

City of Oakland

Interim Design Review Manual for One- and Two-Unit Residences

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Adopted by the Oakland City Planning Commission on _____

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Interim Design Review Manual for One and Two Unit Residences

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CONTENTS

Introduction	1-1
Project Impacts on Neighboring Properties	
Criterion 1: View Impacts on Neighboring Properties	1-1
Criterion 2: Solar Access Impacts on Neighboring Properties	2-1
Criterion 3: Privacy Impacts on Neighboring Properties	3-1
Project Design	
Criterion 4: Site Planning	4-1
Criterion 5: Building Design	5-1
Criterion 6: Bulk: All Projects	6-1
Criterion 7: Bulk: Special Methods for Hillside	7-1
Criterion 8: Neighborhood Compatibility	8-1
Criterion 9: Site Access and Parking	9-1
Criterion 10: Landscaping	10-1
Criterion 11: Street Fronting Fences and Freestanding Walls	11-1
Criterion 12: S-10 Scenic Route Combining Zone	12-1
Appendix A: Projects Exempt from Design Review	A-1
Appendix B: Architectural Styles	B-1
Appendix C: Bibliography	C-1

Purpose and Intent

The Design Review Manual for One- and Two-Unit Residences complements existing zoning regulations and the residential design review procedures of the Oakland Planning Code.

The Design Review Manual provides certainty and predictability in the design review process through the establishment of uniform Citywide decision-making criteria for all one and two unit projects subject to design review. The Manual serves as the basis for design review approval findings by City staff and, when necessary, the City Planning Commission and the City Council. The Manual is intended to be specific enough to guide development, while at the same time flexible enough to not preclude creative design solutions.

Design review objectives are (1) create safe, attractive and stable neighborhoods; (2) maintain property values; (3) provide attractive and highly livable housing that meets the needs of all Oakland residents; and (4) safeguard the City's architectural heritage.

Through the Design Review Manual, the City encourages residential designs that are sensitive to natural conditions and conserve, protect and enhance the unique character of Oakland neighborhoods. Emphasis is placed on the following design features: harmonious relationships between the proposal and existing conditions; the provision and maintenance of usable open space; effective orientation to sun and other elements; and efficiency of land use.

Oakland has many neighborhood environments that vary in landforms, vegetation, development patterns and development densities. Much of the Upper Hill Area is characterized by open canyons, steep natural landforms, native and other naturalistic vegetation, large lots and narrow winding roads. The Lower Hill Area is characterized by smaller hills of varied steepness, natural and ornamental vegetation and more urban development patterns and densities. The flatland areas are mostly characterized by grid street systems and ornamental rather than naturalistic vegetation.

In between these areas are transitional neighborhoods, such as parts of Montclair, which share aspects of both natural and urban settings and are often considered rustic or informal. The Manual seeks to promote design solutions that recognize and are compatible with these different environments.

The Manual provides project sponsors, neighbors and the general public with clear documentation of the City's design objectives and expectations. Toward this end, the Manual presents design approaches which, if followed, will offer project sponsors a high level of certainty through the design review process, assuming their projects conform to all other applicable City standards.

How to Use the Manual's Design Review Criteria and Guidelines

The Design Review Manual consists of both *Criteria* and *Guidelines*. The *Criteria* set forth the overall policy which is then expressed more specifically in the *Guidelines*.

To be granted design review approval, a project must conform to all of the applicable *Criteria*. The *Guidelines* that follow each *Criterion* provide methods to interpret and help meet that *Criterion*.

The City recognizes that the Manual cannot anticipate all acceptable solutions to a particular design problem. Therefore, the *Guidelines* are intended to encourage a variety of good design solutions and are not intended to dictate particular design methods. Methods other than those set forth in the *Guidelines* may often be appropriate. Strict conformity with the *Guidelines* may therefore not be necessary as long as the city determines that the relevant *Criteria* are met. Such determinations may require additional time to review the application.

Design Review Approval Criteria

The following are the Design Review Manual's approval criteria. In order to be approved, a project must conform with all of the applicable criteria:

CRITERION 1: VIEWS

YES/ NO A project shall make a reasonable effort to maintain the most significant views from primary living spaces of existing residences of abutting lots and lots directly across the street. View protection is considered for views that are located within view corridors, subject to view protection limitations.

(Refer to Guidelines 1.1- 1.4 for methods to help meet the 'Views' criterion).

CRITERION 2: SOLAR ACCESS

YES/ NO A project shall make a reasonable effort to minimize solar access impacts on actively used outdoor areas of abutting residential properties.

(Refer to Guidelines 2.1- 2.3 for methods to help meet the 'Solar Access' criterion).

CRITERION 3: PRIVACY

YES/ NO A project shall make a reasonable effort to minimize privacy impacts from upper-level decks or windows on primary living spaces of residential lots abutting the SIDES OR REAR of the project site.

YES/ NO The project shall be designed to minimize privacy impacts ON THE PROJECT from neighboring properties.

(Refer to Guidelines 3.1- 3.3 for methods to help meet the 'Privacy' criterion).

CRITERION 4: SITE DESIGN

YES/ NO The building or addition shall be sited in a manner that is compatible with adjacent properties and any existing site features, respects the configuration and natural amenities of the lot, and maintains or promotes useable open space.

YES/ NO Stairways, accessways, and corridors shall be designed to ensure the privacy and security of residents without adversely affecting the residential amenity of adjacent properties.

YES/ NO The primary pedestrian entrances shall be identifiable from the street; and, where desirable, pedestrian entry paths shall be distinct and separate elements from parking pads and driveways.

YES/ NO Outdoor spaces shall be an integral part of the overall design (distinct spaces and/or landscaped zones rather than left over spaces).

YES/ NO On hillsides, open spaces shall reinforce natural landforms (especially in canyon areas), provide for visual openness between houses and include livable outdoor areas such as courts, yards or terraces at or near grade.

(Refer to Guidelines 4.1- 4.8 for methods to help meet the 'Site Design' criterion).

CRITERION 5: BUILDING DESIGN

YES/ NO Each building shall have an architectural composition of forms that are well related to one another and the site in proportion, scale, geometry and style.

YES/ NO Building elevations (walls, windows, roof/leave lines etc.) shall be composed in an ordered, unified and consistent manner that reinforces the design's basic composition, style and massing while providing visual interest.

YES/ NO Complement neighborhood scale, development patterns and orientation of structures and not disrupt neighborhood appearance.

YES/ NO The principal entryway shall be visually prominent and located either on the front elevation or on the front portion of a side elevation.

YES/ NO Parking entrances and garages shall be integrated into the overall design so that they are not dominant features of facades.

YES/ NO Detailing and use of materials shall enhance the design's appearance and reinforce the architectural composition and style.

YES/ NO For additions and alterations, the scale, bulk, and massing shall be compatible with, but not necessarily identical to, the existing residence. Any new materials shall be integrated into the overall design even if they are not necessarily identical or similar to existing exterior treatments.

(Refer to Guidelines 5.1-5.11 for methods to help meet the 'Building Design' criterion).

CRITERION 6: BULK- ALL PROJECTS

YES/ NO The project shall manage mass, scale and composition, including materials and detailing, to minimize the building's actual and perceived bulk.

(Refer to Guidelines 6.1-6.11 for methods to help meet the 'Bulk- All Projects' criterion).

CRITERION 7: BULK: SPECIAL METHODS FOR HILLSIDES

YES/ NO Hillside projects shall use methods that blend with the hillside setting and minimize the building's prominence.

YES/ NO On sloped sites, minimize perceived bulk when viewed along with neighboring structures from the downslope side.

(Refer to Guidelines 7.1-7.9 for methods to help meet the 'Bulk: Special Methods for Hillside's' criterion).

CRITERION 8: NEIGHBORHOOD COMPATIBILITY (CONTEXT)

YES/ NO

New construction within 40 feet of a front lot line shall relate well to any strong, positive visual patterns, or "contexts" presented by neighboring buildings within the context area. These visual patterns shall include those created by: (i) roof forms and pitch; (ii) principle entryway treatment; (iii) front setback; (iv) surface materials; (v) windows and openings; (vi) architectural detailing; and (vii) front yard landscaping (see Figure 8-1).

The "context area" consists of the five lots on each side of the project site and the ten closest lots across the street (see Figure 8-2).

This criterion shall apply only if the slope of the project site is 20 percent or less and one of the following situations exists:

- a. Within 1,000 feet of the project site, there is a grid system of multiple streets, or the system of streets forms a pattern of a nearly rectilinear grid or the intersection of more than one grid; or
- b. At least 75% of the sites (including vacant lots) within 300 feet of and on the same street as the project site are 4,000 square feet or less in area.

This criterion does not apply if there are fewer than 10 houses in the context area.

(Refer to Guidelines 8.1 - 8.7 for methods to help meet the 'Neighborhood Compatibility' criterion).

YES/ NO

Where physically feasible, unenclosed parking spaces shall be visually screened from the street and other significant vantage points.

YES/ NO

Visible portions of the driveway shall minimize the use of paving, and use natural or decorative materials and designs.

YES/ NO

Garages shall be architecturally consistent with the residence and enhance the main building's streetscape appearance.

(Refer to Guidelines 9.1 - 9.7 for methods to help meet the 'Site Access and Parking' criterion).

CRITERION 10: LANDSCAPING

YES/ NO

The proposed landscaping shall complement the building design and the use of open spaces and yards, and provide visual interest and spatial definition to outdoor spaces and visual relief from building masses.

YES/ NO

Landscape areas shall be provided wherever possible along property lines and the base of buildings to soften edges.

YES/ NO

Fences, retaining walls, exterior stairs, other minor structures and site paving (hardscape) shall be consistent with the building architecture and landscaping and be sensitive to adjacent property conditions and public views.

YES/ NO

Street-fronting yards shall be designed to highlight the pedestrian entry.

YES/ NO

Water conservation shall be considered in the selection of plant material and irrigation systems.

YES/ NO

Fire resistant vegetation shall be used in hill areas. (The booklet "Fireescape - Landscaping to Reduce Fire Hazard" published by the East Bay Municipal Utility District is available at the Zoning Counter.)

(Refer to Guidelines 10.1 - 10.15 for methods to help meet the 'Landscaping' criterion).

CRITERION 9: SITE ACCESS AND PARKING

YES/ NO

Parking areas, garages, driveways and other parking provisions shall be sited to minimize their visual impact on the street and shall be subordinated to the house, landscape and pedestrian entrance.

CRITERION 11: STREET-FRONTING FENCES AND FREESTANDING WALLS

Note: Criterion 11 applies only to street-fronting fences/walls that: (a) are taller than 42" and require a Conditional Use Permit, or (b) are part of a landscape plan requiring City approval.

YES/ NO Street fronting fences and freestanding walls shall not be overly dominant within the streetscape and shall relate well to buildings, landscaping and other streetscape design features.

YES/ NO Fences and freestanding walls within front yards and the front portions of street side yards on corner lots shall complement the architectural style of the adjacent residence.

"Front portions of street side yards" refers to the portions of street side yards adjacent to the main residence and does not refer to portions at the rear of the main residence.

(Refer to Guidelines 11.1 - 11.12 for methods to help meet the 'Street Fronting Fences and Freestanding Walls' criterion).

CRITERION 12: S-10 SCENIC ROUTE COMBINING ZONE

Note: Criterion 12 applies only to projects in the S-10 Scenic Route Combining Zone requiring Design Review and/or a Conditional Use Permit.

YES/ NO Project design in the S-10 Scenic Route Combining Zone shall be aimed at achieving an atmosphere of harmony with nature. The following design considerations shall be given special attention:

1. Materials and architectural appointments;
2. Colors;
3. Landscaping;
4. Building mass and siting.

(Refer to Guidelines 12.1 - 12.5 for methods to help meet the 'S-10 Scenic Combining Zone' criterion).

