
Chapter 8

COMMUNITY DESIGN

- QUALITY DESIGN
- SITE AND CIRCULATION DESIGN
- DEVELOPMENT CLUSTERING
- RESIDENTIAL NEIGHBORHOODS
- COMMERCIAL AND INDUSTRIAL DESIGN
- BUILDING DESIGN
- LANDSCAPE DESIGN
- VILLAGES AND SPECIAL COMMUNITIES

COMMUNITY DESIGN

CONTENTS

Language identified with (LCP) is not restricted to the Coastal Zone; language which includes the (LCP) initials is part of the Local Coastal Program and applies countywide unless specifically stated that the policy, etc. is limited to the coastal zone.

	Page
Authority and Purpose _____	8-1
Goal _____	8-1
Quality Design (8.1) _____	8-3
Site and Circulation Design (8.2) _____	8-4
Development Clustering (8.3) _____	8-5
Residential Neighborhoods (8.4) _____	8-6
Commercial and Industrial Design (8.5) _____	8-7
Building Design (8.6) _____	8-8
Landscape Design (8.7) _____	8-10
Villages, Towns and Special Communities (8.8) _____	8-11

AUTHORITY AND PURPOSE

Santa Cruz County is blessed with a magnificent natural environment. The Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors have deemed it necessary to add this element to the General Plan and LCP Land Use Plan in an effort to integrate high quality physical design with this type of setting. The chapter is an optional General Plan element under State Planning law.

The goals, objectives, policies and programs for this chapter are closely linked to other sections of the General Plan and LCP Land Use Plan, including Land Use, Circulation, Housing, Conservation and Open Space (particularly Visual Resources), Public Safety and Noise, and Parks and Recreation.

The community design character of an area is defined by many factors including the relationship of development to its environmental setting, the pattern of land uses and parcelization, the design and pattern of the circulation system, the location and quality of open space, the siting and design of specific structures, the pattern of landscaping and tree planting and the views within the community, as well as outside the community.

This chapter is divided into sections based on the characteristics of development for the built environment. The initial section of Quality Design includes broad policies which addresses the procedures and function of design review within the County. The sections which follow are more specific in their scope and address Site and Circulation Design, Clustering, Residential Neighborhoods, Commercial and Industrial Siting, Building Design and Landscape Design. The final section of the element addresses design for villages, towns and Coastal Special Communities. All of these sections are intended to be a guide to developers and staff in the review of projects by identifying the issues to be addressed in each project.

In addition to the policies contained in this chapter, there are several village, town and specific plans which describe specific design requirements for individual communities. These plans are incorporated into the General Plan and LCP Land Use Plan (Volume II).

Also, there are several sources of "design criteria" which have been adopted by the County including Public Works Design Criteria Manual; Landscape Criteria; the Zoning

Regulations ordinance which includes sections on Site, Architectural and Landscape Design Review, Large Dwelling Review, and Residential and Commercial Site and Development Standards. Each of these criteria are referenced in this chapter and used to implement the purposes and policies. Substantial background data on the factors which define community design in Santa Cruz County are available in the General Plan Update Background Report (1991).

All projects must be consistent with the policies of this chapter. In addition to this chapter, there are several communities which have unique design criteria adopted specifically for the area. Figure 8-1 lists locations which have special guidelines/criteria and shows the source of these guidelines.

GOAL

The overall goal guiding the Community Design Element is as follows:

- **Community Design:** To preserve and enhance the quality of life in Santa Cruz County through the guidance of development activity to protect open space for its aesthetic, recreational and environmental values, to foster high quality residential areas as pleasant and socially constructive areas in which to live, and to enhance the quality of residential, commercial and industrial development to achieve an aesthetic and functional community.

**Figure 8-1
Areas With Special Design Criteria or Guidelines**

Area (defined on Land Use Maps)	Design Guideline Source
Aptos Village	Aptos Village Community Design Framework - 1985 Aptos Village Parking & Circulation Feasibility Study - 1987
Ben Lomond	Ben Lomond Town Plan - 1990
Boulder Creek	Boulder Creek Specific Plan - 1992
Coastal Zone and Coastal Special Communities	Coastal Zone Regulation Ordinance General Plan/Local Coastal Program
Corralitos	Corralitos Town Plan (to be completed)
Davenport	General Plan/Local Coastal Program and Coastal Zone Regulation Ordinance
Felton	Felton Town Plan - 1987
Live Oak Planning Area	Live Oak Community Plan (to be completed) Urban Forestry Master Plan - 1992
North Coast Beaches	North Coast Beach Master Plan - 1990
Pajaro Valley (urban portion of the Pajaro Valley Planning Area)	Pajaro Valley Community Plan (to be completed)
Rio Del Mar Flats/Esplanade Area	General Plan/Local Coastal Program and Coastal Zone Regulation Ordinance
Seacliff Beach Area Special Community	General Plan/Local Coastal Program and Coastal Zone Regulation Ordinance
Soquel Planning Area	Urban Forestry Master Plan - 1992
Soquel Village	Soquel Village Plan - 1990 Urban Forestry Master Plan - 1992

Objective 8.1 Quality Design

To achieve functional high quality development through design review policies which recognize the diverse characteristics of the area, maintains design creativity, and preserves and enhances the visual fabric of the community.

Policies

8.1.1 Design Guidelines for Land Divisions Approvals

Condition all urban and rural land division approvals to include design guidelines or similar methods which address future development on newly created parcels, emphasizing architectural and landscaping details appropriate to the context of the land division.

8.1.2 Design Review Ordinance

Where applicable, require new development to follow the design guidelines set forth in the Zoning ordinance; and encourage all projects to utilize these principles to guide the design of development not subject to the ordinance.

8.1.3 Residential Site and Development Standards Ordinance

Maintain a Residential Site and Development Standards ordinance for the purpose of protecting light, solar opportunities, air and open space for public and private properties; and require all residential projects to comply with the standards of maximum structural height, maximum number of stories, minimum structural setbacks, maximum ratios of building floor area-to-parcel size, and other criteria therein.

Program

- a. Maintain the existing Site, Architectural and Landscape Design ordinance or implement other approaches to achieve the stated policies.

Objective 8.2 Site and Circulation Design

To enhance and preserve the integrity of existing land use patterns and to complement the scale and character of neighboring development by assuring that new development is sited, designed and landscaped to be functional and visually compatible and integrated with surrounding development, and to preserve and enhance the natural amenities and features unique to individual building sites, and to incorporate them into the site design.

Policies

8.2.1 Designation of Master Plan Areas

Designate areas within the Urban Services Line that are deserving of coordinated site and circulation design as Master Plan Areas. These areas are characterized by irregular lot configurations, substandard lot size, or disjointed development. The purpose of the Master Plan Area is to coordinate the development of these parcels in a cohesive and equitable manner, while providing for efficient circulation, parking and site design. Two types of Master Plan Areas are designated as follows:

- (a) For Commercial zone areas: A plan for the consolidation and coordinated development of the area shall be considered prior to approval of any development. The goal is to combine parcels to maximize the potential for commercial development through coordinated building, circulation and parking design.
- (b) For Residential zone areas: A plan for the coordinated development of the parcels shall be considered prior to approval of any development in this area. The intent of this Master Plan is to provide for coordinated circulation to minimize the impacts of the development on the surrounding area. Development may proceed on individual parcels if consistent with the approved plan.

8.2.2 Designing for Environmental Protection

Require new development to comply with all environmental ordinances, to be sited and designed to minimize grading, avoid or provide mitigation for geologic hazards and sensitive habitats, and conform to the physical constraints and topography of the site.

8.2.3 Design Criteria for Utilities

Require new development to meet County adopted criteria and standards for the design of utilities, water service and sewage disposal requirements and drainage systems. All new power line distribution systems, where practical, and all services to new subdivisions shall be placed underground.

8.2.4 Combining Parcels for Improved Design

Encourage the combination of parcels, especially long narrow lots or small lots, to allow for maximum open space and amenities, and efficient layout of building envelopes and infrastructure.

8.2.5 Circulation

Encourage the design of pedestrian, bicycle, and vehicle circulation and parking to be safe, convenient, readily understandable, and coordinated with development on surrounding properties; and encourage design which minimizes the visual impact and reduces the scale of paving materials and parking.

8.2.6 Circulation Systems for Persons With Disabilities

Require new development to provide pedestrian, bicycle and vehicular circulation systems which include adequate facilities for persons with disabilities, to be consistent with the requirements of the Americans With Disabilities Act, Public Works Design Criteria, County Code, and the Circulation and Fire Hazards sections of the General Plan and LCP Land Use Plan.

Program

- a. Establish a Master Plan Area Combining District or similar mechanism to provide for coordinated site and circulation design in designated areas. Include in the requirements for the combining district the intent and purpose behind the commercial and residential master plan areas. (Responsibility: Planning Department, Redevelopment Agency)

Objective 8.3 Development Clustering

To encourage cluster design for residential development in rural and protected use areas for sites where natural amenities, resources and open space can be retained or enhanced; or in urban areas where cluster design could be used to increase outdoor amenities in higher density development.

Policies

8.3.1 Clustering for Environmental Protection

Require development clustering where clustering of units is essential to meet the intent of the General Plan and LCP Land Use Plan to preserve protected use areas such as scenic areas, riparian corridors, coastal lagoons and marshes, or other natural features. [See Conservation and Open Space Element and sections regarding protection of Agriculture and Timber.]

8.3.2 Urban Development

Encourage development clustering in urban areas to achieve maximum open space for recreational use, for the design of focal points, and to promote energy-efficient and cost-efficient site planning.

8.3.3 Rural Development

Encourage clustering of rural building envelopes, particularly in areas of development constraints such as high erosion hazard or areas of protected resources such as timber, watersheds, and groundwater recharge, in order to maximize resource protection, environmental compatibility, and the preservation of open space. Within the clustered building envelopes, require adequate spacing of residential units, depending on visibility and terrain, to maintain the rural character. (See clustering requirements for Timber Production Lands, section 5.12.)

Objective 8.4 Residential Neighborhoods

To preserve the residential use and character of existing urban neighborhoods, and to maintain the rural and/or agricultural character of residential development in non-urban areas.

Policies

8.4.1 Neighborhood Character

Based on the Zoning ordinance, require new infill development on vacant land within established residential neighborhoods to be consistent with the existing residential character of the neighborhood, dwelling unit types, and where appropriate, architectural style, allowing for innovative design for clustering or solar design. Project density in established residential neighborhoods shall be compatible with existing neighborhood density, consistent with the land use designations, with incentives given to accommodate elderly and low and moderate income housing, but not to exceed densities designated in the General Plan and LCP Land Use Plan.

8.4.2 Retaining Existing Housing

Encourage the maintenance and repair of existing nonconforming single and multi family residential structures on residentially designated land and allow reconstruction where appropriate when found not to be detrimental to the health, safety, or welfare of the surrounding neighborhood. Limit expansion, structural alteration, or reconstruction of existing significantly nonconforming residential structures. *(Revised by Res. 455-98)*

8.4.3 Retaining Existing Housing

Require legally existing residential dwellings to be retained, where feasible, through implementation of a demolition application review process which provides for relocating structurally sound habitable dwellings.

8.4.4 Substandard Subdivisions

Encourage the merger of lots in all undeveloped substandard subdivisions or combinations of substandard sized parcels in order to achieve minimum acreages specified by the General Plan and LCP Land Use designation.

8.4.5 Neighborhood Character Inventories

Require new discretionary project applications to include a neighborhood character visual inventory or equivalent information commensurate with the scope of the project. The purpose of the inventory is to serve as a basis from which to develop appropriate guidelines and conditions for adoption with the project. The inventory shall at a minimum encompass the parcels surrounding the site, consider architectural and landscape style, density, lot sizes and setbacks.

Programs

a. Maintain public notification and hearing practices to ensure the early involvement of neighborhood and area residents in land use decisions. Involve homeowners associations, community associations and other associations, where they can be identified, so that both neighborhood and countywide needs are considered in the decision-making process. (Responsibility: Planning Department, Planning Commission, Board of Supervisors)

b. Establish a program to combine lots in all undeveloped substandard subdivisions or to combine existing lots to be consistent with all current General Plan and LCP standards. (Responsibility: Planning Department, Board of Supervisors)

c. Support the Redevelopment Agency's Urban Forestry Master Plan and community initiated volunteer programs for such things as beautification, tree planting, trash collection, etc., to strengthen the vitality and attractiveness of the neighborhood areas. (Responsibility: Board of Supervisors)

Objective 8.5 Commercial and Industrial Design

To achieve a well defined hierarchy of neighborhood, community and regional commercial and industrial areas which harmonize and complement the unique characteristics of each neighborhood they serve, through coordinated circulation systems and architectural style, and appropriate landscaping and signage.

Policies

8.5.1 Concentrate Commercial Uses

Contain commercial and industrial uses in designated areas, avoiding new strip commercial uses, to minimize impacts on residential areas, adjacent roads, and property, and on the scenic setting of the County.

8.5.2 Commercial Compatibility With Other Uses

(LCP) Ensure the compatibility of commercial and industrial use with adjacent uses through application of the Site, Architectural and Landscape Design Review or similar ordinance. Give careful attention to landscaping, signing, access, site and building design, visual impacts, drainage, parking, on site circulation, traffic patterns, and where applicable, availability of water, sewage system capacity, fencing and mitigation of potential nuisance factors, visual aspects, and traffic problems.

8.5.3 Areas with Unique Design Guidelines

(LCP) Require commercial and industrial projects located within the boundaries of Coastal Special Communities, adopted village, town, community or specific plans to be consistent with the adopted criteria for these areas. (See Objective 8.8 and the related policies of this chapter and Village, Town, Community and Specific Plans within the Land Use chapter.)

8.5.4 Live Oak: Soquel Avenue

Require the development of a master site plan, pursuant to policy 8.2.1 for the properties designated as Service Commercial/Light Industrial land use along Soquel Avenue (between Rodeo Gulch and 17th Avenue). The purpose of the Master Site Plan is to create a coordinated and integrated center(s) for industrial or service commercial uses and employment, and to ensure that uses are appropriate to the site. Require full mitigation of impacts on adjacent streets, services and nearby residential development. Prohibit any uses within the center(s) which may potentially pose a nuisance to the occupants of adjacent properties.

Objective 8.6 Building Design

To encourage building design that addresses the neighborhood and community context; utilizes scale appropriate to adjacent development; and incorporates design elements that are appropriate to surrounding uses and the type of land use planned for the area.

Policies

8.6.1 Maintaining a Relationship Between Structure and Parcel Sizes

Recognize the potential for significant impacts to community character from residential structures which are not well-proportioned to the site; and require residential structures to have a direct relationship to the parcel size as per the Residential Site and Development Standards ordinance.

8.6.2 Residential Development Standards Ordinance

Require all residential structures to comply with the Residential Development Standards ordinance which includes maximum structural height and minimum structural setbacks. Unnecessary grading for the purpose of meeting height restrictions is prohibited.

8.6.3 Story Limitation

Residential structures shall be limited to two stories in urban areas and on parcels smaller than one acre in the rural areas except where explicitly stated in the Residential Site and Development Standards ordinance or Combining District site standards. *(Amended by Res 190-2007)*

8.6.4 Review of Large Dwellings

Recognize that large single residences may have significant adverse visual impacts on the community and require new single family residences larger than 7,000 square feet in floor area and additions larger than 10 percent of residential structures larger than 7,000 square feet in floor area to be consistent with all design criteria of the Visual Resources section of the General Plan and LCP Land Use Plan and the Zoning ordinance.

8.6.5 Designing With the Environment

Development shall maintain a complementary relationship with the natural environment and shall be low-profile and stepped-down on hillsides.

8.6.6 Protecting Ridgetops and Natural Landforms

(LCP) Protect ridgetops and prominent natural landforms such as cliffs, bluffs, dunes, rock outcroppings, and other significant natural features from development. In connection with discretionary review, apply the following criteria:

- (a) Development on ridgetops shall be avoided if other developable land exists on the property.
- (b) Prohibit the removal of tree masses when such removal would erode the silhouette of the ridgeline form. Consider the cumulative effects of tree removal on the ridgeline silhouette.
- (c) Restrict the height and placement of buildings and structures to prevent their projection above the ridgeline or treeline. Restrict structures and structural projections adjacent to prominent natural land forms. Prohibit the creation of new parcels which would require structures to project above the ridgeline, treeline or along the edge of prominent natural land forms. (See Visual Resources section within the Conservation and Open Space chapter.)
- (d) Require exterior materials and colors to blend with the natural landform and tree backdrops.

With respect to the issuance of administrative permits, advise all applicants that they should design and site their structures to conform to the above policies.

8.6.7 Solar Access

Sunlight and solar access shall be maintained wherever practicable and energy-efficient building design shall be fostered. Passive solar siting shall be encouraged for all new development in accordance with adopted building and energy codes.

Programs

- a. Maintain the following or similar ordinances to implement the goal, objectives and policies of this chapter: Residential Development Standards, Large Dwelling Review, and Site, Architectural and Landscape Design Review. (Responsibility: Planning Department, Planning Commission, Board of Supervisors)
- b. Maintain criteria for the control of ridgetop development in order to minimize adverse impacts on scenic views. (Responsibility: Planning Department, Planning Commission, Board of Supervisors)

Objective 8.7 Landscape Design

To ensure that landscaping relates to the building and site design, site conditions, and adjacent properties; and that plant materials are suitable to the design and site conditions.

Policies

8.7.1 Landscape Conditions for Development

When landscaping is required as a condition of permit approval, utilize the Zoning ordinance and the Urban Forestry Master Plan as a guide to require the landscape design to relate to the building and the site design; require plant materials appropriate to the site conditions with consideration for growth pattern, color, texture, solar access, maintenance, and water conservation; and require fencing, walls, site furniture and lighting to be designed to be integral and compatible elements of the building and landscape design.

8.7.2 Utilize Native Species in Rural Areas

Require as a condition of development permit approval, revegetation and landscaping for rural projects to utilize drought tolerant species with a predominance of plants being native species appropriate to the site and recommend these landscape practices for ministerial permit projects.

8.7.3 Appropriate Plants in Urban Areas

Require urban projects, as a condition of development permit approval, to comply with the street tree guidelines of the Urban Forestry Master Plan, and to utilize acceptable species listed within the plan.

Programs

- a. Update and maintain the County's Landscape Criteria which serves as a guide for all development project review and permit approval. (Responsibility: Planning Department)
- b. Establish and administer a Landscape Water Conservation ordinance or similar ordinance to provide guidelines for designing, installing and maintaining water-efficient landscapes in new and rehabilitated projects. (Responsibility: Planning Commission, Water Advisory Commission, Water Conservation, Board of Supervisors)
- (LCP) c. Develop and maintain tree planting standards for new development to ensure adequate screening and softening of the effects of new buildings and to reduce the linear appearance of streets, sidewalks, and building planes. (Responsibility: Planning Department)

Objective 8.8 Villages, Towns and Special Communities

(LCP) To recognize certain established urban and rural villages as well as Coastal Special Communities for their unique characteristics and/or popularity as visitor destination points; to preserve and enhance these communities through design review ensuring the compatibility of new development with existing character of these areas.

Policy

8.8.1 Design Guidelines for Unique Areas

Develop specific design guidelines and/or standards for well-defined villages, towns and communities including commercial and residential uses as appropriate. New development within these areas listed in Figure 8-1 and any other subsequently adopted area plan, shall conform to the adopted plans for these areas, as plans become available.

Program

(LCP) a. In the preparation of village plans, develop a citizen participation program to include concerned neighborhood groups and affected property owners.

COASTAL SPECIAL COMMUNITIES

Policies

8.8.2 Coastal Special Community Designation

(LCP) Maintain a Coastal Special Community designation for the following areas shown on the General Plan and LCP Land Use Maps.

- Davenport
- Seacliff Beach Area
- Rio del Mar Flats/Esplanade
- Harbor Area
- East Cliff Village Tourist Area

8.8.3 Tourist Commercial Concessions

(LCP) Encourage the provision of tourist commercial services within Coastal Special Communities, as follows:

- (a) Davenport: Highway 1 frontage.
- (b) Seacliff Beach Area: Entire Special Community.
- (c) Rio del Mar Flats/Esplanade Area: Esplanade frontage to Stephen Road.
- (d) Harbor Area: Commercially designated areas along 7th Avenue.
- (e) East Cliff Village Tourist Area: Commercially designated areas along East Cliff Drive.

DAVENPORT SPECIAL COMMUNITY

Policies

8.8.4 Davenport Character

(LCP) Require new development in Davenport to be consistent with the height, bulk, scale, materials, and setbacks of existing development: generally small scale, one to two story structures of wood construction.

8.8.5 Historic Structures

(LCP) Prohibit demolition of the following historic structures and require rehabilitation to the extent feasible as a condition of development approval to maintain the architectural and historic character of the structure: Saint Vincent de Paul Catholic Church on Davenport Road, Davenport Jail on Highway 1, and Foresters' Hall on Highway 1.

Program

(LCP) a. Enhance Davenport as a visual focus along Highway 1. Prepare a landscaping and design plan, in accordance with the policies of this section, to achieve the following objectives:

(1) Clear, coordinated circulation including:

- clear definition of stopping spaces (parking) along the highway frontage for both cars and bicycles;
- clearly articulated pedestrian crossings;
- adequate parking off Highway 1, nearby, for existing and new uses, and for visitors;
- bicycle parking facilities to make the town a more attractive bicycle destination/stop over point.

(2) Landscaping to enhance commercial areas, and to assist in definition of parking spaces and walkways, and in screening of parking as appropriate.

(3) Emphasis on the area's whaling history and whale viewing opportunities.

(4) Elimination of visually intrusive overhead wires.

(5) Screening of the cement plant and its parking lot from the residential area to the north.

(Responsibility: Planning Department, Planning Commission, Board of Supervisors)

SEACLIFF BEACH AREA SPECIAL COMMUNITY

Policy

8.8.6 New Development

- (LCP) Require new development, additions, or rehabilitation to be consistent with the objectives of this section and the following:
- (a) Clearly define State Park Drive as a major pathway to Seacliff State Beach by providing:
 - area orientation signs identifying uses and location of uses near freeway exit and at Seacliff State Park Beach;
 - sidewalks on at least one side of State Park Drive, terminating at the stairway at Seacliff Drive, and crosswalks to Center and Santa Cruz Avenues;
 - planting as a street edge and visual filter for adjacent uses on State Park Drive.
 - (b) Improve directional signing along State Park Drive.
 - (c) Reduce the numerous overhead wires on State Park Drive. Consider undergrounding, relocation, and/or reduction in the number of wires.
 - (d) Landscape and improve the entrance to Seacliff State Beach on State Park Drive.

Program

- (LCP) a. Prepare and implement a landscaping and roadside improvement program for the area in accordance with the Urban Forestry Master Plan. (Responsibility: Planning Department, Planning Commission, Board of Supervisors)

RIO DEL MAR FLATS/ESPLANADE AREA SPECIAL COMMUNITY

Policy

8.8.7 New Development

- (LCP) Require infill development, rehabilitations, or new additions in the Rio del Mar flats to maintain heights, bulk, and setbacks similar to existing development as follows:
- (a) Commercial Development. Buildings should be designed to reflect the beach front character of the esplanade and continue the design of existing structures: e.g., Mediterranean style, adobe or wood frame construction, red tile pitched roofs, garden courts, light paint. Sign design shall be integral with the structure, and coordinate with other area signs.
 - (b) Esplanade. Landscaping, paving, lighting, traffic in the Esplanade area shall enhance its potential as an auto/pedestrian piazza, and incorporate Aptos Creek as a design feature.

Program

- (LCP) a. Prepare a design plan and implementation program for the Rio del Mar Cove area (Esplanade and flats), in accordance with the Urban Forestry Master Plan and the policies of this section, to achieve the following:
- (1) Landscaping, paving, lighting, traffic in the Esplanade area to enhance its potential as an auto/pedestrian piazza, and incorporating Aptos Creek as a design feature.
 - (2) Encouragement of a rehabilitation and/or refurbishment of structures where appropriate.
- (Responsibility: Planning Department, Planning Commission, Board of Supervisors)

