



CITY OF CARMEL-BY-THE-SEA

Design Traditions 1.5 Council Direction on Draft Versions

City Council

3/3/26



Purpose

- Presentation of updated Design Guidelines
 - “Apples to Apples”
- Consider Planning Commission recommendation
 - Nore Winter vs. Steering Committee Draft
- Provide direction on which version to complete
 - Include process and participants



Project Background

- March, 2022 – Nore Winter contract
 - Design Traditions 1.5 Project (DT-1.5)
- April, 2022 – DT-1.5 Steering Committee appointed by Council
 - First meeting, April 13th
 - 36 meetings in total since then (10 mo. gap – Planning Director)
- June, 2022 – Community workshops #1 and #2
 - 2 nights, 50-75 people
- September, 2022 – Strategy Paper
 - Consolidated workshop findings
 - Approved by PC and Council



Project Background (cont.)

- October, 2022 – Community workshop #3
 - Shared strategy paper and received feedback
- October, 2022 to February, 2023 – Drafting Design Guidelines 1.5
 - Led by Nore Winter
 - Steering Committee and staff continue to meet with consultant
- February, 2023 – Consultant draft released for public review
 - Steering Committee concerns
 - Not streamlined
 - More complicated
 - Longer



Project Background (cont.)

- March, 2023 – Steering Committee revised draft
 - Organized by “Core Principles”
 - More user friendly
 - Less redundancy
 - Reduced page count
- March 2023 to Nov 2025 – Refine Steering Committee draft
 - Public meetings and input
 - Refined language
 - Small guideline additions
 - Photographs
 - Supporting documents



Project Background (cont.)

- Nov 2025 to Jan 2026 – PC and Council Presentations
 - Council direction:
 - Update Steering Committee Draft – Apples to Apples
 - Get PC feedback on preferred version
 - Return to Council for direction
- Jan 2026 to Feb 2026 – Workgroup efforts
 - Create “Apples to Apples” Steering Committee version
 - Allow the PC to make fair comparison



Project Background (cont.)

- Feb 18th – Special Planning Commission Meeting
 - Recommendation: Use Steering Committee Version
 - 4 yes, 1 abstain
 - Additional PC feedback:
 - Use recent PC issues to inform guidelines (flat roof, skylights, etc.)
 - Rely on existing City Documents if possible (bldg. code, hist. context etc.)
 - More PC and Planning Staff involvement for remaining work
 - Need to create a formal redline for adoption process
 - Complete Guidelines in a process that moves as efficiently as possible



Updated Draft Guidelines Highlights

- Organized under 6 “Core Principles”
 - Developed through community workshops
- Reduced Page Count
- Reduced photographs
 - Only when guidelines need a visual
- Find specific topics via index (e.g.: “windows”)
 - Shows up under multiple Core Principles
- Hyperlinks
- Revised Supporting sections

CORE PRINCIPLES

1. **ENHANCE**, restore, and preserve the forest in all improvement projects: private, public, and otherwise.
2. **SUBORDINATE** every built structure to the character and continuity of the forest, natural environment, and to the natural features of its own site.
3. **FIT** every built structure within its neighborhood context.
4. **RETAIN** and build upon Carmel’s architectural heritage.
5. **DESIGN** every built structure with modesty and restraint.
6. **DETAIL** every property authentically and consistently.



“Apples to Apples” Work

- Formatting
 - More intuitive
 - Visual cues to original guidelines
- Navigability
 - Table of Contents, Keys, Index, Hyperlinks
- Narratives
 - Explain each principle
- Process
 - Narrative application form and Flowchart
- Photographs



Look and Feel

Design Traditions of Carmel
DESIGN GUIDELINES





Keys



IMAGE SYMBOLS KEY

- ✓ Image and caption describe a **SUPPORTED** principle.
- Image and caption describe a **CONDITIONAL** principle.
- ✗ Image and caption describe an **UNSUPPORTED** principle.



LINKED DOCUMENTS KEY

<u>GP</u>	General Plan
<u>HCS</u>	Historic Context Statement
<u>LCP</u>	Local Coastal Plan
<u>MC</u>	Municipal Code
<u>P</u>	Policy



Core Principles Explained

1. **ENHANCE**, restore, and preserve the native forest in all improvement projects: private, public, and otherwise
(as seen in the dense, healthy Monterey Pine and Coast Live Oak environment above).

Background: Few newcomers recognize that Carmel hosts the sole surviving “Mother Stand” of the Monterey Pine forest on planet Earth, an ecosystem that has adapted to 25 million years of climate change, from ice ages to searing droughts. So important is this native ecology today that academic and industrial scientists fly in to study it, to determine how to nurture it, and to grow its species in lumber plantations around the world. So important was this ecology to the early developers that they incorporated the town in 1916 because Monterey County was failing to adequately protect it. In fact, their radical founding idea was to promote this place as a refuge for people to live in harmony with nature amidst a majestic, prehistoric forest -- an idea that ran in very stark contrast to the prevailing “pioneer tradition” of the time, which advocated for the conquest of nature. In times of ongoing climatic stresses, how harmoniously we reside within this international treasure will determine its fate and that of this visionary village.

Process: design steps most relevant to this section include...

- visiting the site and speaking with neighbors to discover natural assets and shared view issues
- commissioning a site survey
- conducting preliminary consultations with city forest and planning staff and commissions
- obtaining a preliminary assessment report on site conditions, development standards, zoning, and so on
- studying the significant tree evaluation inventory worksheet



Fire Alert

FIRE ALERT

When beginning any residential design or remodel in Carmel-by-the-Sea, fire resilience must serve as the premier guide for the proposed project to ensure long-term sustainability and community safety. Because significant portions of the city are classified as an extreme fire danger area, wildfire represents the single greatest threat to both the natural environment and architectural character of the community.

True sustainability is not complete without proactive protection against catastrophic fire risk, necessitating design concepts that prioritize ignition-resistant materials, Class A roofs, and ember-resistant detailing. To address the critical gap in wildfire resilience, applicants must now utilize ignition-resistant [products listed by the Office of the State Fire Marshal \(OSFM\)](#). This allows projects to honor the village's aesthetic legacy—using materials that convey a natural patina and human scale—while meeting the objective safety requirements of the [California WUI Code](#).

Furthermore, the initial design layout should consider defensible space to ensure proper distance between structures and flammable materials such as vegetation, fences, etc. By making fire resilience the primary driver of a design, homeowners can harmonize Carmel's unique aesthetic heritage with the [objective regulatory standards](#) required to make the built environment both beautiful and survivable.



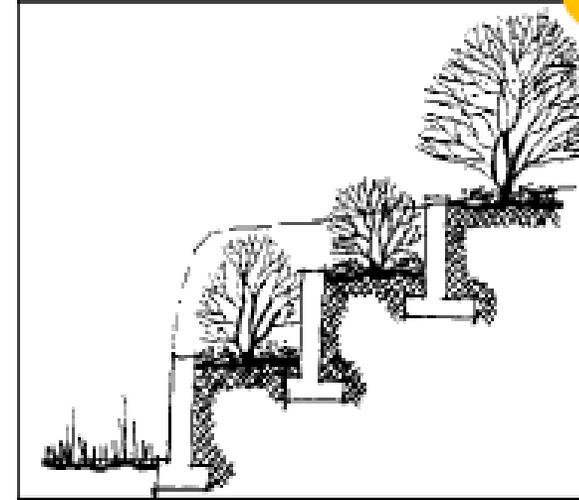
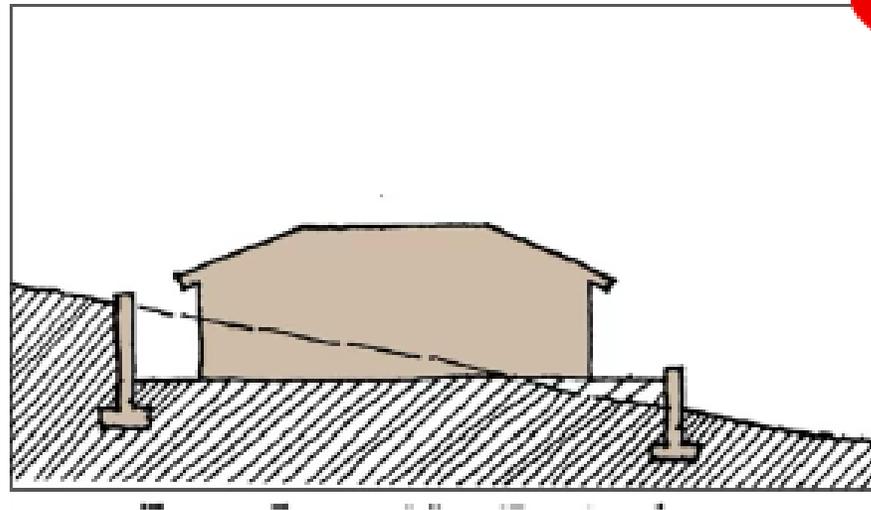
Suggested Omissions – Non Guidelines

- 1.1.1. Before beginning design work, have a licensed surveyor or engineer prepare the required survey, showing existing site conditions, topography, drainage features, trees, structures, right-of-way edges and character, views, privacy issues, historical evaluations, nonconformities, neighborhood design contexts, and other features useful in designing a project.
 - 1.1.2. Address comments provided by a City Planner and the City Forester on the required survey and on the required City Forester evaluation of existing tree significance and condition on and immediately adjacent to the project site, including in the right-of-way.
 - 1.1.3. Address the Forest and Beach Commission's project review comments on the effects that proposed work will have on significant trees.
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- 1.2.6. Do not remove trees or add gravel or other “hardened” surfaces to provide parking in the right-of-way, but instead reinforce the forest image by separating parking spaces from driveways with plantings and by using natural soil, or **fresh, mini-woodchips** as surface materials (*as shown above by a nearly undetectable natural area sized to accommodate parking*).



Conditioned Preferences

part of the allowed floor area.



- 2.2.4. Avoid abrupt changes in grade (*as shown above left by flattened grade with added retaining walls*) within a site and between adjoining properties. If such transitions are unavoidable, then use sloped, planted areas. If a stable planted slope cannot be created, then use multiple landscaped terraces rather than a single tall wall (*as shown by short walls above right*).



Process Documents

1. ENHANCE, restore, and preserve the native forest in all improvement projects: private, public, and otherwise.

Design the project as an extension of Carmel's native forest. The upper and lower canopy should remain the primary site feature, with buildings visually secondary. Projects should retain significant trees, supplement the forest with new planting, and reinforce continuity of the forest character across the site and surrounding area.

Describe how the project addresses this principle:

Step 1: Site Assessment

- Applicant applies for preliminary site assessment. (General Planning application and survey created within a year of application submittal.)
- Planning and Forestry staff assess the site.
- The applicant uses the assessment and the core principles in developing the project design.



Step 2: Concept Review

- Owner develops the Concept Design level information.
- Planning Commission reviews for compliance.
- When approved, applicant continues to Final Design.





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Hyperlinks

- 1.2.2. Remove any excess existing paving and other non-conforming and easily displaced materials, such as gravel per M.C. 12.24.020.B. Never keep in the right-of-way irrigation equipment or unpermitted paving, gravel, boulders, logs, timbers, planters, fences, retaining walls, other above-ground encroachments, or any hardscape that would widen the street or create a parking space.



Thank You!

- Steering Committee
- Community
- Planning Staff
- City Council
- Planning Commission



Purpose

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- Consider Planning Commission recommendation
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Steering Committee Comments



Questions