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Adopted: November 5, 2001 Resolution No. 149 (2001)
Revised: July 17, 2006, Resolution No. 66 (2006)

Single-Family Design Guidelines

I. Introduction

1) Purpose of the Guidelines

San Mateo's neighborhoods help make it a great city. San Mateo is a place where walking is comfortable, where residents identify not just with their own homes but also with their neighborhood, and where people are proud of where they live. The *Single-Family Design Guidelines* ("Design Guidelines" or "Guidelines") address the construction of new single-family dwellings and second story additions to single-family dwellings, and how the building's size, architectural character, and relationship to the street and nearby houses contribute to successful neighborhoods. The intent of these Guidelines is to have new single-family dwellings and second-story additions enhance the livability of San Mateo neighborhoods.

2) Development of the Guidelines

For several years leading up to the Guidelines there were concerns brought to the City of how additions to single-family houses were bulkier than their neighbors, not visually compatible, resulted in loss of privacy for neighbors, destroyed views and major landscaping, and were otherwise inappropriate in their neighborhood. In March 2000, the City Council directed staff to prepare Single-Family Design Guidelines. Working through a public planning process, staff and consultants held public workshops to further identify community issues and met regularly with a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) over a ten-month period. The TAC members represented neighborhood and homeowners associations, builder/contractors, Realtors® and the American Institute of Architects. Concerns and ideas expressed in the workshops and refined by the TAC became the focus of topics for the Design Guidelines.

3) Use of the Guidelines

The Single-Family Design Guidelines are intended for use by homeowners and their designers, by neighbors, and by community groups in their consideration of new single-family dwellings and second-story additions. The Guidelines do not apply to single-story additions. The Planning Division staff, Planning Commission and City Council will also use the Guidelines in their review of projects.

The Guidelines establish basic criteria to consider when designing a house. Following the minimum criteria alone will not guarantee good design. A thoughtful application of the guidelines will, however, cause a designer to consider the neighborhood context and other issues when developing a design, and reduce the potential for conflict and the delay and expense of project revisions.

The Guidelines are not intended to require an identical, regimented design for every house in a neighborhood. However, they are designed to help the reader identify the key building characteristics and components that define the character of the neighborhood. There are a variety of creative ways in which a dwelling can be designed to incorporate those key elements, but still retain its own individual identity. These Guidelines are intended to help in this effort.

New single-family dwellings and second story additions to single-family dwellings will be reviewed for compliance with these guidelines (as well as the other codes as mentioned below). There may be instances when unusual project characteristics, such as a unique lot shape, or the overall character of the neighborhood, make strict adherence to these guidelines inappropriate. In those cases, the reviewing body (Zoning Administrator, Planning Commission, City Council) may determine that other design solutions may result in a better designed structure for the neighborhood. There may also be cases where solutions other than as described in the Design Guidelines are desirable to the homeowner and are beneficial to the neighborhood. In those cases the deviation should result in a higher quality design that would be viewed as an improvement to the neighborhood by those reviewing the proposal. Higher quality could be interpreted to be use of building materials or architectural detailing that would not only be compatible with the neighborhood, but also set a positive example for neighborhood architectural standards.

The Design Guidelines are set up to complement other required City codes:

Zoning Code – The zoning code addresses building height, bulk, setbacks/daylight plane, parking, paving and other development standards. The design guidelines are intended to complement the Zoning Code to ensure a consistent quality of residential design. A copy of the major Zoning Code requirements for single-family dwellings is attached as *Appendix B* to this document.

Other Codes and Requirements – Other City codes that affect the design of single family dwellings include, but are not limited to, the Building Code which covers all aspects of construction (structural, mechanical, electrical, plumbing), Public Works requirements for all driveways, curb cuts and work in the public right of way (the sidewalk and street), the Heritage Tree Code which addresses the removal of significant vegetation, the Site Development Code which addresses major vegetation and slopes, and Subdivision Code maps.

4) Organization of the Guidelines

The Design Guidelines are structured to address the variety of neighborhood types in San Mateo. Owners, designers and reviewers will use the Guidelines to evaluate the neighborhood and determine what design solutions would be visually compatible with the neighborhood and with the existing house. The Guidelines are organized as follows:

- Chapter I – *Introduction*.
- Chapter II – *Neighborhood Character*, assists readers in defining the limits of their neighborhood and understanding what design elements contribute to its visual quality.
- Chapter III – *Relationship to Neighborhood*, examines the building form and building entry patterns of the neighborhood.
- Chapter IV – *Elements of Design*, analyzes individual components of a house and how they may contribute to the visual quality of the neighborhood and of the existing house.

The Guidelines in Chapters III and IV follow a consistent format, which includes the following:

- A topic heading as per the table of contents;
- An introductory paragraph describing the topic;
- A series of questions that assist the reader in evaluating the topic to determine if there is an architectural pattern in the neighborhood and to understand if it is important to follow the pattern;
- The Guideline pertaining to the topic along with descriptive sketches. In some cases the sketches show both good and bad examples of design to clarify the intent of the guidelines.

5) The City Review Process

To allow construction of a new house or to make changes to an existing house the following City approvals are required:

- Prior to filing a Planning Application, neighbors must be informed of a pending project in their neighborhood and given an opportunity to comment directly to the applicant. The process for neighborhood review is explained in *Appendix A* of this document.
- Upon completion of neighborhood review an applicant must then file a Planning Application with the City's Planning Division. Design review will occur as part of the Planning Application and will include a Single Family Dwelling Design Review. The City's Zoning Administrator will make a determination on the application's conformance with the Zoning Code and these Design Guidelines, and approve or disapprove the application. The application may also be referred to the Planning Commission for review. See *Appendix A* for a complete description of the review process.
- Upon Planning Application approval, an applicant must submit for a building permit to allow construction. Prior to issuing the building permit, final construction drawings will be checked

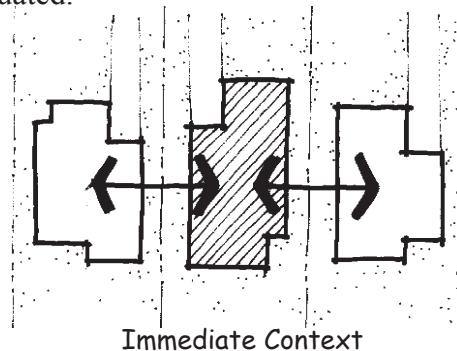
II. Neighborhood Character

What is a Neighborhood?

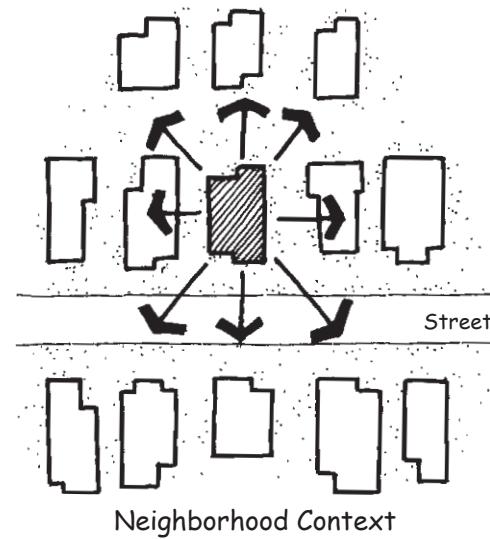
The first step in planning a change to a house is understanding the neighborhood. These guidelines attempt to have alterations to houses be compatible with neighboring houses and the overall neighborhood. The architectural character of the neighborhood is the basis for many of these design guidelines and for how changes to houses will be evaluated.

A neighborhood can easily be considered at two levels:

1) The immediate context, or how the house relates to the adjacent houses; and



2) The neighborhood context, or how the house relates to the visual character and scale of other houses in the general vicinity - generally houses that can be seen together and properties which abut.



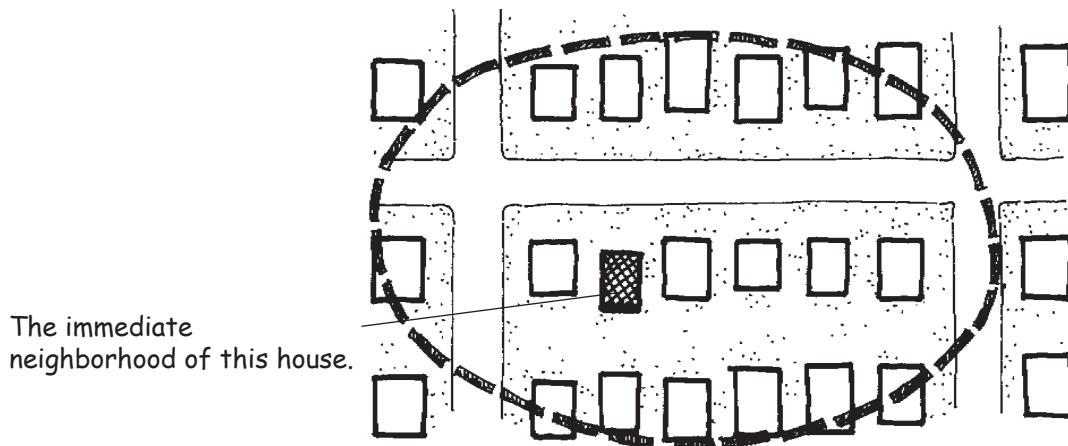
What Defines the Edge of a Neighborhood?

For purposes of these Design Guidelines there are four primary elements that make up a neighborhood and mark where it changes. These elements can determine the size of the neighborhood, its borders and its character:

- Land use – or a change from one land use to another such as from residential to commercial;
- Buildings – a neighborhood may be made of relatively similar buildings. Changing to another building type, such as from two-story houses to high-rise office or residential, or to a different architectural style, such as from “Mediterranean” to “Ranch”, defines the edge of a neighborhood;
- Streets – a wide street can form the edge of a neighborhood; and
- Natural areas or landscaping can mark the edge of a neighborhood.

What are the Limits of a Neighborhood?

For the purposes of these guidelines, a neighborhood is defined as the block or general area where a house exists, or a group of houses that can be seen together. The neighborhood also includes the homes behind the house that can all be seen together. Neighborhoods are often defined or limited by a change in land use, such as a commercial district or major park.



How Does a House Contribute to the Character of the Neighborhood?

The shape of a house, its arrangement of doors and windows, its roof style, and its architectural style all make up the character of a house and contribute to the collective appearance of the neighborhood. There are many architectural elements that contribute to the character of an individual house and the neighborhood. Some of the most common are listed here:

- How houses are setback from the street
- Parking and garage patterns
- The architectural style of a house or houses in the neighborhood
- Arrangement of major building forms
- Location of entries
- Roof forms
- Number of stories
- Materials
- Window type
- Landscaping
- Historic buildings or features

Design Review of Single-Family in Multi-Family Neighborhoods

When designing improvements to single-family homes in multi-family neighborhoods, consider the architectural characteristics of the multi-family structures in addition to the criteria stated in the Design Guidelines. Acknowledge that the scale and architectural detailing may be different than typical neighborhoods that are composed mainly of single-family homes.

III. Relationship to Neighborhood

To a large degree, the visual quality of San Mateo is defined by its neighborhoods. A single building out of context with its neighbors can appear disruptive. The following guidelines examine patterns and building forms that may be common to a neighborhood, and the guidelines suggest methods of maintaining or enhancing the neighborhood's most important visual qualities.

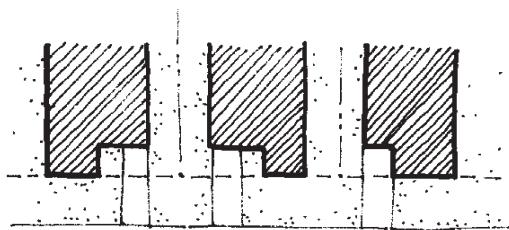
1) Setback Patterns

The pattern of building setbacks often establishes a pleasing architectural rhythm to a block. The Zoning Code requires a minimum setback from front, side and rear property lines. The neighborhood's setback pattern is established by the common distance between the building edge and the front property line, and also by the building footprint patterns of the neighborhood. A new home that is contrary to the established pattern, changes, and could visually disrupt the appearance of the neighborhood. If there is no established setback pattern, greater flexibility in setbacks may be considered. Evaluate the neighborhood pattern of setbacks:

- Is there an existing dominant pattern of building setbacks that differs from the minimum Zoning Code requirement?
- What would be the effect of altering this pattern?

Guideline:

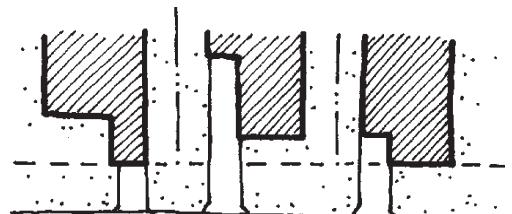
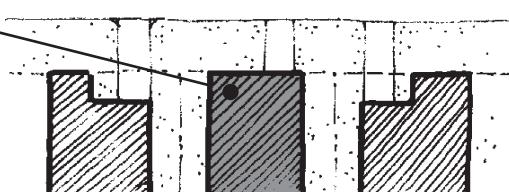
If there is a strong setback pattern in the neighborhood, even if it is greater than the Zoning Code required setbacks, respect that pattern.



This neighborhood has a consistent setback and building footprint pattern.

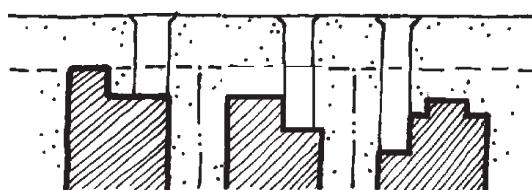
Street

The shaded new building does not respect the established building footprint pattern of the neighborhood because it is not offset at the front like all other homes in its neighborhood.



Street

This neighborhood has less of an established building setback or building footprint pattern. New construction or additions could have greater flexibility in their building form and location within the required setback.



2) Garage Patterns

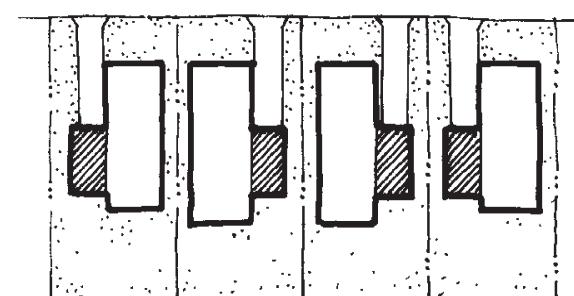
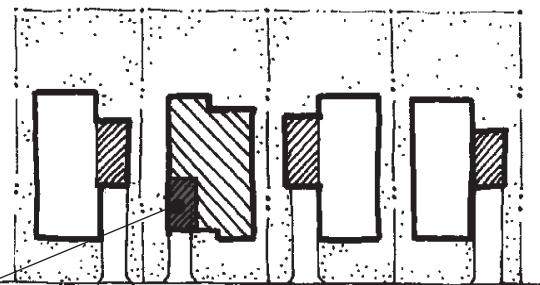
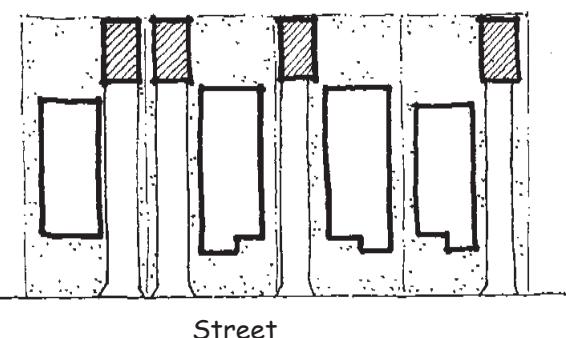
A. Garage Location. The location of garages can have a great effect on the appearance of a neighborhood. In some San Mateo neighborhoods garages are located towards the front of the home. In other neighborhoods they are setback from the front but connected to the home. In other areas they are detached and located towards the rear of the property. Changes to a strong pattern would be disruptive to the neighborhood character. If there is no established pattern of garage locations, greater flexibility in location and design may be considered. Evaluate the neighborhood pattern of garage location:

- Is there an existing pattern of garage location in the neighborhood?
- How are garages in the neighborhood located in relation to their home?
- What would be the effect of altering this pattern?

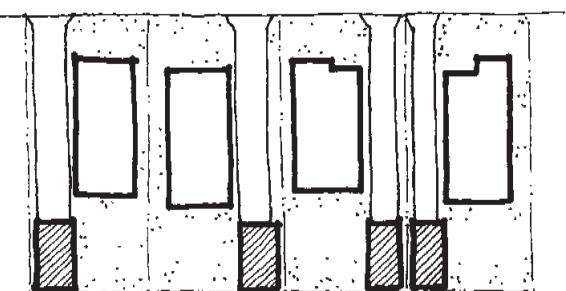
Guideline:

If there is a strong pattern in the neighborhood of how garages are located, respect that pattern.

All homes in this neighborhood except the home shaded here form a pattern of garages being located about 20-feet behind the front of the home. This proposed garage would not be consistent because it is located at the front of the house.



All the homes shown here have a similar garage location pattern of being detached and located at the rear of the property. Improvements to a home in this neighborhood should follow the established pattern.



Garage Patterns (continued)

B. Garage Openings. Changes to the size, position and appearance of the garage opening would also affect an established pattern of these features in the neighborhood. Examples of visual patterns are having most garages being single garage doors, or most garages being set behind the front of the house. If there is no established pattern, greater flexibility in design and appearance of openings may be considered. Evaluate the appearance of the garages in the neighborhood:

- Are garages visually less dominant than the entry to the house?
- Are single or double garage doors most common?
- What would be the effect of a change to the dominant style of garage openings in the neighborhood?



On this home, the single garage door set behind the front of the house lets the house's architecture present the strongest image of the

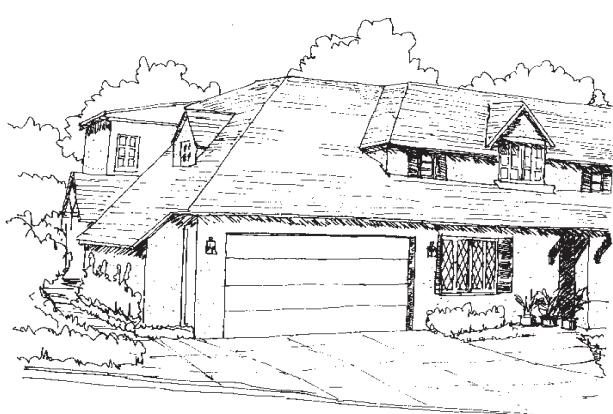
Guideline:

If there is a strong pattern to the size, position or appearance of the garage openings in the neighborhood, respect that pattern.



Note: Two single doors often appear less massive than one double door.

If the pattern of garage openings in the neighborhood is of single-sized doors, then respect that pattern with new garages having individual doors.



If the pattern of garage openings is of double-sized doors, then more choices of design are generally available.

3) Driveways

Wide driveways create more paved area and reduce frontyard landscaped area. Widening a driveway may result in a disruptive change to the neighborhood character. Observe the driveway pattern in the neighborhood:

- Are single or double width driveways common to the neighborhood?
- Could the parking needs of the home be met with a single width driveway?
- How would changing the driveway width affect the neighborhood pattern of landscaping versus paving?

Guidelines:

A. Driveway Width.

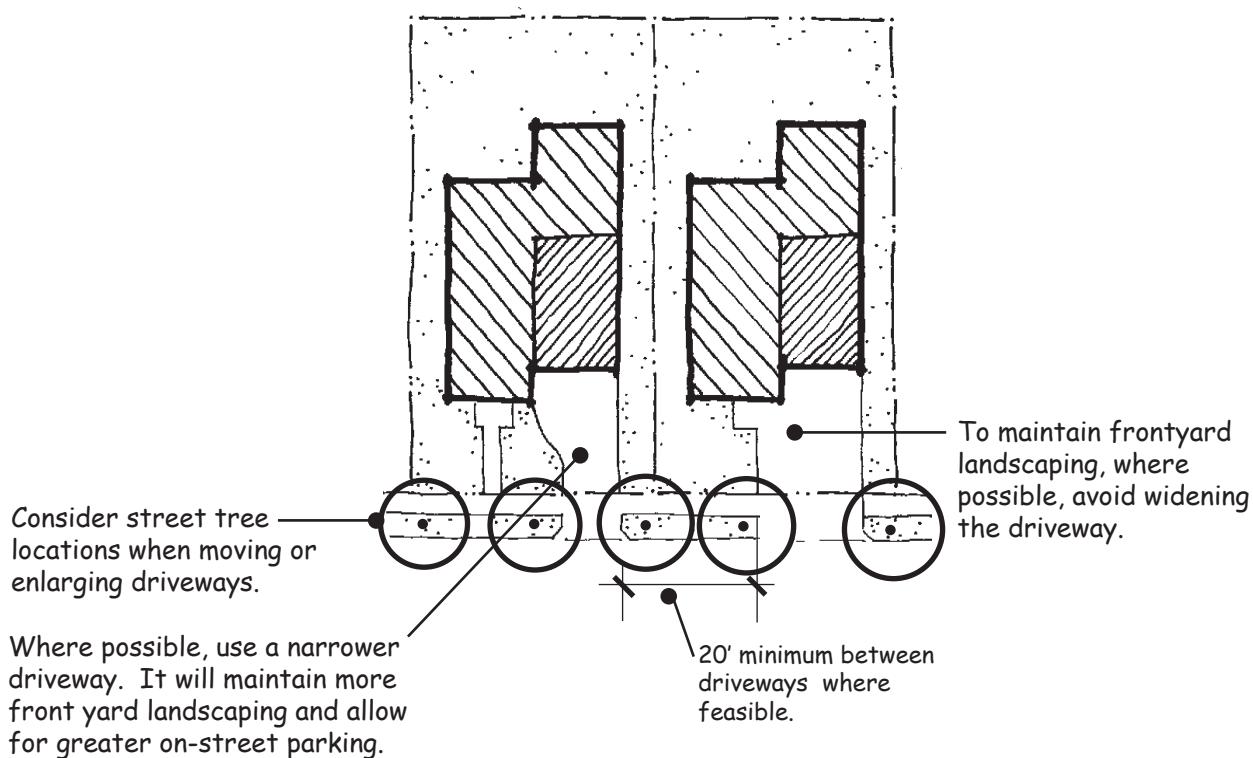
Minimize driveway and curb-cut widths where possible and where within Zoning Code requirements.

B. Maximize Street Parking.

Locate driveways to maximize curb space suitable for on-street parking. Maintain on-street parking by providing a minimum of 20-feet between curb cuts where feasible.

C. Street Tree Pattern.

Minimize harm to existing street trees and provide opportunities for new trees by minimizing driveway widths and carefully placing driveways.



4) Entries

Front walkways, front doors and front porches that face the street are common to most San Mateo neighborhoods. Front doors and windows that are visible from the street also make for safer neighborhoods by keeping ‘eyes on the street’ and by providing opportunities for neighborly associations. Evaluate the design and visibility of entries in your neighborhood:

- How prominent are the primary house entries in the neighborhood?
- Are front porches common to the neighborhood?
- What would be the effect of altering the pattern of entries in the neighborhood?

Guidelines:

A. Visible Front Doors.

Main entries should be obvious from the street. Visible front entries improve street security and create a ‘human scaled’ appearance to a building. Do not block front entries with walls, screens, or tall hedges.

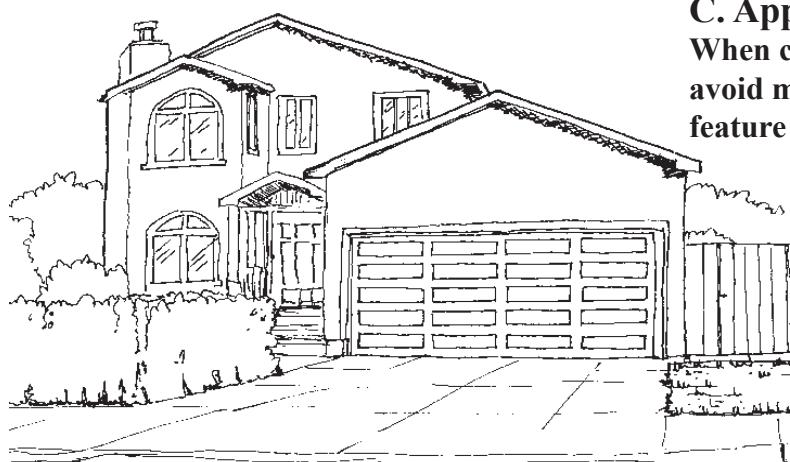


B. Front Porches.

If front porches are a part of the neighborhood pattern, a new house or new entry should consider including this feature similar in size and proportions to the other homes in the neighborhood.

C. Appearance of Garage.

When changing the front of a house, avoid making the garage the dominant feature as seen from the street.



For home additions, avoid having the garage become the closest architectural element to the street. Also see Zoning Code for required garage setbacks.

IV. Elements of Design

The architectural elements of a house can affect its apparent mass, architectural character, and the visual quality of the neighborhood. The placement of architectural elements can also impact the privacy of neighbors. The following Guidelines explore a more detailed level of design to address these issues. The Guidelines are not intended to require an identical, regimented design for every house in a neighborhood. However, they are designed to help the reader identify the key building characteristics and components that define the character of the neighborhood and determine if it is important to repeat those characteristics.

1) Building Envelope

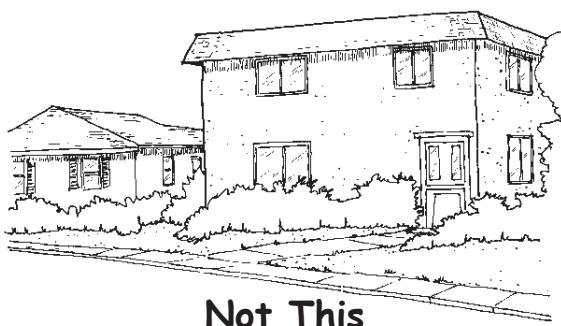
Similar to setbacks, the complexity of building forms contributes to the visual quality of a neighborhood. The complexity of the building forms may also affect the apparent mass of the house. Less complex or simpler forms often appear more massive and larger, while houses with more variety in their forms appear less massive and often more interesting. Changes to a consistent pattern of building forms appears disruptive to a neighborhood. If there is little pattern of established building form, greater flexibility in building footprint and massing may be considered. Evaluate the neighborhood pattern of building footprint and massing:

- Is there an existing pattern of building footprints?
- Are building forms highly complex or simple in form?
- What would be the effect of altering the pattern?

Guideline:

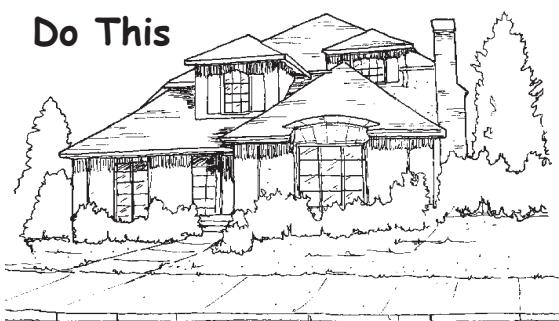
Observe the variety in the building forms and footprints within the neighborhood.

The first and second-story of this house show an exterior form with a great amount of variety that reduces its apparent mass .



Not This

Do This



This second-story addition with very rectangular building form appears massive next to its one-story neighbor. More variety in the second floor design would have made the house more compatible with its neighbor. Two-story walls may be permitted if an integral part of the proposed design style.

2) Neighborhood Scale

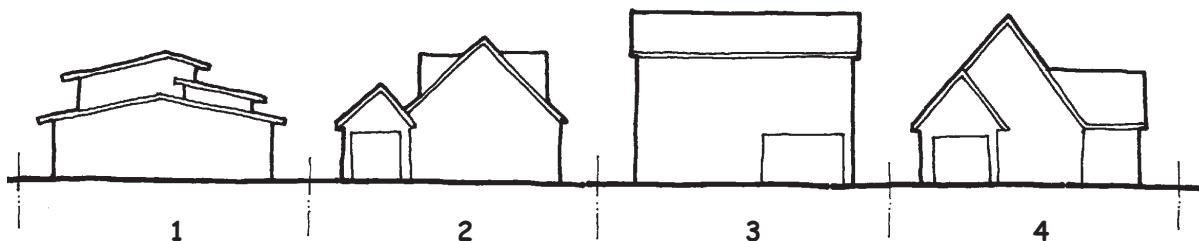
The scale of a building is its perceived size relative to the size of neighboring houses. A compatible design will respect the scale of its neighborhood. The apparent scale can be affected by the overall size of the house, how the façade is broken into more complex pieces, and how second-story portions are setback from the first level. To assess compatibility, examine the dimensions and proportions of neighboring buildings with the proposed house:

- Is there a common size or shape to houses in the neighborhood?
- Does the proposed house appear under or oversized in relation to neighboring houses?
- What building forms and sizes could make the scale of the proposed house appear compatible with the neighborhood?

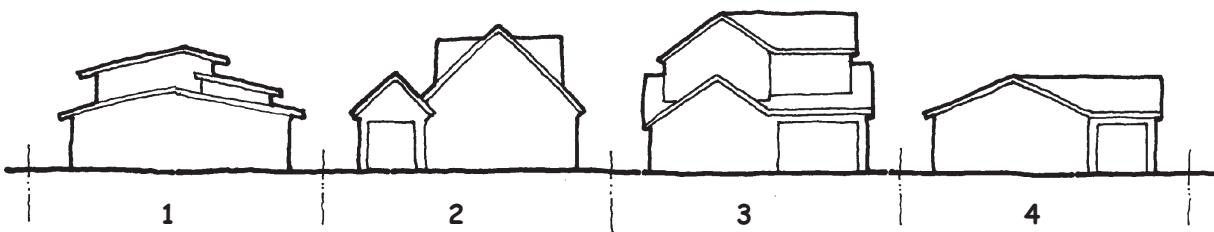
Guideline:

Observe the scale of houses in the neighborhood to determine if there is a common size or shape to houses in the neighborhood. If a common size or shape exists, respect the scale of the neighborhood through building sizes and shapes compatible with the houses in the neighborhood.

House No. 3 appears out of scale by being too high, wide, and blocky.



The revised design of House No. 3 became compatible with its neighbors by reducing the height, stepping back the second story and providing variation in the roof and building forms.



3) Second Story Additions

The most common way to add on to a house in San Mateo is by adding a second-story addition. Many parts of San Mateo are built with single-story houses. However, many two-story houses exist in San Mateo and are architecturally suited for their neighborhood. The following sections describes how a second-story addition can be designed to be compatible with neighboring houses.

Daylight Plane

The “San Mateo Zoning Code Daylight Plane” requirements are included below as a starting point for designing a second story addition.

San Mateo Zoning Code, R1 Districts - One Family Dwellings

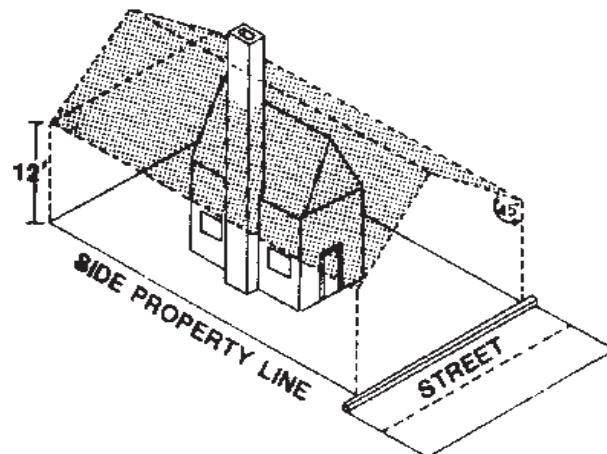
27.18.050 BUILDING HEIGHT AND DAYLIGHT PLANE.

(a) Maximum height. The maximum height of structures shall be 24 feet measured from existing grade to the building plate line and 32 feet measured from the existing grade to the highest point of the roof. Existing residences that exceed these limits may construct additions in accordance with their existing roof lines but shall not increase the nonconformance with these height limits.

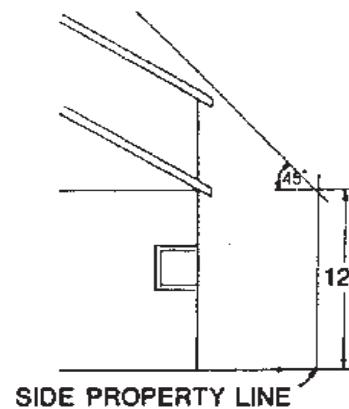
(b) Daylight plane. No structure shall extend above or beyond a daylight plane having a height of twelve (12) feet at each side property line and extending into the parcel at an angle of forty-five (45) degrees, with the following encroachments allowed:

- (1) Television and radio antennas, chimneys, flues, eaves, or skylights;
- (2) Dormers or similar architectural features, provided that the horizontal length of all such features shall not exceed a combined total of fifteen (15) feet on each side, measured along the intersection with the daylight plane;
- (3) Gables or similar architectural features, provided that the horizontal length of all

THE DAYLIGHT PLANE

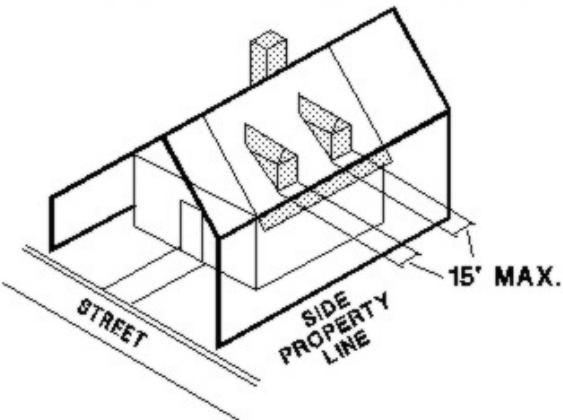


CROSS SECTION OF THE DAYLIGHT PLANE

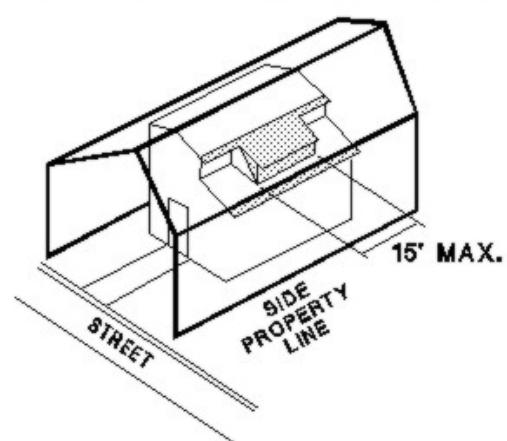


Daylight Plane (continued)

ALLOWABLE DORMER INTRUSIONS ABOVE DAYLIGHT PLANE



SHED STYLE DORMER ABOVE DAYLIGHT PLANE



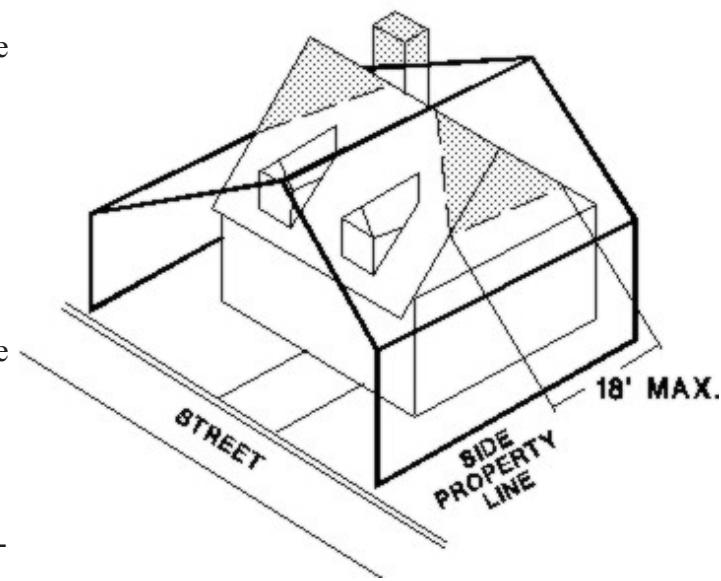
such features shall not exceed a combined total of eighteen (18) feet on each side, measured along the intersection with the daylight plane, and provided that the intersection of the gable with the daylight plane closest to the front property line is along the roof line;

(4) Where the finished first floor of an existing dwelling is more than three (3) feet above existing grade and is being extended by an addition, the initial height of the daylight plane shall be fourteen (14) feet; parcel; and

(5) Where the slope of a parcel measured between the side property lines at the front setback is fifteen percent (15%) or steeper, the initial height of the daylight plane shall be fourteen (14) feet on the downhill side of the parcel; and

(6) Where the slope of a parcel measured between the front and rear most points of the structure is fifteen percent (15%) or steeper, the daylight plane shall be measured at the front setback line and each thirty (30) feet thereafter, and the height limits established at these points shall be extended horizontally to the next measurement point. (Ord. 2000-2 § 6, 2000; Ord. 1992-16 § 10 (part), 1992).

ALLOWED GABLE INTRUSION ABOVE DAYLIGHT PLANE



Second-Story Additions (Continued)

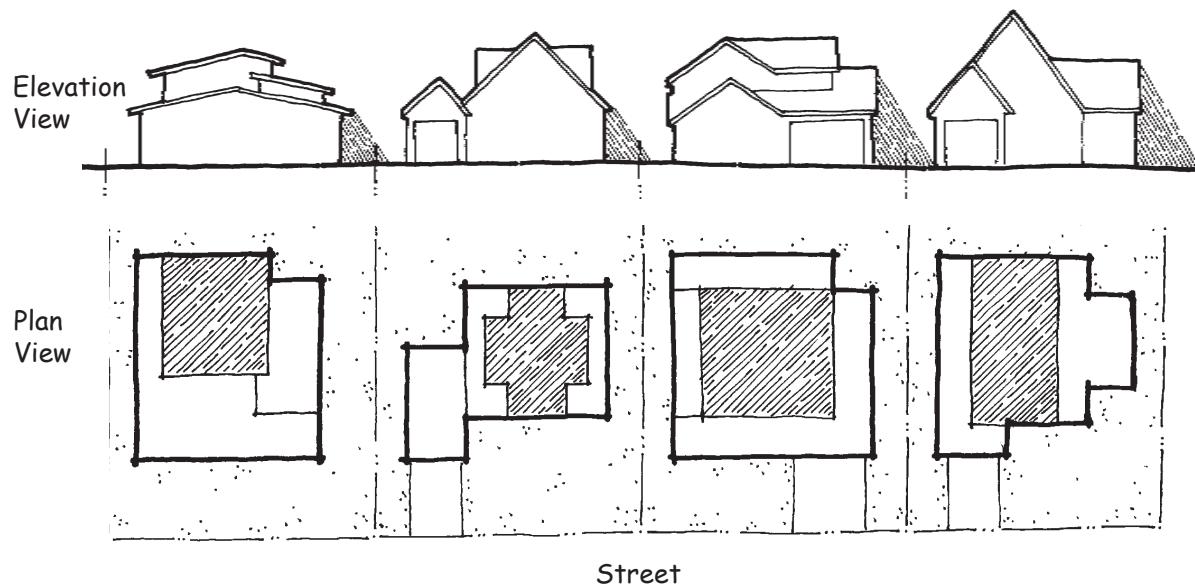
A. Second-Story Setbacks. Stepping back second-story additions from the side and rear property lines increases available light into neighboring properties.

- How would the proposed second-story affect daylight entering neighboring properties?
- Is the placement of the proposed second-story held back from property lines to meet daylight plane requirements and maximize light into neighboring properties?

Guideline:

Locate second-story additions away from the edges of the property. Keep volumes away from the property line where feasible. Set the major portions of second-story additions away from the front, side and rear property lines.

These second story additions held towards the center of the property allow greater sunlight onto neighboring properties.



Note: The Zoning Code allows a portion of the second-story to be exempt from the daylight plane and extend to the side setback

Second-Story Additions (Continued)

B. Location Over the House. A second-story over a portion of a house will visually emphasize that area of the home. Placing the second-story over the living areas will emphasize the human, or habitable area of the home, whereas over the garage, it will emphasize the automobile or storage areas of the home. Also, on most homes a second-story over only the garage will appear out of balance. Evaluate the proposed second-story addition:

- Could the proposed second-story addition be feasably located over the living areas of the house instead of only over the garage?
- Does the placement of the proposed second-story addition appear in balance with the home and with the neighboring homes?

Guideline:

Where feasable, place the primary volume of second-story additions over the house instead of only over the garage.

Second-story built within the roof form of the home.



Do This

Second-story located over the house and garage may appear balanced.



Do This

Second-story located only over garage appears out of balance.



Not This

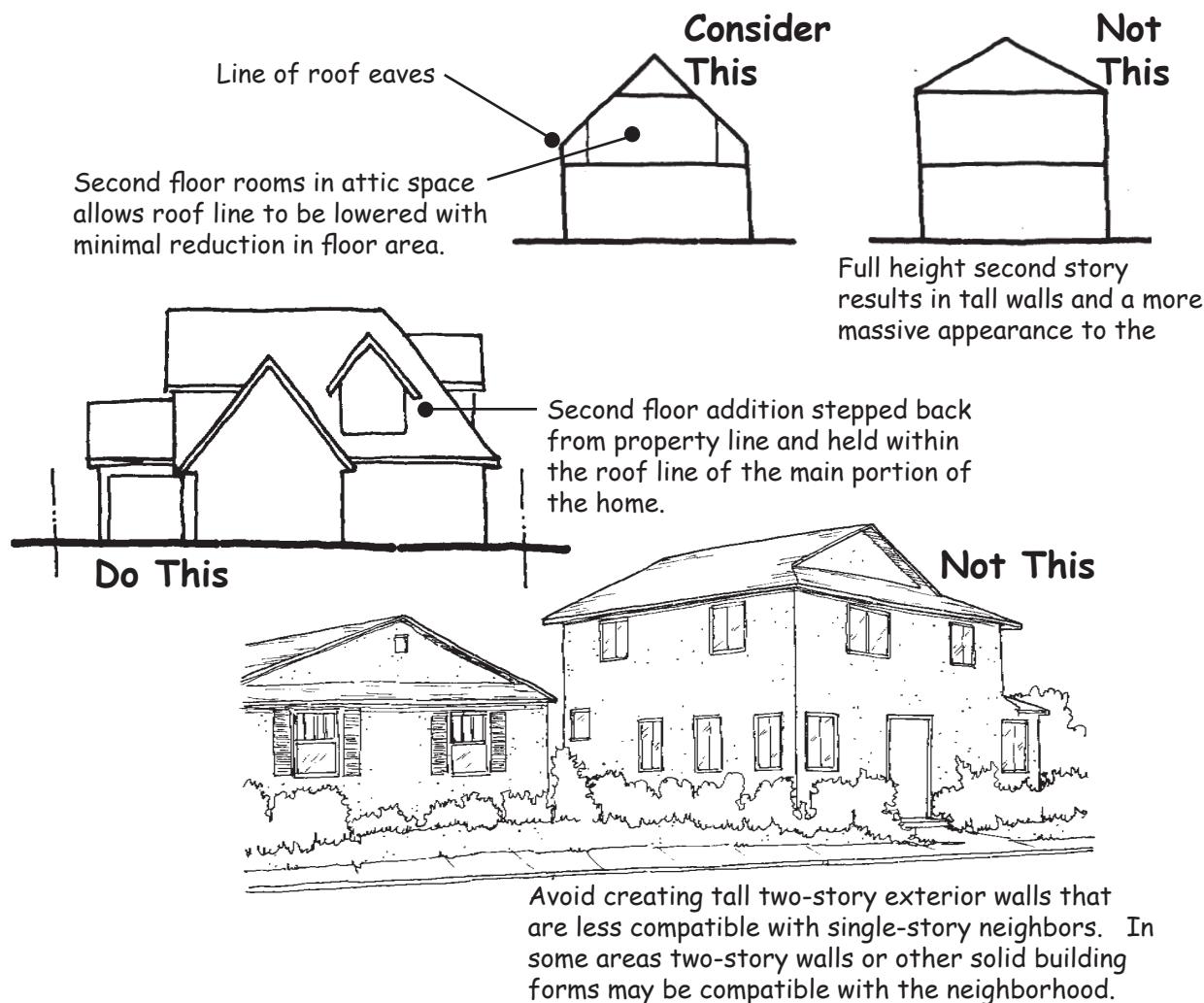
Second-Story Additions (continued)

C. Lowering Eave Line. Lowering the eave line of a second-story roof can add to its compatibility with single-story neighbors. Lowering the eave line ties the two stories to a house height common to many San Mateo neighborhoods. Setting second-story additions back into the area of roof lines is often a solution for meeting Daylight Plane requirements and it generally will lower the apparent height of the home. Lowering the eave line of the second story roof can also reduce the apparent building mass, which may result in the scale of the building being more compatible with its neighborhood. Evaluate the proposed second-story addition:

- Is there an existing pattern of single-story or full two-story homes in the neighborhood?
- Would the proposed second-story create wall heights that are compatible with or different from the pattern of homes in the neighborhood?
- What would be the effect of altering the pattern?

Guideline:

If the neighborhood does not have a dominant pattern of tall two-story walls, consider bringing some portions of the roof down to the gutter or eave line of the first-story roof to reduce the apparent mass of the building.



Second-Story Additions (continued)

D. Compatibility with the Architectural Style. Many architectural elements can affect how an addition can appear compatible with the house and its neighborhood - building mass, height, architectural style, materials and detailing. San Mateo neighborhoods are home to many different architectural styles. In some neighborhoods the architectural style is more defined than in others and on some houses it is more apparent than on others. Generally it is best to continue to express the existing style of the house through appropriate design and materials. If the style of the house is changed with the addition, consider the impact of that change on the neighborhood. Evaluate the architectural style of the house and the surrounding neighborhood:

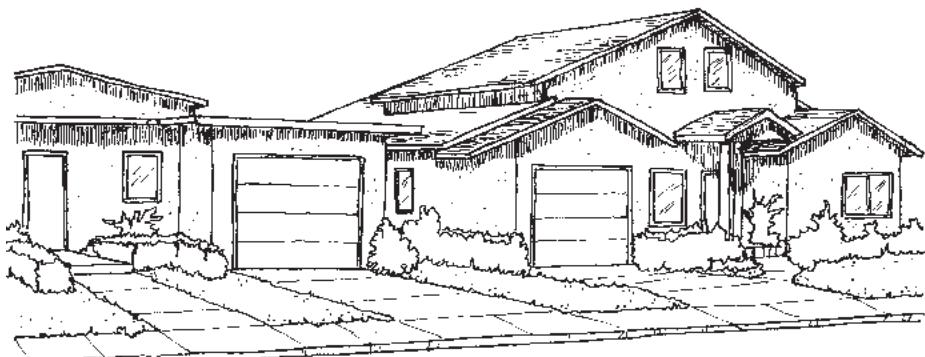
- What building elements define the architectural style of the house? (e.g. building style, roof shape, materials, window type)
- Are the defining elements common to other houses in the neighborhood?
- What would be the effect of changing the architectural style or some of the elements that are common to the neighborhood or the existing house?

Guideline:

A home addition should be architecturally compatible with the existing house, with any second-floor addition integrated into the design of the house. If there is an established common architectural style to the neighborhood, continue that architectural style through building style, materials, architectural detailing, and size and placement of windows.



Do This



Do This

These two houses have second-story additions whose architectural style is acknowledged through continuing the existing building materials, roof slope, and window design.

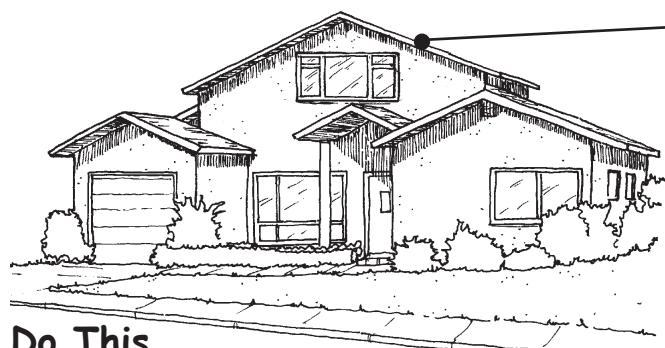
4) Roof Design

A. Design Compatibility. Roof shape and type can be the most obvious elements in defining the appearance of a house and a neighborhood. Some neighborhoods have roof patterns that are distinctive and repeatable from home to home. Other neighborhoods have greater variety or less distinctive roof forms, and greater changes to a house's roof form could appear acceptable. Roof patterns are created through the roof slope, materials and massing of roofs. Evaluate the patterns of roofs in the neighborhood:

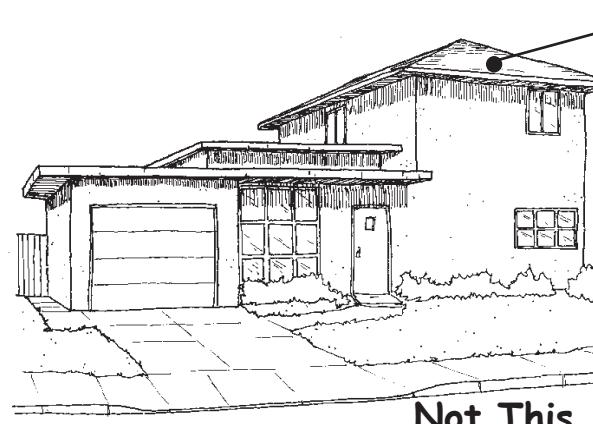
- What are the common roof slopes?
- What materials are common to most roofs?
- How is the massing of the roofs commonly arranged?
- What would be the effect of altering the common roof patterns of the existing house or the neighborhood?

Guideline:

If there is an established architectural style of roofs in a neighborhood, consider roof shape and types that are compatible with roofs in the neighborhood and with the existing home. Express this compatibility through roof forms, slope, materials and massing. Applicants may also consider alternate roof forms that improve the architectural quality of the house where the design enhances the character of the neighborhood.



The roof slope and material of the second-story addition is compatible with the existing single-story roofs on the house.

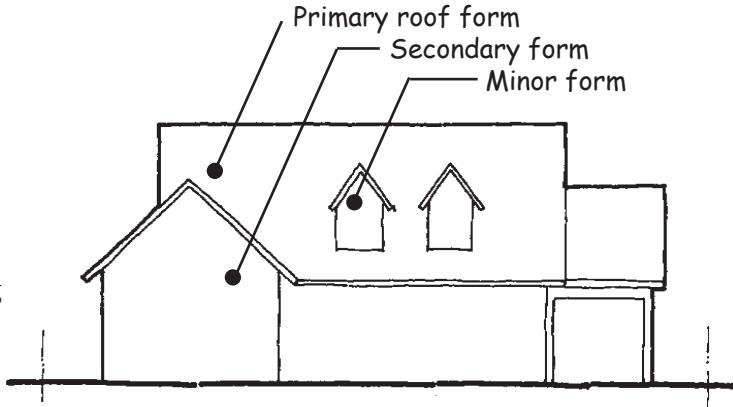


The sloped second-story roof appears awkward with the original single-story portions of the home.

Roof Design (continued)

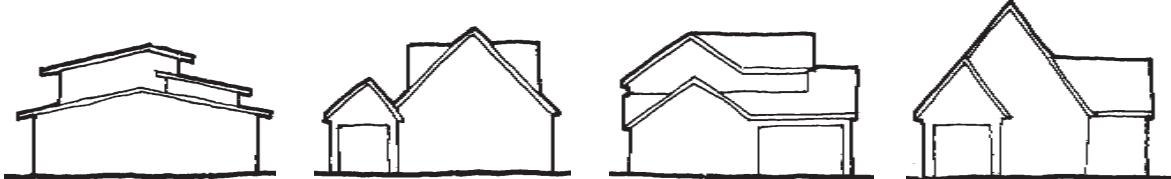
B. Massing of Roof Forms. The mass of a roof and how it is articulated into different shapes contributes to the character of a house. Most houses with sloped roofs, and many with flat roofs have a primary roof form and smaller secondary and minor forms that contribute to the overall style of the house. Evaluate the massing of the roof form and determine how an addition to the roof form will benefit the appearance of the house and be compatible with the neighborhood:

- Does the existing house have primary and secondary roof forms?
- Would the addition change the appearance of those roof forms?
- Do the proposed roof forms contribute to the overall style of the house?
- What would be the effect of altering the common roof patterns of the neighborhood?



Guideline:

When planning a second-story addition evaluate the primary roof form. Consider additions to the primary roof such as secondary roof forms and dormers that may serve to reduce the homes apparent mass and scale, provide visual interest, and have an appropriate number of roof forms. Additional roof forms should be architecturally compatible with the primary form's slope and material, and be consistent with an established character of roof forms in the neighborhood.



These two-story houses all display primary and secondary roof forms compatible with their architectural style

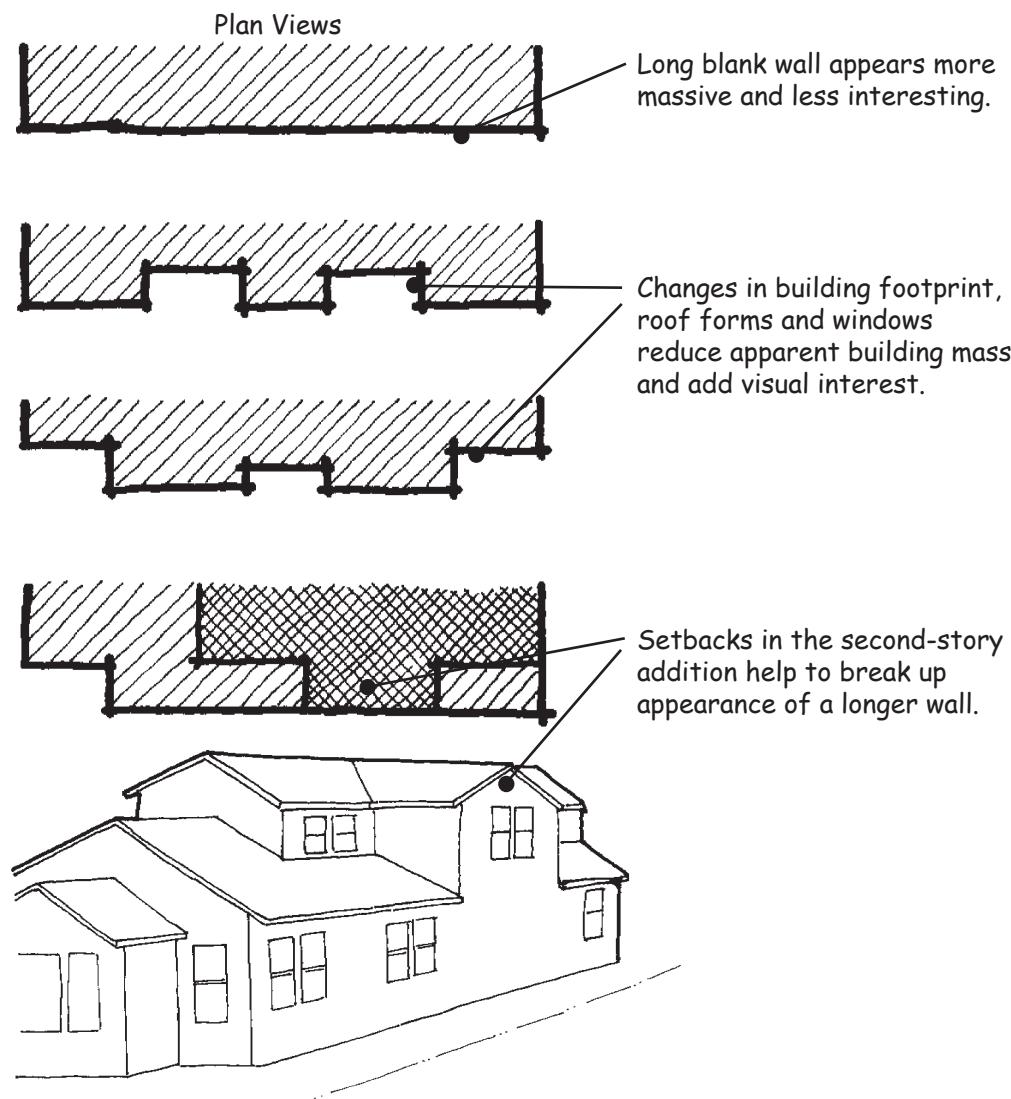
5) Wall Articulation

Building wall gaps that articulate the walls of the house create shadows and contribute to the architectural character of the home. These changes to the form of a building can have a great affect on the apparent building mass. One option often explored for expanding a home is to fill-in some of these areas. Longer flat walls generally appear more massive and less interesting. When planning an addition to a home, consider how the addition will affect the appearance of the homes longer walls.

- Do the proposed changes remove architectural features that break-up the apparent mass of the house?
- Do the proposed changes include new features that will add visual interest to long or tall walls?

Guideline:

Avoid creating long or tall blank side walls. Breakup the appearance of long side walls with steps in the building wall, and windows where neighbor's privacy can be respected. Also consider changes in materials and appropriate architectural detailing that add scale to long walls.



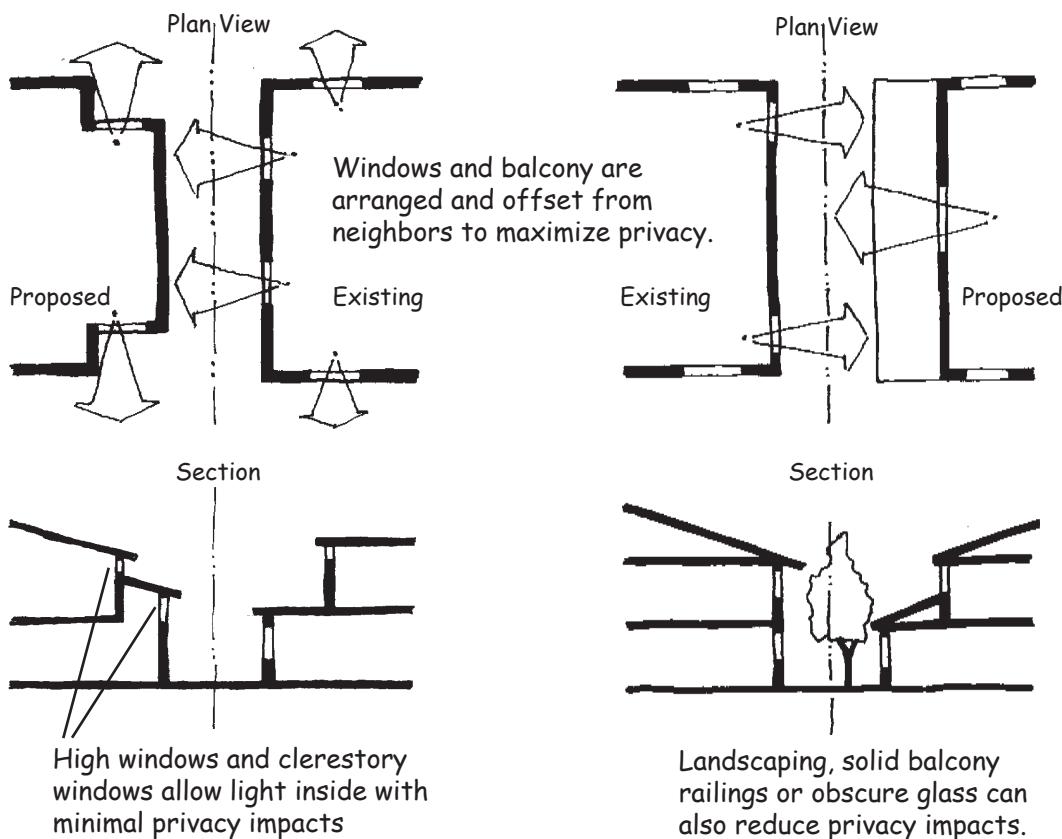
6a) Privacy - Windows, Landscaping & Layout

Adding a second-story or other addition to a house often raises privacy concerns with adjacent neighbors. When planning an addition, evaluate how new windows and balconies may affect the privacy of neighbors:

- Are planned windows, balconies and second-story decks directly aligned with neighboring windows or offset?
- Can the proposed floor plan be modified to protect a neighbor's privacy?
- What architectural or landscaping solutions might enhance privacy?

Guideline:

Design house additions to respect adjacent neighbor privacy through careful planning of window locations, balconies and second-story decks, use of landscaping, and other architectural solutions.



Notes:

When using landscaping to create privacy consider the potential view impacts that could occur from mature trees.

When evaluating privacy impacts and potential solutions, acknowledge that privacy impacts are greater when close, and reduce with distance.

6b) Privacy - Placement of Second-Story

The placement of a second-story addition on a house can create privacy impacts on adjacent neighbors. When planning an addition, evaluate how the location of the second-story on the property may affect privacy by creating sight lines into adjacent homes.

- Is the second-story addition located to avoid direct views into neighboring windows or yard areas?
- Can the proposed second-story addition be pulled back from a property line to protect a neighbor's privacy?
- Can manipulation of architectural forms create or enhance neighboring privacy?
- Could the desired expansion be better accommodated with a single-story addition?

Guideline:

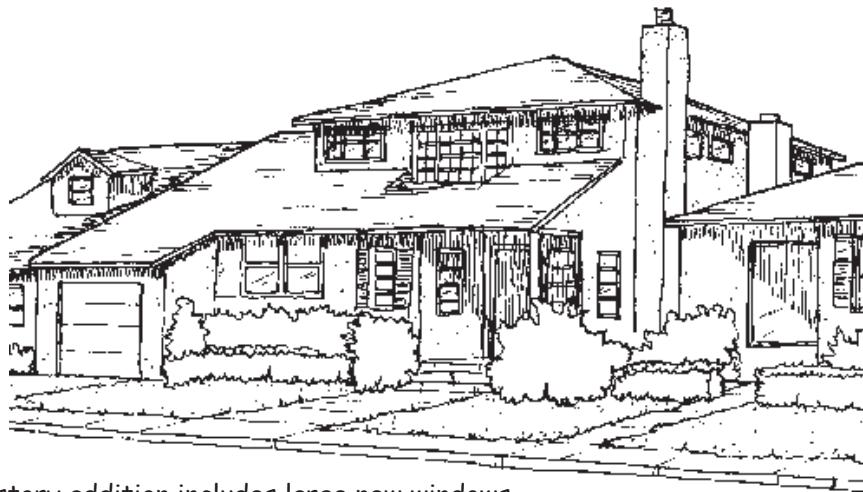
Design house additions to respect adjacent neighbor privacy through careful placement of second-story massing and other architectural solutions.

Do This



The second-story addition is held back from the property line to allow maximum light into the addition while minimizing the impact on neighboring homes. Property line landscaping may further enhance privacy.

Do This



The second-story addition includes large new windows on the front and smaller windows on the side to minimize privacy impacts.

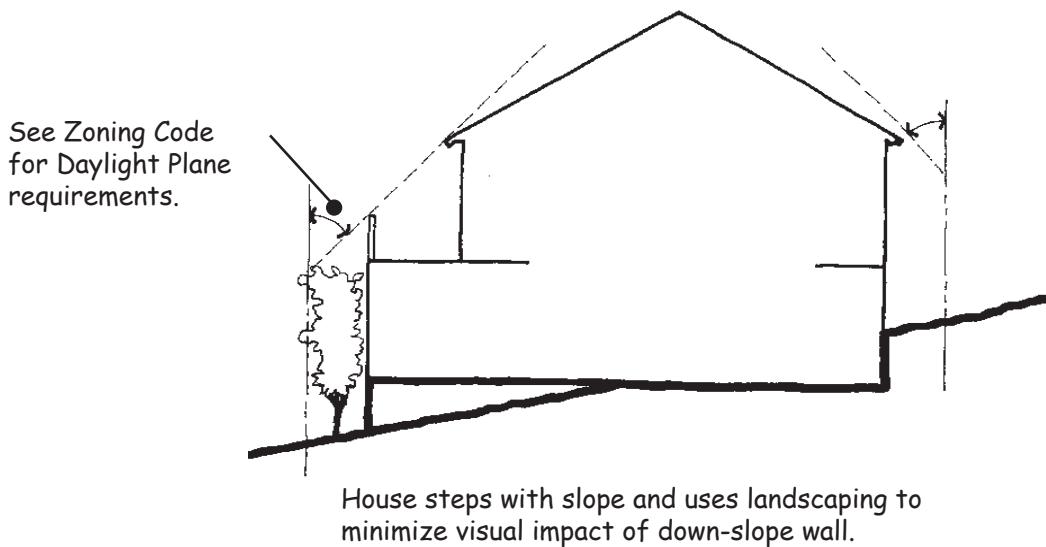
7) Homes on Hillside Lots

A substantial number of homes in San Mateo are located on hillside lots – lots that have a cross slope of greater than 15-percent. Daylight plane requirements are slightly different for these lots. Please review the Zoning Code for complete requirements. The slope of a hillside lot generally requires the down-slope side of the house to have a taller exposed wall than the up-slope side. To minimize the visual impact of a tall wall consider architectural and landscape solutions.

Guideline:

Reduce the visual impact of tall walls on hillside homes by:

- 1) Meeting the Daylight Plane requirements of the Zoning Code;**
- 2) Stepping the home with the slope to avoid expanse of tall walls;**
- 3) Using landscaping to mask tall down-slope walls;**
- 4) Respecting neighbor's views when planning for placement of second-story additions.**



8) Views

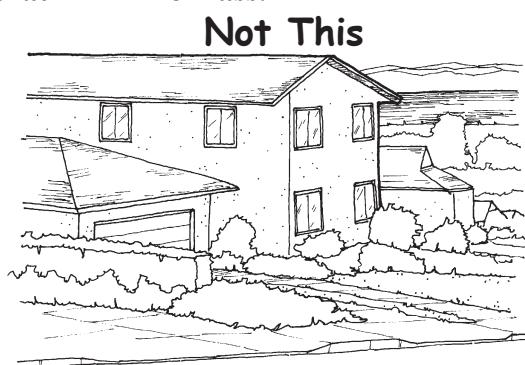
A variety of view types are available from San Mateo neighborhoods: distant views of the Bay, adjacent parts of the City or Peninsula hills, city lights, and vistas through the neighborhood. Common characteristics of views are that they add value and enjoyment to a property. When adding onto a house, consider how the addition would affect the views from neighboring houses:

- What are the established views from neighboring houses? For purposes of these Guidelines, the most important views would be from primary living areas e.g. living, dining, kitchen, rather than from secondary rooms, e.g. bedroom, bath.
- To what degree would the proposed addition block views from neighboring houses?
- Would the proposed addition create a greater view blockage than other homes on similar parcels in the neighborhood?
- Could the addition be designed to minimize view blockage from neighboring houses?

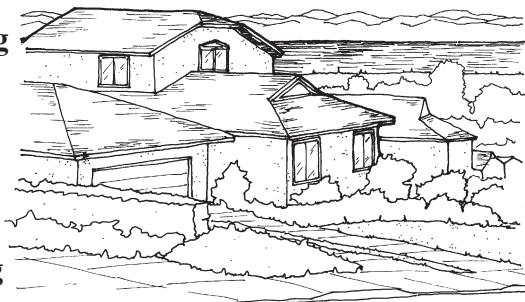
Guidelines:

A. Respect Established Views

Recognize established views from the primary living areas of neighboring houses and design house additions to minimize blockage of those views. Possible methods to minimize view blockage include: configuring living space where it would have less view impact; increasing the setback of second-story additions; lowering roof plate heights; and choosing roof forms that minimize mass.



Consider This



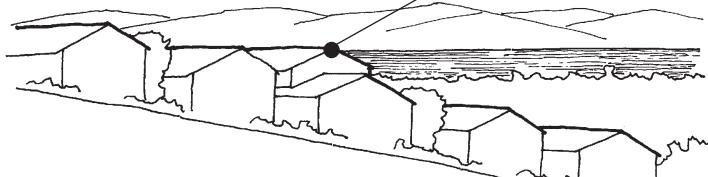
A second-story addition stepped back from the front and sides minimizes view blockage from neighboring homes.

A more massive second-story addition creates greater view blockage.

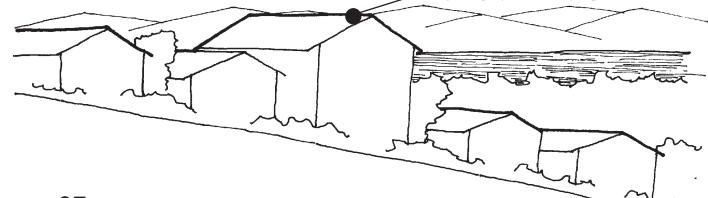
B. View Equity

Neighboring views should be maintained to a similar level as that enjoyed by the proposed house addition. Balance the private rights to views from all parcels so that no single parcel should enjoy a greater view right than other similar parcels, except for the natural advantages of each site's topography.

Consider This



Not This



9) Exterior Materials

Exterior materials should complement the style of the existing house and that of the neighborhood. When selecting materials, consider the types of materials, number of different materials, the quality, and how ornamentation is applied. As with other design elements, the neighborhood and the existing house may provide context for the choice of materials. Use of similar materials will help a house appear compatible with its neighbors. The intent is not to require an identical design for every house in the neighborhood, rather to assess if there is a prevalent use of certain architectural materials, and if it is desirable to continue that use. Changes to a dominant material would require a higher quality design to justify the deviation. When planning the architectural appearance of a house, evaluate the existing materials on the house and in the neighborhood:

- Do the exterior materials complement those on the existing house and those found in the neighborhood?
- Is the quality of materials comparable to the house and of other houses in the neighborhood?
- Is the number of different finish materials comparable to that of houses in the neighborhood?
- Does the proposed house appear too plain or overly decorated?
- What would be the effect of using exterior materials that are different from those on the existing house or those in the neighborhood?

Guidelines:

If there is a dominant exterior material palette in the neighborhood, also apply the following for neighborhood compatibility.

A. Compatibility

Use exterior materials that are common to the neighborhood and compatible with the architecture of the house.

B. Quality

Use exterior materials that are of a similar or better quality of those used in the neighborhood, and are consistent with the architecture of the house.

C. Quantity

Quantity refers to the number of different exterior materials used on a house. Apply an amount of exterior materials in a manner consistent with the neighborhood and the architectural style of the house.

D. Ornamentation

Apply ornamentation in a manner consistent with the style of the house. Avoid using ornamentation in a manner that will make the house appear too plain or overly decorated.



The materials of this house appear compatible because they are mostly wood, and they have a common style of heavy and exaggerated proportions.



The stucco and tile materials of this house are compatible because they are of a defined architectural style - Spanish Mediterranean, and are an appropriate amount of ornamentation for this style house.

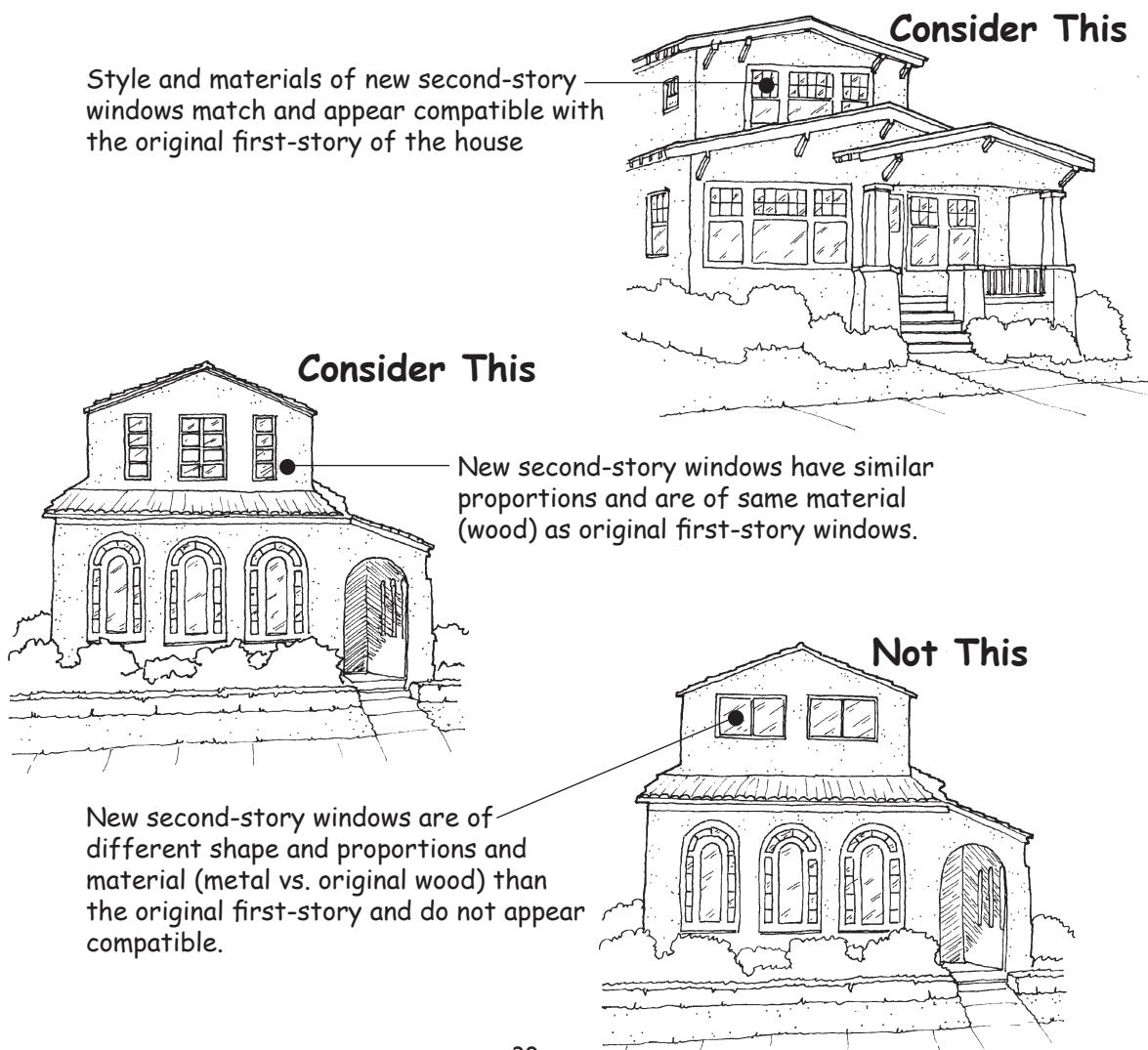
10) Openings

Doors and windows are often the most visually distinctive features on a house. They are a link between private and public space and can provide a sense of security for both. They also can establish an architectural rhythm and affect the apparent mass of the house. Evaluate the openings on the house and in the neighborhood:

- Is there a proportion to the openings – vertical or horizontal – that is common to the house or the neighborhood?
- What are the dominant window materials on the house and in the neighborhood?
- Is there a window or door style – such as an arched shape or divided window lights – common on the house or in the neighborhood?
- What would be effect of altering the established pattern or style of window or door openings?

Guideline:

Select windows and doors that are compatible with the dominant types on the house and, if a common pattern exists, also in the neighborhood. Consider proportions of the openings, materials, and style or detailing.



Acknowledgements

City Council

John Lee, Mayor
Jack Matthews, Vice Mayor
Jan Epstein, Council Member
Carole Groom, Council Member
Brandt Grotte, Council Member

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Bertha Sanchez, Commissioner

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Mark Spence – Beresford/Hillsdale Homeowners Associations
William Van Housen – American Institute of Architects
Jane Williams – Homeowner Association of North Central San Mateo
David Wilson – Building Contractor (Alternate)
Jerry Winges – American Institute of Architects
Walt Worthge – Building Contractor
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