



# Morro Bay Design Guidelines

*Residential*



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## Acknowledgements

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## INTRODUCTION

### **Purpose of the Guidelines**

The purpose of the Interim Design Guidelines is to maintain the high quality of the City of Morro Bay’s neighborhoods by developing reasonable, sound and objective guidance to assist residents, homeowners, and designers in identifying the key design features and components that define the character of a neighborhood that can then be utilized in designing new or remodeled single family homes.

Neighborhood compatibility is generally represented by how a neighborhood looks and feels. The basic features that help define a neighborhood include: landscaping, pedestrian routes, street improvements, building material, architectural style, home size, scale, bulk, proximity of homes to one another, building height, and setbacks.

A majority of the neighborhoods in Morro Bay contain a wide variety of architectural styles, which helps focus policy language on scale, height, bulk and consistency or integrity of the chosen architectural style.

The intent behind implementation of the Design Guidelines is to conduct design review on all single-family construction (additions included). The Guidelines are meant to implement the neighborhood compatibility policies found in the General Plan and Local Coastal Plan and as such, serve as a basis to provide consistent design review by both City Staff and the Planning Commission.

By applying the Design Guidelines as part of the project review process, the City of Morro Bay, has the opportunity to provide positive, constructive direction to development within the City. The Design Guidelines can save time, facilitate a positive response to community concerns about development proposals, avoid divisive controversy, reduce unnecessary delays and expenses, and most importantly, achieve high quality designs and more livable neighborhoods.

### **Single-Family Design Guidelines**

The following guidelines are not meant to encompass the entire range of design possibilities, but instead are meant to provide basic guidance as to what is expected when development is proposed. The policies are not meant to discourage innovative designs nor encourage any specific style or design concept. Variations from the Guidelines will be considered when proposed project elements provide for a better project than would be possible adhering to the specific direction provided within the Guidelines.

## **Design Guidelines**

### *A. Relationship to Homes in Immediate Neighborhood*

1. The overall design of the home should pay particular attention to the adjacent homes while remaining visually compatible with the immediate neighborhood.
2. Maintain architectural integrity with design and material consistency on all facades.
3. When replacing or changing the exterior materials, use materials compatible with homes in the surrounding area.
4. Entryways or features, such as front doors and porches should be visible from the street. Use of tall walls, fences, landscaping or other design elements that block view of the entry should be avoided.

Utilize Figure 1 below when determining what constitutes the immediate neighborhood within a standard subdivision. For consideration of neighborhood compatibility, greater weight should be given to the character of existing development closer to a proposed project than to more distant portions of the neighborhood. In some situations, factors may be present which require a definition of the immediate neighborhood that differs from that determined by use of the 500-foot radius. Examples include, but are not limited to, location and visibility of the home being built/modified. ***If questions arise regarding what constitutes the “Immediate Neighborhood,” then please consult City Staff.***

*Figure 1. Immediate Neighborhood Map Example (500 Foot Radius).*



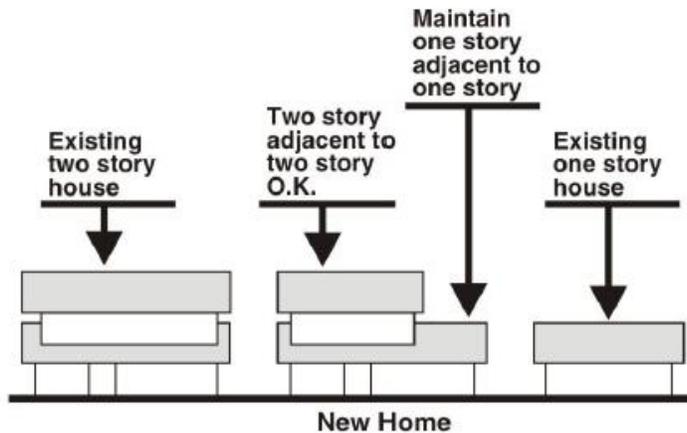
B. *Scale and Mass*

Building scale refers to the proportional relationship of a structure to objects/structures next to it. Mass is basically the size of a structure.

1. Proposed new construction or remodeling projects should be consistent with the overall pattern of perceived scale and mass in the surrounding neighborhood. Compatibility cannot be achieved merely by

demonstrating other selected residences nearby may be similar in size or larger than the proposed project, particularly if the selected examples are atypical of the neighborhood or at a distance from the proposed project. The apparent size, scale, and mass of a proposed project can be affected by thoughtful design, appropriate siting on the lot, landscaping, and other factors as well as by the actual size of the residence.

*Figure 2. Placement options for second story when adjacent to single story home*



2. The perceived scale, mass, and design should be appropriate to the original home.
3. Blocks where single-story houses or small two-story homes are the predominant block pattern, a second story may require special attention. Scale may be minimized by employing one or more of the following techniques:
  - a. Limit the house profile of the expanded or new home to an area generally consistent with the profiles of the existing homes.
  - b. Setting the second floor back from the front and sides of the first story a distance sufficient to reduce apparent overall scale of the building.
  - c. Limit the size of the second story relative to the first story.

- d. Increase the front and/or side setbacks for the entire structure.
- e. Place at least 60 to 70 percent of the second floor area over the back half of the first story.
- f. Slope the new roof away from the adjacent homes.
- g. Incorporate the second story into the roof.

*Figures 3 & 4 demonstrate incorporation of second floor into the roof helping to relate larger homes to smaller neighbors*



*Figure 4.*



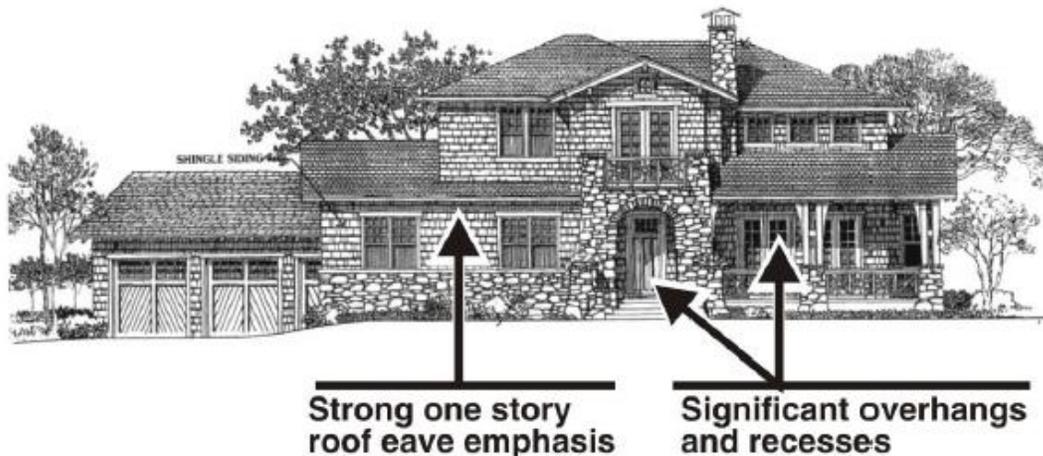
*Figure 5. Second floor is pulled into the center of the roof providing a setback from the building edges helping to maintain adequate space, light and sense of openness to the adjacent residences.*

*C. Surface Articulation*

Residences should be designed with relief in building facades. Long unarticulated wall and roof planes should be avoided, especially on two-story elevations.

1. Changes within the wall and roof planes can be accomplished when one of the forms is setback several feet or when a gable end fronts the street and through the use of porches that run across the street-facing elevation of the home.
2. Changes within the wall and roof planes can also be achieved through the use of various textures and materials. This can be seen in the use of horizontal wood lap siding, wood trim around windows and doors, shingle textures on the roof, deep recessed entries, use of roof segments separating the first- and second-floor facades.

*Figure 6. Changes in wall plane and second-floor step backs are utilized, as well as a mix of materials and use of recessed areas help achieve relief in the building facade*





*Figure 7. Design exhibits use of differing wall planes, two story entry element and covered porch to break up the front facade.*

*D. Building Orientation*

1. Residences should contain visible front entryways, in scale with neighboring properties and oriented toward the public street.



*Figure 8. Avoid exaggerated tall entries like this*

*Figure 9 & 10. Avoid formal entries in neighborhoods with informal homes (Figure 9) and in neighborhoods where entries are located under roof eaves as shown in the ranch style (Figure 10).*



2. New/remodeled structures should not present height or bulk at front and side setback lines which is significantly greater than those of the adjacent homes.



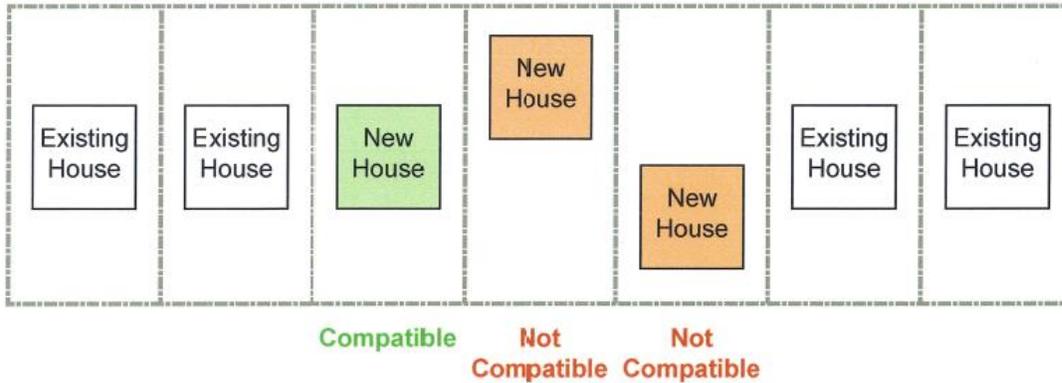
*Figure 11. Homes with differing bulk and massing along front facade*

3. Homes should be located on the lot in a similar manner as adjacent homes and within the applicable setback requirements.

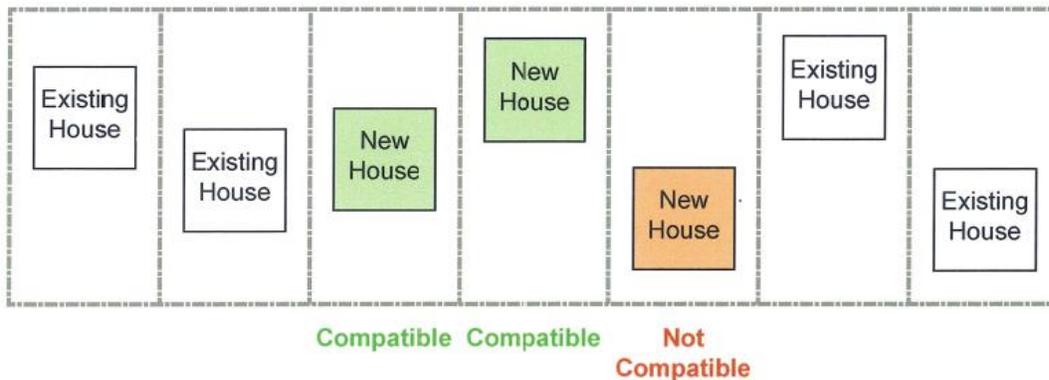


*Figure 12. Homes with similar setbacks on the street frontage*

4. In cases where setbacks are similar in the neighborhood, new homes should match those of adjacent homes.
5. Where adjacent homes have differing setbacks, the setback of the new home should be the average of the two on either side.



*Figure 12a. In neighborhood where existing homes have consistent setbacks, new construction should match the siting of adjacent homes.*



*Figure 12b. In neighborhoods where existing homes have varied setbacks, the siting of new construction should be equal to or greater than the average setback of adjacent homes.*

**Exception to Averaging: Where the adjacent lots have a nonconforming setback, the applicant may have the option of conforming to the required zoning setback. In some instances, a varied setback from the neighborhood pattern may be necessary or appropriate (such lot constraints include topography, trees, creeks, lot size and Environmentally Sensitive Habitat).**

*E. Garage and Driveway Design*

In most cases, the curb appeal and livability of a home will be enhanced if the living area, rather than the garage is the most prominent feature of the front façade. Garage doors can have a noticeably negative impact to the street facing elevation of a home and, cumulatively on appearance of a neighborhood. To reduce the prominence of garages and driveways, home designs should to the extent feasible, reflect a careful consideration of the following principles:

1. Garages placed along the front elevation of a home should not exceed 50% of the linear front elevation width where possible. The remainder of the front elevation should be devoted to living area or a porch.
2. Garages exceeding 50% of the linear front elevation should include one or more of the following design options:
  - a. Recess garage from the front wall of the house a minimum of 5'
  - b. Provide an entry porch trellis extending in front of the face of the garage.
  - c. If the garage is the dominant feature from the street frontage, then it should be designed with architectural and visual interest.

***Figure 13. Limiting driveway width of garages and setting them back from the front façade can minimize visual impact***



Figures 14 – 18 provide examples of Decorative Garage Door ideas:

*Figure 14.*



*Figure 15.*



*Figure 16.*



*Figure 17.*



*Figure 18.*

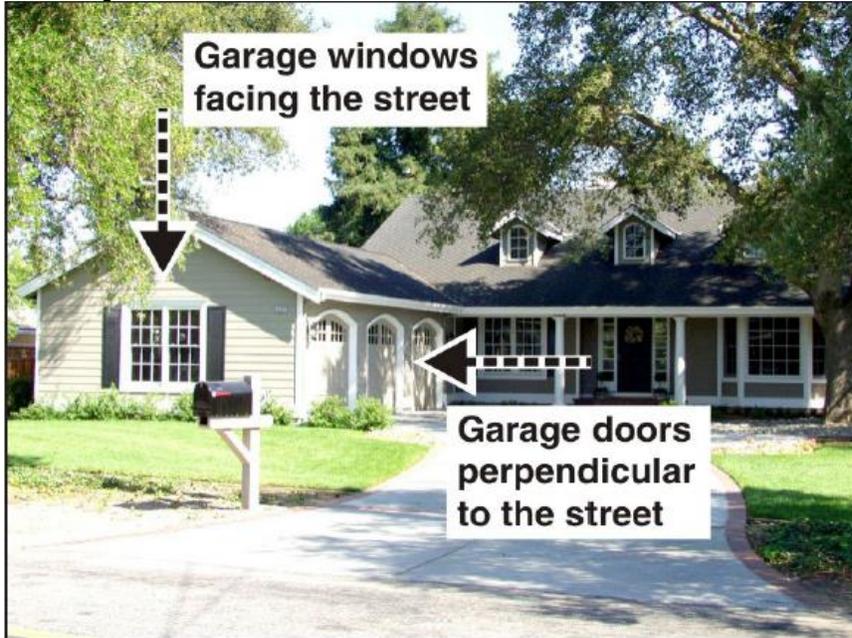


3. Garage entries should be oriented away from the street where possible. This can be accomplished through placement of the garage at the rear of property or through use of a side loaded garage (see figures 19 & 20).

*Figure 19. Narrow driveway with garage located toward the rear of the property*



*Figure 20. Side loaded garage help minimize the visual impact of larger garages on the streetscape*

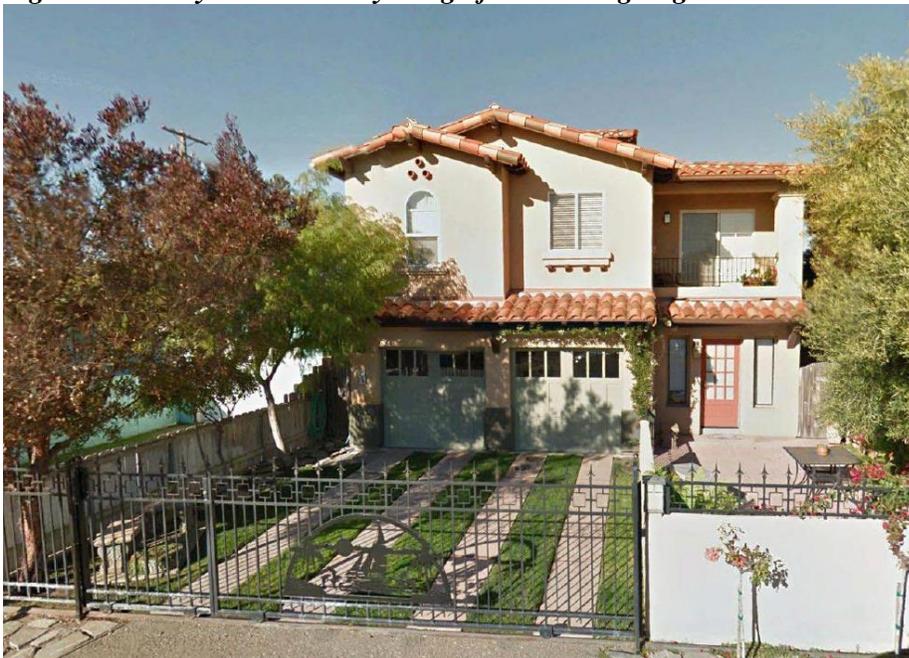


4. Mitigate the impact of driveways on the streetscape by:
  - a. Limiting width of curb cuts to the minimum size needed to access the garage. This preserves on street parking and reduces paving in the front yard.
  - b. Utilizing decorative paving materials, permeable pavers or special patterns or colors to break up paved driveway areas in front setbacks (See figures 23 – 27).
  - c. Utilizing single width driveways or make use of “Hollywood” driveways (See figures 21 & 22).

*Figure 21. Hollywood Driveway Design for single car garage*



*Figure 22. Hollywood driveway design for two car garage*



Figures 23 – 27 provide examples of permeable paver drive options

*Figure 23.*



*Figure 24.*



*Figure 25.*



*Figure 26.*



*Figure 27.*



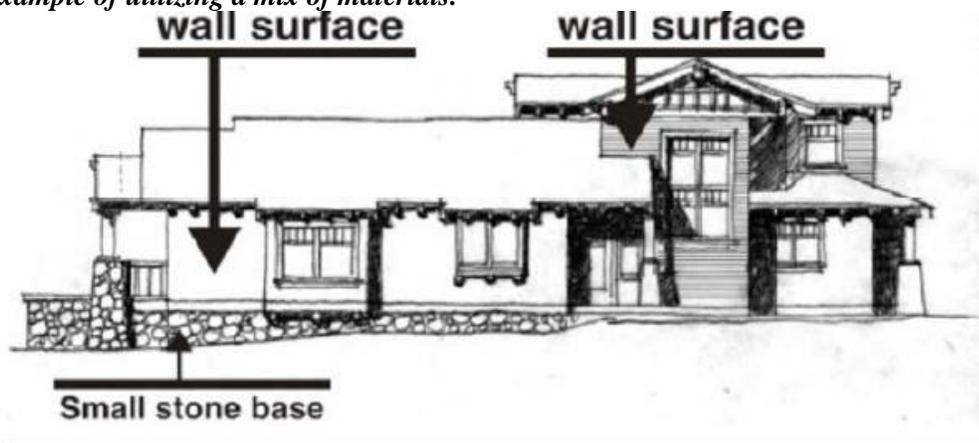
5. Other similar features as approved by the review authority.

*F. Building Materials*

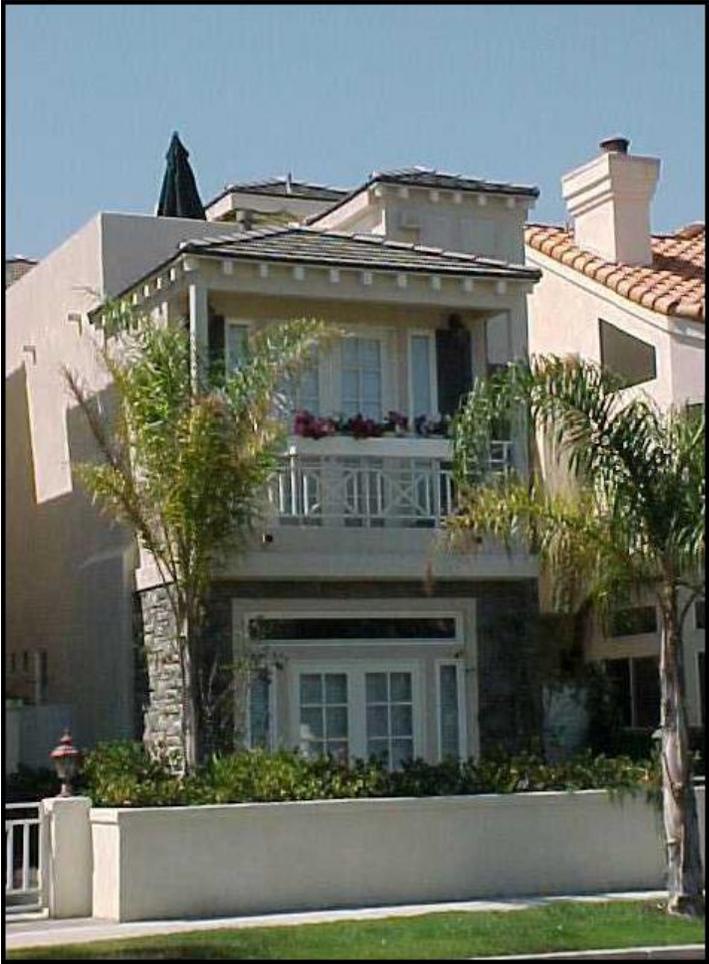
Building materials should be consistently applied and shall be harmonious with adjacent materials (see Figures 28 & 29). Piecemeal and frequent changes in building materials should be avoided.

1. When using a mix of material, avoid using too many materials.
2. Avoid using an even split of materials (*i.e.* 50/50) on facades.
3. It is preferred to have one material as the dominant surface with the second material utilized in a lesser or accent role.

*Figure 28. Example of utilizing a mix of materials.*



*Figure 29. Use of complimentary building materials and color palette enhances building design*



*G. Architectural Elements*

The architectural elements of a building include openings, doors, windows and architectural features such as roof elements, columns and dormers.

1. Architectural elements within the design should be in proportion to the overall home design.
2. Architectural elements should reflect the habitation and internal and external use of the structure.
3. For most traditional styles architectural elements should be balanced on

the building elevations. One option to achieve balance is through the vertical and horizontal alignments of the elements.

4. When the architectural style of a residence does not call for symmetry, creative asymmetric placement of architectural elements may provide for dramatic interest.

*Figure 30a. Some architectural styles require simple shapes and formal symmetry of the door and windows*



*Figure 30b. Creative Asymmetric Placement of Architectural Elements*



**Figure 31. Avoid too many building elements competing for attention**



**H. Additions to Existing Homes**

1. The design of the addition should be consistent with the materials and architectural elements utilized in the existing home and adjacent neighborhood. If differing materials or styles are chosen for the addition they should be complimentary in nature.
2. Second floor additions should integrate into the overall design of the home. The addition should look like an original part of the home.

**Figure 32. Original single story home**



*Figure 33. Incorporating a second floor addition into the roof adds the desired space while respecting the integrity of the existing house and the scale of the neighborhood.*



3. Rooflines of the addition should be compatible with the roof slope of the existing house.
  
4. New windows and other architectural elements should be compatible with the shape, pattern, style, color and materials of the original architectural elements. If all windows are replaced, then the new windows should be compatible with the architectural style of the home.

**Figure 34.** Addition incorporated into the roof, but roofing material is not consistent with architectural style of the existing residence.

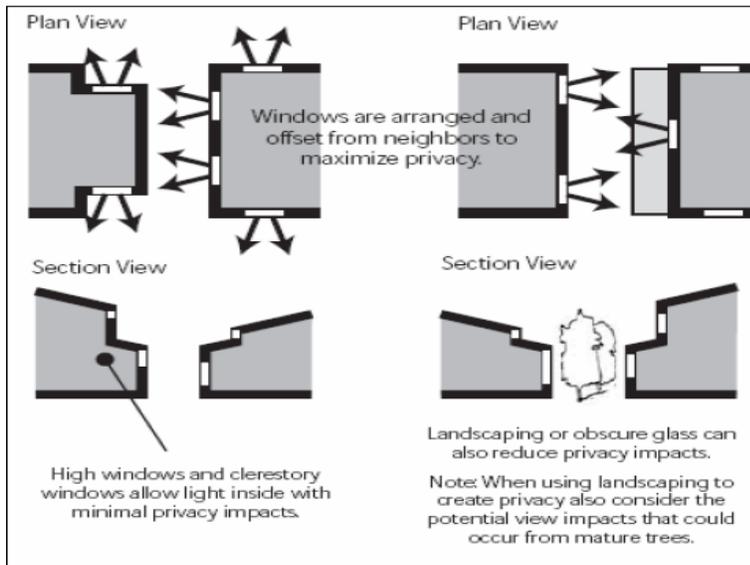


*I. Privacy. Minimize privacy intrusions on adjacent residences.*

While it may not be possible to ensure complete privacy between homes, given the small lot sizes in the City, designs should attempt to lessen the impact. Options for reducing privacy conflicts are noted below:

1. Windows should be placed so as to minimize views into the living spaces and yard spaces near neighboring homes. In particular, window placement in the side wall of a home should be offset to avoid looking directly into a neighboring room.
2. Decks and balconies should be designed and located with consideration given to the privacy of adjoining properties.
3. Other options for reducing privacy impacts between neighboring residences include: application of appropriate landscaping, use of smaller windows, designing sill height above eye level or utilizing frosted or textured glass to reduce visual exposure.

**Figure 35. Design options for reducing privacy impacts**



### *J. Landscaping*

Residential landscaping should include the following:

1. Drought tolerant plant species that require little to no fertilizer, herbicides, and pesticides.
2. Plants appropriate for the sites characteristics; sun exposure, wind, soil moisture, and existing vegetation.
3. Non-invasive plant species, particularly near creeks, drainages or existing native vegetation. Plantings should be sited such that they will not interfere with onsite utility lines, including water and sewer lines.
4. Siting of trees to avoid unnecessarily obstructing views from adjacent properties. In view sensitive areas, proposed trees should be chosen that do not exceed a mature height that exceeds the maximum building height of the zone district. Proposed trees should also be continuously maintained at a height that does not exceed the maximum permitted height of the zone district. Existing mature trees are exempted from this policy.
5. Street trees should be chosen from the City's approved street tree list.

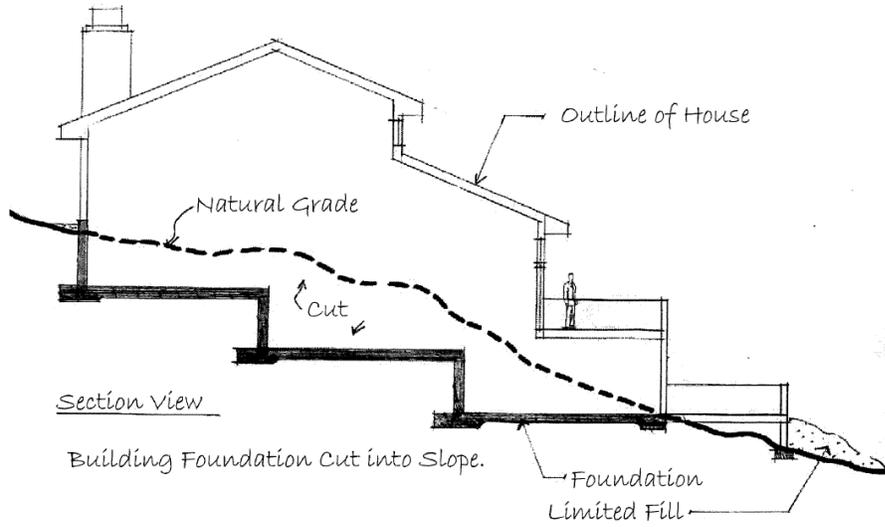
6. Mature landscaping should be preserved where possible, paying special attention to the preservation of mature healthy trees.
7. Efficient drip irrigation systems that make use of soil moisture meters, and rain and wind shutoff devices to reduce water consumption.

*K. Hillside Development*

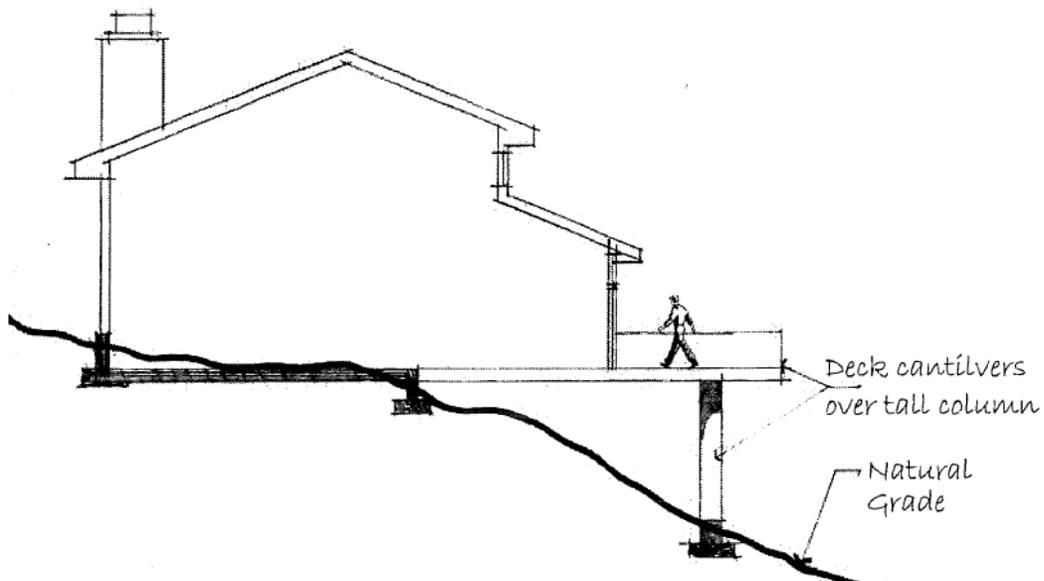
The hillside development guidelines apply to properties with lot sizes 5,000 square feet or greater and with slopes exceeding 15%. The intent of the following policies is to preserve, enhance and protect the visual quality of the Morro Bay hillside areas. Project design should take into consideration the site's natural features, topography, visual character, unique qualities and surrounding environment:

1. Step the building up or down the hill (see Figure 36).
2. Set the structure into the hillside topography while also balancing or limiting the amount of grading, beyond the footprint, to avoid erosion and visual impacts (see Figure 36).
3. Step back the taller portions of the structure to reduce the appearance of height.
4. Minimize exposed foundations, underfloor areas, and downhill cantilevers when structurally feasible and avoid use of tall support columns utilized for support of overhanging areas (see Figure 37).
5. Vary height of building elements (See figure 38)

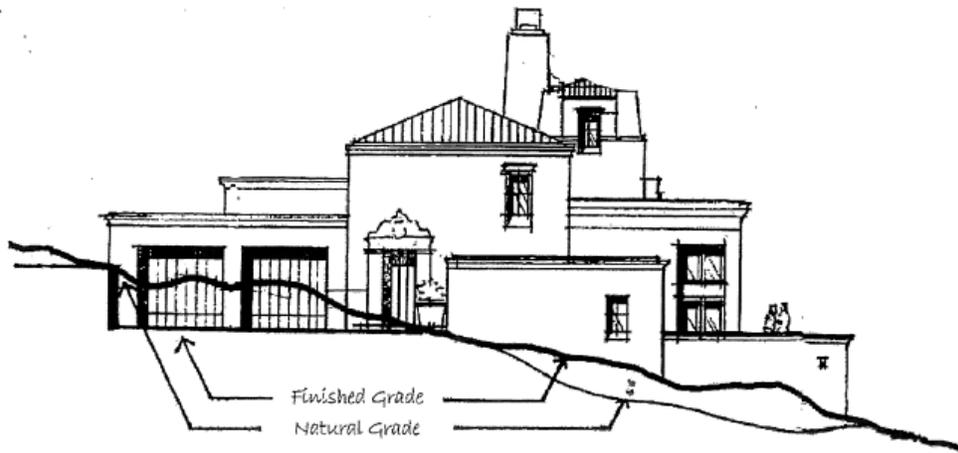
**Figure 36. House cut into slope and stepped into the hillside**



**Figure 37. Avoid exposed understory with large cantilevers supported by tall columns**



*Figure 38. Vary Height of Building Elements*



*L. Solar Access*

The City of Morro Bay encourages applicants to incorporate solar energy systems into their projects. Building placement and adjacencies should be considered such that they do not unreasonably affect solar access on neighboring properties. Solar panels and other roof mounted equipment can detract from the appearance of a home and appear obtrusive if not integrated into the design. The following policies should be considered when designing a solar system and when siting a home or addition:

1. For existing homes align solar equipment and panels with the underlying roof slope where feasible. Avoid panels with slopes that are different than that of the roof.
2. For new homes, the roof should be designed to accommodate future solar energy and hot water systems, taking into consideration orientation and slope.
3. Integrate the design of the equipment and panels into the design of the roof. Avoid a tacked on appearance.
4. Locate roof mounted solar equipment and panels below ridgelines and on sides of roofs away from street view wherever possible. Non-glare and non-reflective type panels should be utilized where possible.

5. The design and placement of roof mounted solar equipment and panels should account for heights of existing trees and future growth. This applies to both trees on-site and on neighboring properties.
6. Orient the massing of the home and roof forms away from the side yards of neighbors as much as possible to minimize blocking their solar access.
7. On flat roofs, set solar equipment back from the edge to reduce visibility.
8. Siting of new homes and additions should avoid shading existing solar systems and should take into consideration potential shading issues related to future solar installations on neighboring properties.
9. Minimize roof penetrations on South and West facing roofs.

*M. Glossary.*

**Bulk:** The qualitative readily visible composition and perceived shape of a structures volume. Bulk is affected by variations in height, setbacks and stepbacks of upper stories.

**Garage (Side Loaded):** A garage with it entry doors located at an angle (usually a right angle) to the street which provides vehicular access to the garage.

**Grading:** Any excavation or filling of earth or combination of these activities.

**Height Limit:** The maximum allowed height of a structure as established by the Zoning Code utilizing an imaginary surface located at the allowed number of feet above and parallel to the existing grade.

**Hillsides:** Lands with slopes exceeding 15% slope

**Mass:** The three-dimensional form of a building

**Roof Pitch:** The angle of the sloped planes of a roof, often expressed in the rise in inches for every foot of horizontal distance, as in a 4 in 12 pitch.

**Scale:** Building elements and details as they proportionally relate to each other and to humans.

**Setbacks:** The horizontal distances a structure is held away from the adjacent property lines. Also use to describe the offset distance between horizontal or vertical planes of a structure.

**Solar Access:** The potential to receive adequate sunlight in order for certain areas of a dwelling or lot to catch the sun's energy.

**Trellis:** A horizontal light framework, freestanding or projecting from the face of a wall, use for the purposes of sun shading and/or support of vines or other vegetation.