOD COMPATIBILITY AND CHARACTER

### View Protection

- Preservation of views from adjoining hillside lots should be carefully considered in the design of a new home or addition to an existing home on a hillside lot.
- Terracing allows each house on a slope to gain light, air, private and shared open space, and in most cases, partial or full views. Where the terracing of the streets is shallow enough that a vertical addition or tall structure on the lower side of the street will obstruct the view from the windows, decks and yards of homes sited uphill, design solutions should minimize the impact of view reduction.
- Instead of a vertical design or addition, a rear addition or extension of a story at a lower level is a possible solution. Or, development of an unfinished lower area within the existing building envelope could suffice where extending the building footprint is not possible.
- A proposed structure can be designed and located so that it avoids blocking views from surrounding properties to the maximum extent feasible. New structures, additions, and tall landscaping should not be placed directly in the view of the primary living areas on a neighboring parcel. "Primary" living area in this context refers to living rooms, family rooms, patios, but not a kitchen, bedroom or bathroom. New structures should be placed on the lower areas of a hillside site.
- Mechanical equipment may be placed on rooftops or below a deck only if the equipment is not visible from neighboring parcels, except for unobtrusive solar collectors that are compatible with the roof lines and architecturally integrated with the structure.



# DESIGN GUIDELINES FOR NEW SINGLE-FAMILY RESIDENCES ON HILLSIDE SITES

## SITE PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

### Site Planning and Development

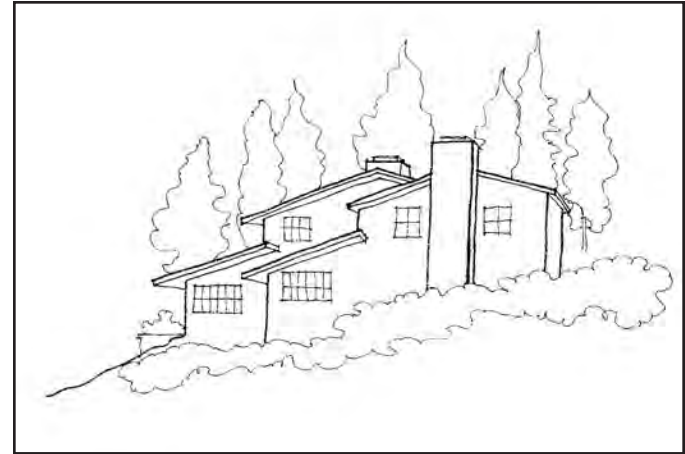
#### Typical Parcels and Building Placement

Siting of structures on hillside sites must take into consideration the unique characteristics of the individual sites as well as the relationship to neighboring properties and structures. Each hillside structure should be located in the most accessible, least visually prominent, most geologically stable portion of the site, and at the lowest feasible elevation. Structures can also be aligned with the natural contours of the site. Siting structures in the least prominent locations is important on open hillsides where high visibility should be minimized by placing structures so that they will be screened by existing vegetation, depressions in topography, or other natural features.

#### Set Back / Building Placement / Orientation on Parcel

Set Back requirements for new homes on hillsides are addressed in the South Pasadena Zoning Code, Section 36.340.050 and in Section 36.300.030.E.3. Except where the review authority determines that an exception should be made, the following guidelines apply to all hillside sites:

- Structures should not be sited so that they are silhouetted against the sky when viewed from the street. Development on or within 50 vertical feet of ridgelines is disallowed.
- Where adjacent lots have a difference in vertical elevation of three feet or more, the required side yard should be measured from the nearest toe or top of slope to the structure, whichever is closer.
- Each structure should be located to take advantage of existing vegetation for screening, and should include the installation of additional native plant materials to augment existing vegetation, where appropriate.



This house is built into the landscape taking advantage of the site and existing plantings.

# DESIGN GUIDELINES FOR NEW SINGLE-FAMILY RESIDENCES ON HILLSIDE SITES

## SITE PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

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Often hillside houses on narrow, but steep lots place the garage at the top and build out living areas below. This design attempts to make the garage and residential entry visually interesting from the street.



This large residence requires extreme changes to the landscape to fit the site.

- In order to minimize visual impacts where lots are substantially longer in the direction of the slope than lot width, residences should generally be oriented to present the narrow side of the home to the exposed view rather than the wide side.
- Visible corner lots play a more important role in the character of a neighborhood. Sites at intersections and at visible ends of cul-de-sacs have special requirements for the location of driveways, garages, house entries and architectural features. Garages and driveways should be placed away from intersections on uphill portions of lots.
- Home entries and architectural design features should be oriented toward intersections. Lots at the ends of cul-de-sacs should have driveways and garages located at the sides of circles with entries and features located at the more visible end of the street.

### Grading

Grading requirements are included in the Municipal Code, the General Plan, and the Zoning Code. Generally, any new grading on hillside lots should blend into existing contours and be consistent with natural landforms. Any new construction on hillside lots should be designed to fit the terrain rather than altering the terrain to fit the project. Large scale slope terracing, cribwalls, or significant slope modification is discouraged.

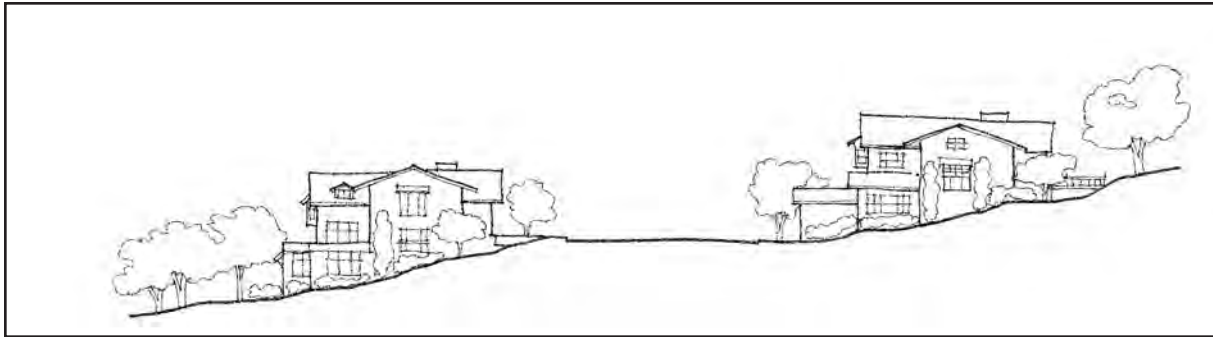
- New construction on hillsides should not disregard or significantly alter the existing topography of a site. Further, the requirements put forward in the South Pasadena Zoning Code should be followed. To minimize grading, building designs should step up or down hillsides.
- Grading should be minimized for driveways, parking areas, and yards. Grading into the hillside to locate a structure and reduce its visual bulk is encouraged. New development on hillside sites should be designed to reduce tall walls on the down-slope side of the house.

## DESIGN GUIDELINES FOR NEW SINGLE-FAMILY RESIDENCES ON HILLSIDE SITES

### SITE PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

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- For downslope lots, garages and homes should be sited as close to the street as practical while providing vehicular access and allowing for adequate off-street parking as required by the City so as to minimize grading for driveway ramps and front area landscaping.
- For upslope lots, garages, buildings, and driveways should be sited so as to minimize the size and height of driveway retaining walls and to avoid excessive cuts. Wherever possible, garages should be “straight-on” rather than “side-on” designs. The maximum average grade for driveways set by the Zoning Code is 15%. The maximum slope for ramps to garages or carports is 5%, within 10 feet of the garage or carport.
- New construction should avoid dramatic re-grading and large retaining walls. Set the structure into the grade and create a set back from the street whenever possible. Large retaining walls in a uniform plane should be avoided.
- Retaining walls should be divided into terraces with variations in plane and include landscaping to break up the length of the walls and to screen them from view.
- Generally, retaining walls should be as low as possible and should follow the contours of the hillside.

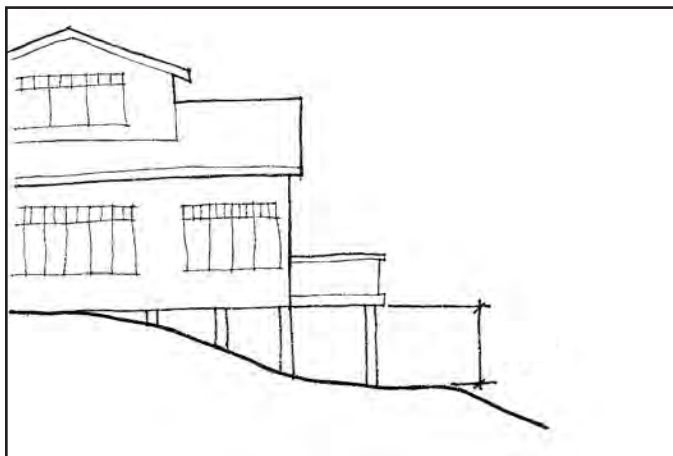


These houses are well matched in terms of proportions and their placement across a street from one another takes into consideration the downhill slope on which they are located.

# DESIGN GUIDELINES FOR NEW SINGLE-FAMILY RESIDENCES ON HILLSIDE SITES

## PHYSICAL DESIGN COMPONENTS

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This sketch illustrates the relationship of the deck to the hillside.

### Physical Design Components

#### Scale and Massing

- The design of hillside homes should reduce visual mass by incorporating building setbacks, stepbacks and roof variations.
- Massing should be stepped with the slope to avoid large expanses of tall walls. The wall planes at various levels should be articulated and have a variety of solid and void elements.
- Roof-top decks over lower level garages and first floor spaces are encouraged at up-sloping sites to avoid two story walls near the street.
- To minimize the visual impact of the tall wall at down-slope sides of a building, landscaping should be used to mask the wall plane and add interest.
- Dividing a structure into separate structures or “modules” that step down a slope also reduces the massing at the street level and when viewed from below.
- Vertical building walls should not exceed 15 feet in height above grade. Any vertical walls above 15 feet should be stepped back from adjacent lower walls by a minimum distance of ten feet.
- Flat building walls over one story in height and over 25 feet in horizontal dimension are discouraged to minimize unarticulated wall mass.
- Residential designs should avoid excessive cantilevers or overhangs on downhill elevations. Residential designs should also avoid using overhanging decks or decks on supporting poles that make buildings appear more massive from downhill lots. No portion of the walking surface of a deck with visible underpinnings should exceed a height of six feet above grade.



# DESIGN GUIDELINES FOR NEW SINGLE-FAMILY RESIDENCES ON HILLSIDE SITES

## PHYSICAL DESIGN COMPONENTS

- The siting of homes on steep hillside lots tends to pull garages close to the street. Garages at hillside homes should be carefully designed and integrated into the overall design of the residence with articulated details and quality materials. Garages can be enveloped into the building, treated as a free standing building, or pushed back away from the front of the house.

### Height and Roof Form

- Height limitations are included in the South Pasadena Zoning Code Section 36.340.040 and limit the height for structures with a roof pitch of 3:12 or greater to 28 feet. For homes with a roof pitch less than 3:12, the maximum height is 24 feet.
- To reduce the overall height, mass and bulk and avoid adverse visual impacts, roof pitches should be kept to slopes at or below 6:12.
- Roof forms will be seen from homes on hillsides above and should present a pleasing roofscape of low pitched gable and hip roofs. Architectural features such as dormers are encouraged. Roof forms and roof lines broken into a series of smaller building components are preferred over long, linear unbroken roof lines.

### Facade Treatments

- Building facades should be in keeping with the traditional quality found in the South Pasadena historic residential neighborhoods.
- New hillside construction should be compatible with the character of the City, and the traditional architectural styles found there, and could incorporate the features of any one of the traditional styles identified in part II of these Guidelines. Further, new hillside construction could embrace modernism while maintaining the scale and patterns of building placement in the neighborhood.



This hillside residence fails to create an engaging facade. The placement of the windows and plain stucco wall does not offer an interesting facade arrangement.

# DESIGN GUIDELINES FOR NEW SINGLE-FAMILY RESIDENCES ON HILLSIDE SITES

## PHYSICAL DESIGN COMPONENTS



This hillside residence employs light colored wood, concrete and glass to project its design aesthetic.



The upper residence in this picture is not as successful in its use of materials and window placement. From below it overwhelms the hillside.

- New designs in the traditional styles should be comprehensive in massing, forms, details and materials, with quality design and workmanship. Hillside designs in these styles should be respectful to the contours of the site, and be stepped back with the slope of the site.
- Contemporary designs are also appropriate, when they are designed with attention to height, form, massing, proportion, size, scale and roof form. Consideration should be taken to provide articulated details and careful attention should be given to quality workmanship.

### **Exterior Cladding and Roofing Materials**

The City's Planning and Building Department maintains a list of exterior wall finishes that are generally acceptable for projects in South Pasadena. Materials are categorized into two groups: "encouraged" and "generally unacceptable". The term "generally" is used to imply that exceptions may be made in certain unique situations. An "encouraged" material may not be acceptable if used in the wrong context. At the same time, a "generally unacceptable" material may be acceptable if the material is uniquely befitting the design and the argument is convincing.

### **Exterior Wall Finishes – Encouraged with Traditional Styles**

Stucco, with appropriate texture (e.g. sand or smooth finish and half-timbering)  
Wood clapboard siding  
Wood shingles  
Wood board and batten  
Brick

### **Exterior Wall Finishes – Encouraged with Modern Aesthetic**

Stucco  
Metal  
Concrete and concrete block  
Wood  
Glass

# DESIGN GUIDELINES FOR NEW SINGLE-FAMILY RESIDENCES ON HILLSIDE SITES

## PHYSICAL DESIGN COMPONENTS

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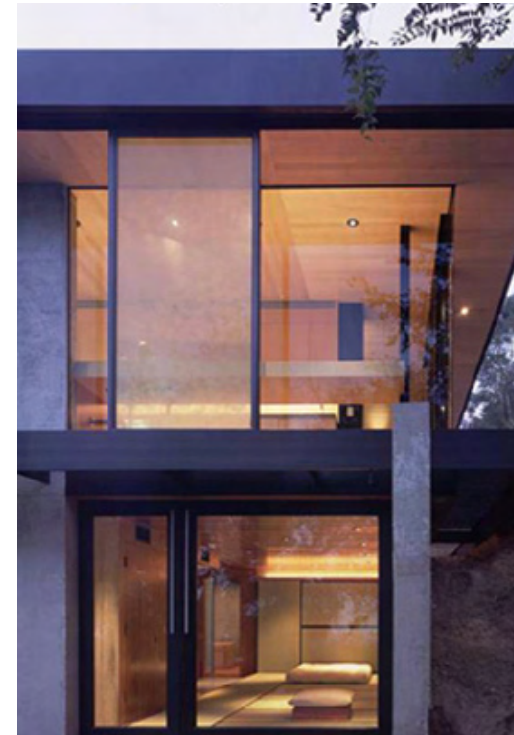
### Roofing Materials – Encouraged with Traditional Styles

Composition shingles  
Clay tile  
Slate  
Wood Shake (where allowed by code)

### Roofing Materials – Encouraged with Modern Aesthetic

Membrane roofing (rolled roofing)  
Corrugated or galvanized metal  
Composition Shingles

- **Quality:** Exterior materials should be similar in quality to those typically found in the traditional residential neighborhoods. The texture and sheen of the materials should be similar. Natural materials without an applied finish, or simply painted or stained are preferable. Synthetic materials simulating wood or masonry are discouraged. Any synthetic roofing material should be compatible with the structure and the neighborhood, with colors that simulate natural materials consistent with the style of the house.
- **Quantity:** The number of different materials used on the exterior of a house should be consistent with the neighborhood and the architectural style of the house. An abundance of different materials should be avoided. The use of one main material and a strong accent material is encouraged.
- **Ornamentation:** Ornamentation and decorative elements should be applied in a manner consistent with the style of the house. Avoid a lack of ornamentation that could make the residence too plain, or too much ornamentation that will appear overdone.



This Modern hillside home has a flat roof that is enhanced by the overhang and simple wood fascia detailing.

## DESIGN GUIDELINES FOR NEW SINGLE-FAMILY RESIDENCES ON HILLSIDE SITES

### PHYSICAL DESIGN COMPONENTS

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This hillside house employs large expanses of glass.

#### Fenestration – Windows and Doors

- The designs of entryways, windows and doors are important contributors to the overall character of new hillside homes.
- Entryways should be a defining feature, enhanced by porches, overhangs, trellises and stairways. Large, two story entry features and double entry doors should be avoided.
- Particular attention should be given to the spacing, placement, scale, orientation, proportion and size of window and door openings in new construction.
- Window and door openings help provide shadow lines and relief to house facades. Deep recesses, projections, and canopies are encouraged. Windows arranged in pairs, groups or bays, where consistent with the building style are appropriate.
- Large expanses of undivided glazing at windows should be avoided. Areas of glass larger than 36 square feet should be subdivided into smaller panes to reduce visual impacts.
- Skylights should not be placed at the primary facades of new residences. Skylights should be designed as an integral part of the roof, flat in profile so as not to disrupt the roof form. Frames should be non-reflective and glazing should be clear.

# DESIGN GUIDELINES FOR NEW SINGLE-FAMILY RESIDENCES ON HILLSIDE SITES

## STREETSCAPE AND LANDSCAPE

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### Streetscape and Landscape

#### Landscaping

- The South Pasadena Zoning Code requires that 25% of the lot area plus the percentage figure of the average slope must remain in its natural state in terms of vegetation.
- Except for existing trees and vegetation, trees and other added landscape vegetation should be suited to the lot.
- Landscape features, such as shrubs, retaining walls, etc. should be designed and situated so as not to impede sight lines between the driveway and approaching motorists.
- The location of plantings along the uphill property line of lots shall not block views from adjacent upslope residences.

#### Driveways

- The design and location of driveways should be designed to minimize their presence.
- The maximum average grade for driveways set by the Zoning Code is 15%. The maximum slope for ramps to garages or carports is 5%, within 10 feet of the garage or carport.
- Driveway width should be kept to a minimum to minimize the presence of paving materials. Large turnaround areas are discouraged.

#### Fences, Walls and Gates

- Front yard fences are discouraged.
- Where permitted through design review, fences within a front yard shall not exceed a maximum height of 3'-6" unless located within the required building envelope.