



Workforce Housing

Design Guidelines



PLANNING & BUILDING
CENTER OF SAN LUIS OBISPO

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1. Introduction



Providing an adequate supply and range of affordable housing choices is a high priority in San Luis Obispo County.

Background

Providing an adequate supply and range of affordable housing choices is a high priority and significant challenge in San Luis Obispo County. The San Luis Obispo region faces constraints such as high construction costs and high demand for developable land. The Housing Element is a component of the County's General Plan. Through the Housing Element, the County sets policies and standards to facilitate the provision of affordable housing.

Affordable housing is divided into several classifications:

Definition	Income	Annual Income for a Family of 4 (2015)
Extremely Low Income	30% Median	\$22,600
Very Low Income	50% Median	\$37,700
Low Income	80% Median	\$60,300
Median Income	Median	\$77,000
Moderate Income	120% Median	\$92,400
Workforce Income	160% Median	\$123,200

Because of the compact nature of the development, specific focus should be given to any design issues that affect quality of life.

Present market conditions make the construction of large single family homes the most profitable option for developers. The average single family residence in the unincorporated County has steadily risen from 1,600 square feet in 1980 to 2,300 square feet in 2010 (Housing Element 2014). Meanwhile, demographic trends show a decrease in household size. This has led to a situation where families need to dedicate a large proportion of their income towards housing costs. In some communities, based upon census data, this represents up to 60% of household income. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development considers families who pay more than 30% of their income for housing ‘cost burdened’ and potentially challenged in affording necessities (source HUD).

The Workforce Housing Ordinance is envisioned as a means to encourage the development of market-rate residences that are affordable to the County’s workforce. This is accomplished in two ways:

- **Workforce Housing Subdivisions** - Relax certain standards for new subdivisions that involve the development of workforce housing.
- **Mixed Use Developments** - Allow interim residential uses to occur in commercial mixed use developments.

Workforce housing developments often deal with compact infill development in existing urbanized areas with nearby head-of-household employment. Because of the compact nature of the development, specific focus should be given to any design issues that affect quality of life. For example, a small-lot subdivision should consider not only the design of the individual residential units, but also the siting of structures and the location of upper floor windows, front entrances, parking, and private outdoor space. Issues such as these are generally context-based and depend upon site conditions and constraints. As a result, specific design requirements are best addressed on a case-by-case basis as part of the design review process, rather than through a “one size fits all” ordinance standard.

The San Luis Obispo County Economic Vitality Corporation's Building, Design, and Construction Cluster was involved in the crafting of the workforce housing subdivision ordinance.

These design guidelines are intended to provide guidance on the design, review, and approval of workforce housing developments. **Guidelines differ from standards in that they are recommendations and not requirements.** They are a reference point and should be used in the following ways:

- **By the landowner or designer**, to help in designing the conceptual layout of the development and its various features (e.g. parking, outdoor space, etc.)
- **By the Community Advisory Council**, to aid in their review and recommendations on discretionary development projects. The advisory council should reference the guidelines in recommending revisions to development plans and identifying any critical guidelines that should be applied as conditions of approval to the project.
- **By the County Planner**, to aid in their design review and recommendations for the project.
- **By the Review Authority**, to aid in their deliberations when considering project approval, conditional approval, or denial.

What is a Workforce Housing Subdivision?

A workforce housing subdivision is a standard residential subdivision where all units are priced to be affordable to the County's workforce. The "workforce" is considered to be any household that earns up to 160 percent of median household income or \$123,200 annually as of July 2015. County Planning and Building publishes monthly statistics showing the maximum sales price of a workforce residence.



*Moylan Terrace Site Plan
RRM Design Group*

In exchange for flexibility and other incentives, the developers agree to limit sales price and to sell to owner-occupants (first sale only).

A workforce housing subdivision differs from a *planned development*, which is governed under a separate section of the Land Use Ordinance (see Section 22.22.145). Planned developments are common interest developments as defined in the California Civil Code. In this respect, planned developments always include some land under common ownership or held by a homeowners association. Planned developments do, however, provide a mechanism to reduce lot sizes, reduce setbacks, and otherwise adjust ordinance standards to accommodate a more compact building design. This flexibility standards also applies to workforce housing subdivisions.

The key difference is that workforce housing subdivisions do not require any land or facilities to be held in common.

In exchange for the flexibility and other incentives, the developers of a workforce housing subdivision agree to the following limitations:

- **The first sale of each residence must meet the affordability criteria for a workforce housing residence.** The affordability criteria is adjusted for the communities of San Miguel and Oceano to reflect lower household incomes in those communities.
- **Each residence must be owner-occupied.** This is intended to discourage investors from purchasing residences intended for workforce ownership.

Objective 1

Incentivize the development of new housing in a range of types and affordability to San Luis Obispo County's workforce.



Mixed use development in San Miguel

The difficulty of financing commercial space has prevented mixed use projects from being built.

Another crucial difference between planned developments and workforce housing subdivisions relates to construction. Though not all planned developments involve a single structure crossing property lines and/or airspace unit boundaries, some (such as condominiums) do. A workforce housing subdivision, in contrast, involves no common ownership. Lots are held in fee-simple title, similar to a conventional subdivision. Therefore, each lot in a workforce housing subdivision must remain structurally independent.

What is a Mixed Use Development?

A mixed use development is a single development project that involves more than one use of land. For example, a two story building with 10,000 square feet of retail space on the ground floor and two apartments above would be considered mixed use. The County General Plan strongly encourages mixed use developments in urbanized unincorporated areas (refer to *Framework for Planning*). Mixed use developments are allowed in the Commercial Retail (CR) and Office and Professional (OP) land use categories.

Mixed use developments are almost always located in the central business district of an urbanized community, where the County envisions future pedestrian activity. In many ways, these developments mimic central business district development patterns prevalent throughout the County prior to the 1950s. By introducing high quality design and enhancing the pedestrian experience, mixed use developments can be an excellent tool for revitalizing business districts. Business owners also enjoy the added security of having residents nearby to keep “eyes on the street.” Because they are located in commercial land use categories, mixed use developments are required to be primarily commercial in nature. This has historically been interpreted as a requirement that at least one-half

Overarching Goals

of the square footage be dedicated to commercial use. In the last decade, the County Planning Commission has approved several mixed use developments. However, only a few of these have been constructed. Developers have consistently told the County that they are willing and able to construct the residential component of their mixed use development, but have difficulty obtaining financing on the commercial development. Recent conference sessions at the American Planning Association confirm that this trend is common throughout California.

Overarching Goals

The following overarching goals should be considered throughout the design, review, and approval process for workforce housing subdivisions. Any subdivision approved under these standards should meet all of the following goals.

Overarching Goals of Workforce Housing	
Goal 1	Create high quality indoor and outdoor living environments for all residents.
Goal 2	Design residences to enhance the public realm.
Goal 3	Provide fee simple home ownership opportunities for a greater number of people at a wider range of income levels.
Goal 4	Provide solutions for the development of infill housing.
Goal 5	Design and configure housing to be compatible with the existing neighborhood context, especially in sensitive areas.
Goal 6	Prioritize the livability and the affordable market value of a project over density limitations.

Workforce Housing

The difficulty of financing commercial space has prevented mixed use projects from being built. This, in turn, has hindered attempts to revitalize central business districts. **As part of the workforce housing ordinance, the County has adopted standards that would allow commercial space in mixed use developments to be used for residential purposes on an interim basis, as long as they are designed to meet commercial form requirements.** Over time, the intent is that market conditions would allow ground floor spaces along public roads to convert to commercial use, as the demand rises.

Ordinance Standards

In order to qualify as a workforce housing subdivision, a project is required to meet certain eligibility standards. The checklist below summarizes these requirements:

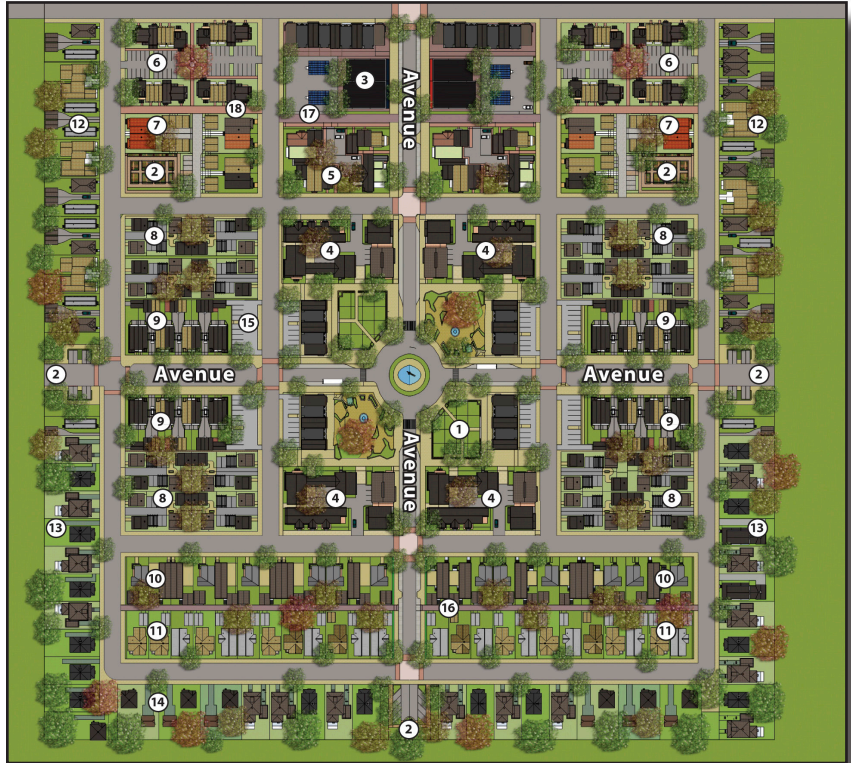
Workforce Housing Ordinance	
<i>Compliance Checklist</i>	
<i>Location Eligibility</i>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	The project site is located within the RR, RS, RSF, RMF, O/P, or CR land use categories.
<input type="checkbox"/>	The subdivision will be served with community water and sewer.
<i>Sales Restrictions</i>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Subdivider agrees <u>that all</u> workforce housing units shall be owner-occupied.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Subdivider agrees to limit the sales price for the first sale of a developed workforce housing parcel to workforce affordability standards.
<i>Lot Dimensions and Design</i>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	The parent parcel is at least 6,000 square feet.
<input type="checkbox"/>	All lots are at least 1,000 square feet in size with a minimum width of 15-20 feet. Development must be consistent with the density of the land use category.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Each lot is structurally independent.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Once developed, all lots are designed to contain at least 200 square feet of private outdoor area.

Workforce Housing

Workforce Housing Ordinance	
<i>Compliance Checklist</i>	
	The 200 square-foot private outdoor area designated on each lot will contain at least one unobstructed area with a minimum depth of 6 feet and minimum width of 8 feet.
	At least 35 percent of the subdivision will be open area (including setbacks, but excluding structural development).
<i>Setbacks</i>	
	Development on all lots will maintain a minimum 5 foot setback from exterior tract boundaries.
	Development on all lots will maintain a minimum 3 foot setback from interior lot boundaries, unless the applicant requests and the Review Authority grants an adjustment to allow a zero lot-line development.
	Development on all lots will maintain a minimum 15 foot setback from public road rights-of-way. Exceptions: (1) Front porches may be set back 5 feet if the porch is 8 feet deep and 10 feet wide; (2) Corner lots may have one 10-foot setback; (3) Where the Review Authority grants an adjustment.
	Any garages directly accessible from a public road will maintain a minimum setback of 20 feet from the back of sidewalk to ensure no vehicle overhang.
<i>Access</i>	
	All lots have vehicular access to a public or privately maintained road. Exception: If a lot's parking is located off-site, the off-site location must have vehicular access to a public or privately maintained road. In this circumstance, each lot must have a minimum 10-foot pedestrian accessway.
	The local fire agency has reviewed the plans and concurs that appropriate fire safety access will be provided.
<i>Workforce Housing Design Guidelines</i>	
	The development is consistent with the Workforce Housing Design Guidelines.
	The development is consistent with the Site Planning guidelines, because development will be compatible with the existing neighborhood, while also striking a balance between parking, adequate common areas, and the public realm.
	The development is consistent with the Building Design guidelines, because project features (entryways, height and massing, building facades, roof lines, and materials) are compatible with the neighborhood and of high quality design.
	The development is consistent with the Landscaping and Outdoor Areas guidelines, because landscape features delineate the public, private, and transitional areas and enhance visual interest.
<i>General Plan Compliance</i>	
	The overall project density is consistent with Land Use Ordinance and General Plan standards for the project's land use category.
	The project complies with minimum parcel size and maximum density standards established in any applicable Community Plan, Area Plan, or Design Plan.

2. Site Planning

Site planning techniques can have a major effect on the quality of life. Workforce housing development should be both functional and aesthetically pleasing.



*Conceptual Neighborhood Site Plan.
Source: Illustrative Design Model, San Luis Obispo County.*

The Importance of Site Planning

When dealing with urban infill projects, particularly where development will occur on small lots, using good site planning techniques can have a major effect on the quality of life. Workforce housing developments should be both functional and aesthetically pleasing. To achieve this, major site planning considerations include the following:

- **Relationship to the Street:** Does the development fit in with the predominant patterns along the public road?
- **Site Layout and Circulation:** Does the project layout encourage functional use and a high quality-of-life?
- **Parking and Driveways:** Is vehicular circulation and parking appropriately addressed?

Objective 2

Design and configure housing to be consistent with the General Plan as well as any applicable Community Plan, Specific Plan, or Design Plan. Ensure that workforce housing developments, which encourage smaller housing units that are affordable by design, remain compatible with the existing neighborhood, while also striking a balance between parking, adequate common areas, and the public realm.

By meeting as many Site Planning guidelines as possible, a project is consistent with Objective 2.

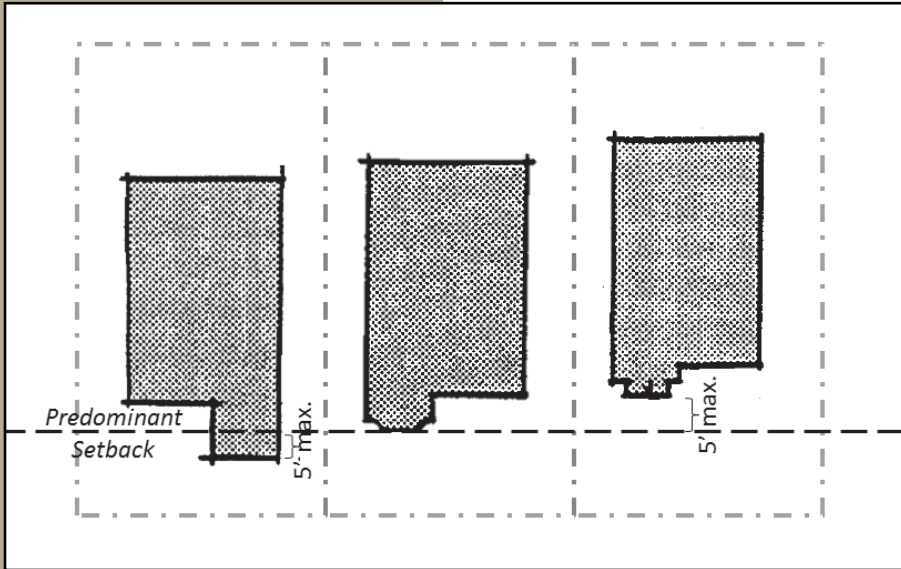


Guidelines for Site Planning **Relationship to the Street**

*Guideline 2-1: **Prevailing street setback.** In areas with an existing prevailing street setback, align the small lot development to be consistent with this setback and provide continuity along the street edge. Slight deviations from the setback are acceptable.*

*Guideline 2-2: **Varying setbacks.** On residential streets with varying setbacks, the front yard setback should be within 5 feet of the average setback of adjacent properties*

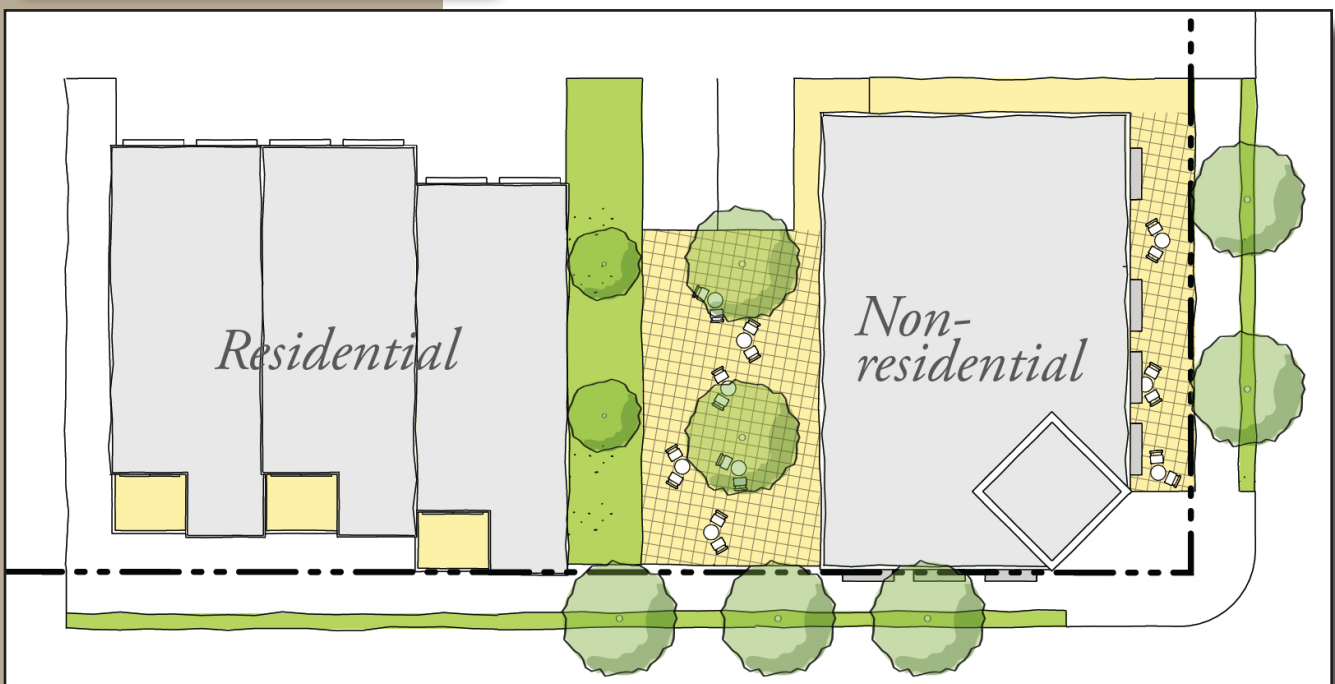
*Guideline 2-3: **Commercial streets.** On commercial streets with a range of setbacks, small lot developments should nearly abut the sidewalk, allowing sufficient room for entry, front stoop, and some transitional landscaping. However, this is not required for dwellings with ground floor retail.*



Varying the front setback on each parcel helps to create visual interest and to break up the perceived massing of development. Nonetheless, residences should be set back within 5 feet of the predominant front setback in order to maintain continuity.



Consistent with the **Relationship to Street** guidelines, residential development along a commercial street should include only enough of a front setback to allow a porch and small vegetated area.



Guidelines for Site Planning
Site Layout and Circulation

*Guideline 2-4: **Frontage.*** Configure homes to front streets, primary entryway, circulation walkways, and open spaces, rather than driveways.

*Guideline 2-5: **Pedestrian access.*** For homes not adjacent to the street, provide pedestrian circulation in the form of private walkways or clearly delineated paths of travel from the sidewalk to their entryway.

*Guideline 2-6: **Green space.*** Maximize green space while minimizing the total amount of driveway space.

*Guideline 2-7: **Alleys.*** Where possible, utilize alleyways for vehicular access.

*Guideline 2-8: **Natural features.*** Take advantage of existing topography and natural features (i.e. existing trees) to maintain appropriate grade levels consistent with surrounding structures.

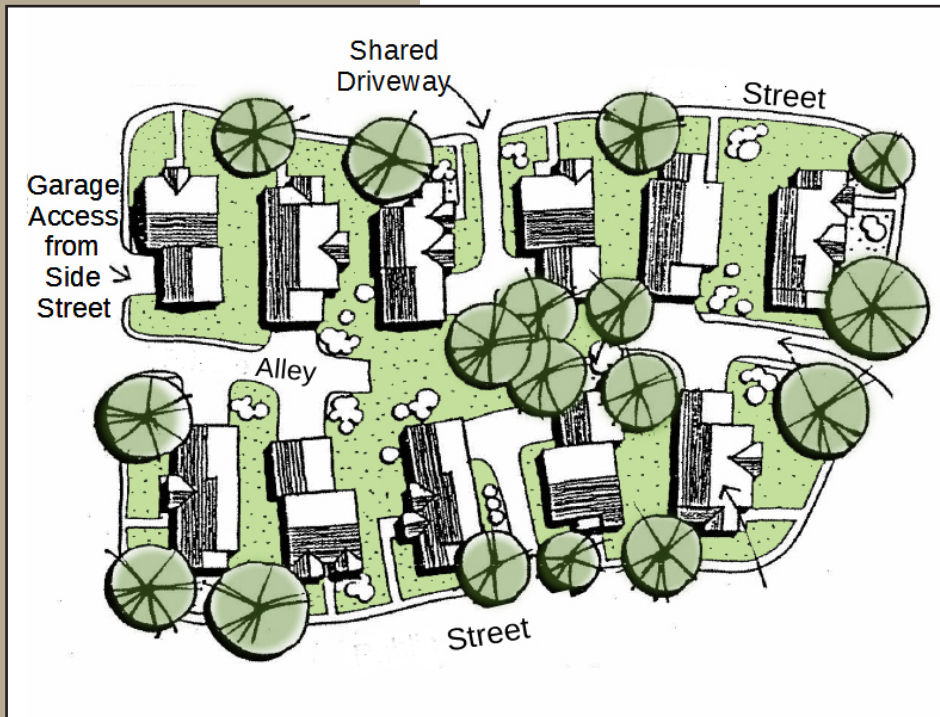
*Guideline 2-9: **Primary entrance.*** Homes fronting streets with street parking are encouraged to have the primary entrance and main windows facing the street.

*Guideline 2-10: **Decorative paving.*** Enhanced paving on private property is encouraged to mark pedestrian and vehicular entries of complexes to provide a sense of arrival.

*Guideline 2-11: **Building and outdoor area layout.*** Design floor plan layouts in relation to lot shape, width, and depth to maximize usable outdoor spaces.

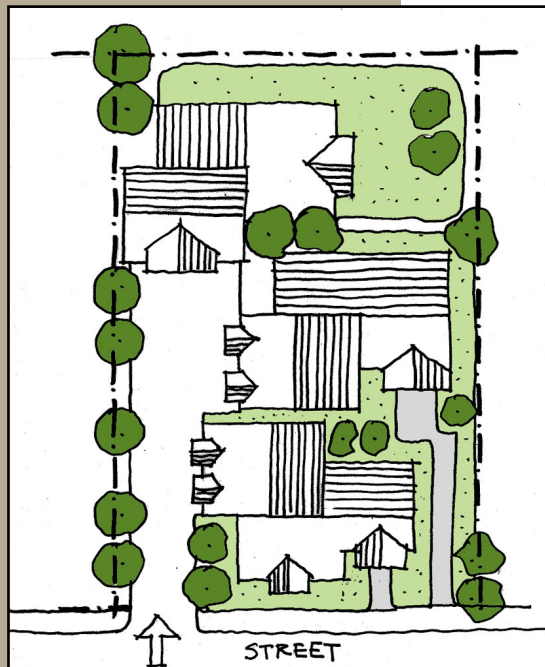
*Guideline 2-12: **Pathways.*** Provide direct paths of travel for pedestrian destinations within the development. Whenever relevant, create primary entrances for pedestrians that are safe, easily accessible, and a short distance from transit stops.

*Guideline 2-13: **Separate pedestrian and vehicular paths.*** When multiple units share a common driveway that is lined with individual garages, provide distinguishable pedestrian paths to connect parking areas to articulated individual entries.

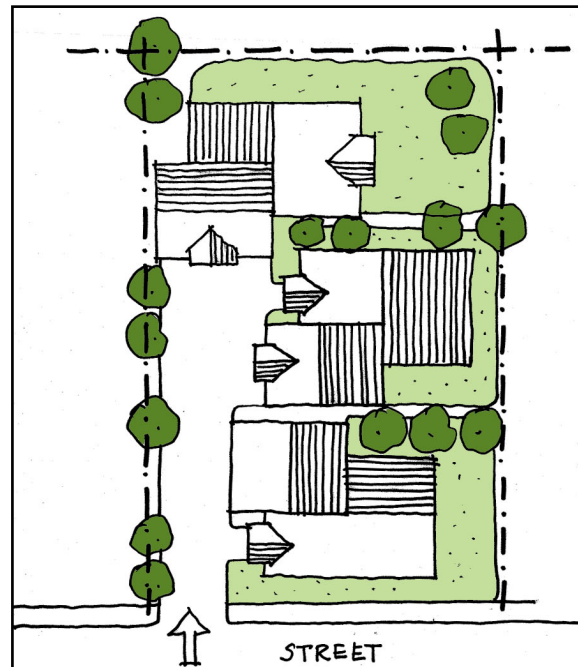


Consistent with the **Site Layout and Circulation** guidelines, this workforce housing development involves residences that front on streets, but take vehicular access from alleys and shared driveways. This design can help ensure that vehicular and pedestrian paths of travel are separated.

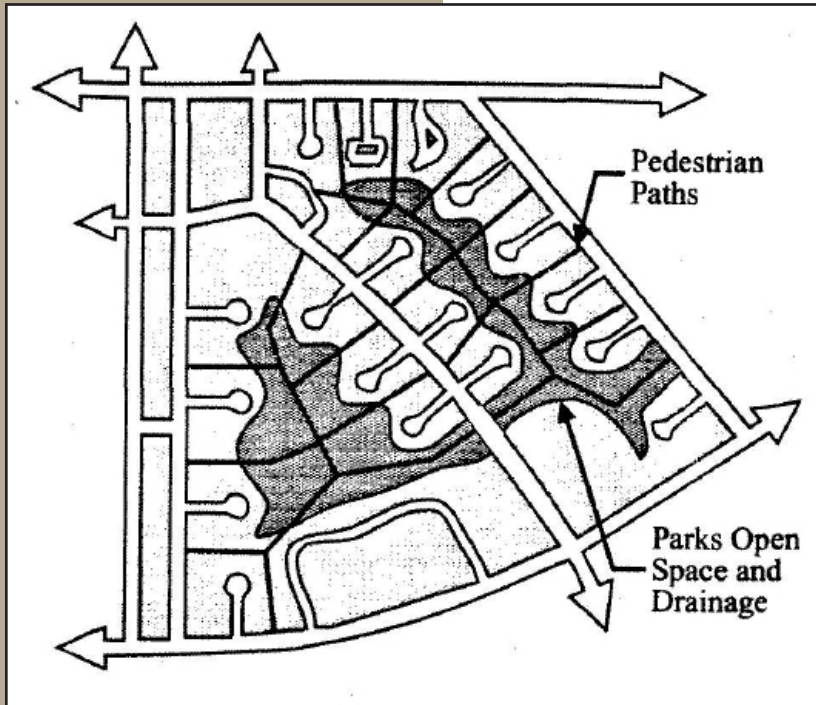
Preferred



Discouraged

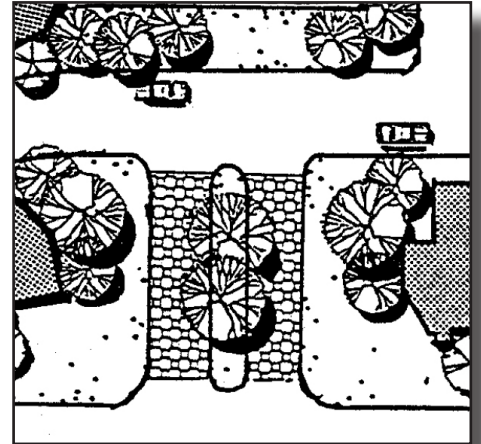


The **Site Layout and Circulation** guidelines also encourage orienting the front entrance of residences towards the street, rather than internally or towards a driveway. This approach to site design helps to integrate the residences with the surrounding neighborhood.



Pedestrian paths and circulation should be integrated into the subdivision design.

Decorative pavement treatment at the entry driveway is highly encouraged.

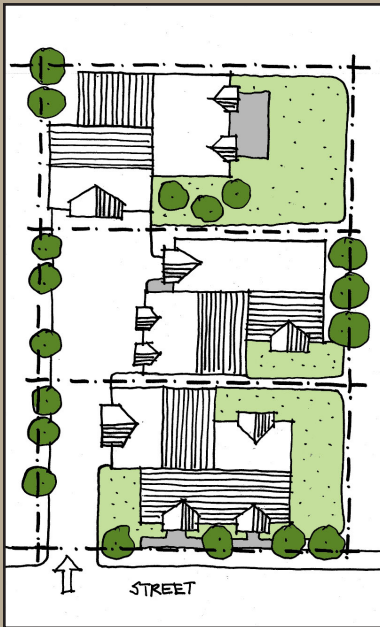


In this example, four residences are clustered around a common driveway. The driveway serves dual purposes for parking and common outdoor area for the residences.

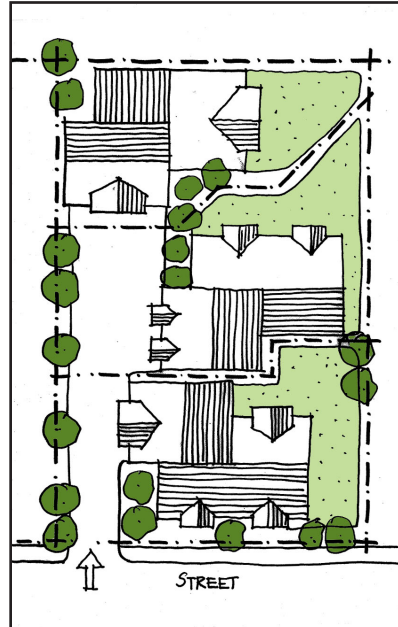


Courtyard setting homes on 837 Islay Street, San Luis Obispo, CA.

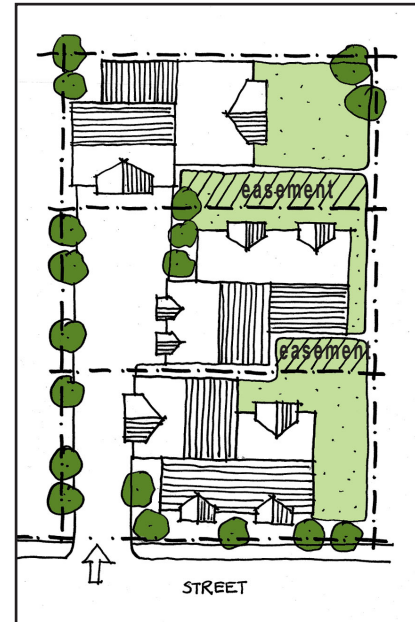
#1 Discouraged



#2 Acceptable



#3 Preferred



As part of the review of Site Layout and Circulation guidelines, the designer should consider functional use of outdoor area. The three images above illustrate different options for site layout.

Example #1 is discouraged. The front lot's outdoor area is relatively narrow. The middle lot lacks sufficient outdoor area. The rear lot's outdoor area is much larger than the other two lots.

Example #2 is acceptable. Each lot has roughly equivalent outdoor yard area. The odd shape of the lot lines, however, does limit the functional use of the yards.

Example #3 is preferred. While lot boundaries are identical to Example #1, each lot has roughly equivalent outdoor yard area. The yard area's perimeter uses right angles to provide maximum function. Exclusive use easements may be used to allow yard areas to encroach across property lines.

Guidelines for Site Planning
Building-to-Street Proportions

*Guideline 2-14: **Building placement.*** Vary building placement to increase variation in facades and more articulated building edges.

*Guideline 2-15: **Landscaping.*** Define the proper proportion private driveways through the planting of shade trees and low-growing vegetation (see Landscaping Section for further information).

*Guideline 2-16: **Defined edge.*** Plant shade trees and ornamental plants to define the edge and increase visual interest to both the public and private realms. Avoid placing 4-foot-tall or higher shrubs immediately adjacent to the sidewalk.



*Conceptual Neighborhood Site Plan for San Miguel.
Source: Landscape Architecture Design Studio, Cal Poly University, 2014*



In these examples, landscaping is used as a tool to define the boundaries between public and private spaces



Guidelines for Site Planning **Parking and Driveways**

*Guideline 2-17: **Parking in rear.*** Locate parking to the rear of dwellings where homes front the public street.

*Guideline 2-18: **Alleys.*** Where available, use alleyways as access to off-street parking.

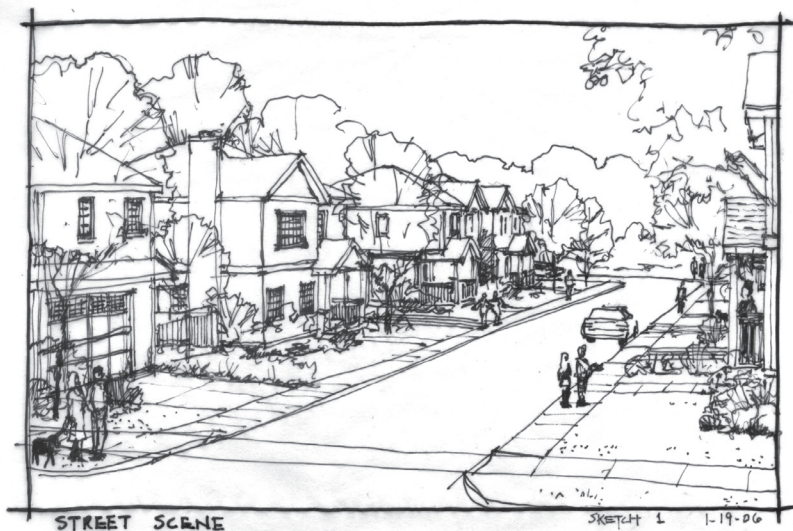
*Guideline 2-19: **Front driveways.*** If individual front driveways must be used, the setback of the building should allow for an ample amount of landscaping space and a front entryway, porch, or landing.

*Guideline 2-20: **Separate pedestrian and vehicular paths.*** Allow for a pedestrian access path separate from driveway whenever possible. When the driveway provides pedestrian access to individual dwellings, a distinguishable path should be provided.

*Guideline 2-21: **Driveway width.*** Access driveways should be designed to be no wider than circulation and backup requirements, while still allowing for landscaping and a pedestrian access path on-site.

*Guideline 2-22: **Multiple uses of driveway space.*** Space permitting, design the driveway area for multifunctional uses.

*Guideline 2-23: **Encroachment.*** Structures should limit encroachment over the driveway area to not restrict the movement of trucks.



3. Building Design



*Conover Commons Homes, WA
Ross Chapin Architects
Developer: The Cottage Company*

Site planning techniques can have a major effect on the quality of life.

The Importance of Building Design

As discussed in the Site Planning chapter, aesthetically pleasing design and quality of life are primary considerations in Workforce Housing. The County welcomes innovation in housing styles and architecture, and the photos and techniques described in this section are not meant to be limit creative building solutions.

- **Entryways and Front Porches:** Is the entry way to each unit clearly distinguished using design features?
- **Height and Massing:** Are the residences appropriately sized and scaled to fit in with the surroundings?
- **Building Facades:** Do residences use articulation, changes in material, and architectural features to create high quality facades?
- **Building Materials:** Are the materials both durable and decorative?
- **Roofs:** Is the roof design visually appropriate?
- **Ground Floor Commercial:** Is the ground floor of a mixed use structure appropriately designed for commercial use?

A project is consistent with the Building Design guidelines if it achieves the intent of Objective 3, while meeting as many of the guidelines as possible.

Objective 3

Develop the overall form and relationship of the buildings by focusing on neighborhood compatibility and high quality design of the following elements: entry, height and massing, building facade, roof lines, and materials.



Identifiable entryways connected to pedestrian pathways create an inviting frontage along houses (Broad Street, San Luis Obispo)

When fronting street, varied orientation of driveways and porches are encouraged at street level (Nipomo, below)



Guidelines for Building Design
Entryways and Front Porches

Guideline 3-1: Identifiable entryways. Primary entryways should be clearly identifiable and connected to the public street by a walkway. Individual residences should incorporate transitions such as landscaping, paving, porches, stoops, and canopies.

Guideline 3-2: Street-facing entryways. Homes that front a public street should have their primary entryway accessible from the street, where practicable. Garages should not take the place of the main entryway.

Guideline 3-3: Lighting. Use ornamental low-level lighting to highlight and provide security for pedestrian paths and entrances. Ensure all parking areas and walkways are illuminated.

Guideline 3-4: Ground floor commercial. Entrances that front commercial roads should allow room for a stoop and entryway and ideally some landscaped area.

Guideline 3-5: Transitions. Incorporate transitions such as landscaping, paving material, porches, stoops, and canopies at the primary entrance to each residence, and at the main pedestrian entrance to the development from the sidewalk.

Guidelines for Building Design
Height and Massing

Guideline 3-6: Context. Use the surrounding built environment to inform decisions about variations in height and massing.

Guideline 3-7: Height changes. Avoid excessive differences in height between the proposed development and adjacent buildings.

Guideline 3-8: Articulation and spacing. Provide sufficient space between buildings, articulation along the street frontage, and visual breaks to diminish the scale and massing.

Guideline 3-9: Scale. Small lot developments should be appropriately designed and scaled to transition from single-family properties using methods such as step backs, building placement, driveway location, variations in height, and landscape screening elements.



Scale of building elements; roof, porches, windows and outdoor structures such as pergolas should be varied to provide interesting visual elements.

Variety of complimentary materials, colors and window rhythm should be considered for architectural treatments and features.

Guidelines for Building Design **Building Facades**

*Guideline 3-10: **Architectural detail.*** Employ architectural details to enhance scale and interest by breaking the facade up into distinct planes that are offset from the main building facade.

*Guideline 3-11: **Window placement.*** The placement of windows should follow a consistent rhythm to create visual clarity and character-defining features while avoiding the creation of blank walls.

*Guideline 3-12: **Windows overlooking outdoor space.*** Provide windows on building facades that front on public streets, private driveways, and internal pedestrian pathways within the development.

*Guideline 3-13: **Architectural features.*** Layer architectural features to emphasize elements such as porches, entries, corners, windows, and organization of units.

*Guideline 3-14: **Colors and materials.*** Alternate different textures, colors, materials, and distinctive architectural treatments to add visual interest while avoiding blank facades. Said color/material/articulation should follow building mass in a harmonious manner.

*Guideline 3-15: **Facade detail.*** Treat all facades of the building with an equal level of detail, articulation, and architectural rigor.

*Guideline 3-16: **Entrances and windows.*** Include overhead architectural features at entrances and windows that provide shade and passive cooling.

*Guideline 3-17: **Balconies.*** Design balconies so that their size and location maximize their intended use for open space. Avoid “tacked on” balconies with limited purpose or function.

*Guideline 3-18: **Reduce monotony.*** Reduce the monotony of undifferentiated facades through landscape screening elements, entry enhancements, and building/garage facades.

Guidelines for Building Design
Building Materials

*Guideline 3-19: **Quality materials.*** Select building materials, such as architectural details and finishes, that convey a sense of permanence. Quality materials should be used to withstand weather and wear regardless of architectural style.

*Guideline 3-20: **Details.*** Apply trim, metal and woodwork, lighting, and other details in a harmonious manner that is consistent with the proportions and scale of the buildings.

*Guideline 3-21: **Context.*** Materials should appropriately respond to the neighborhood context.

*Guideline 3-22: **Changes in materials.*** Apply changes in material purposefully and in a manner corresponding to variations in building mass.



Variety of roof lines and building materials can increase building articulation and visual interest.





*Moylan Terrace, San Luis Obispo
RRM Design Group*

Guidelines for Building Design **Roofs**

*Guideline 3-23: **Varied roof lines.*** Integrate varied roof lines into the upper floors of residences through the use of sloping roofs, modulated building heights, gables, dormers, and innovative architectural techniques.

*Guideline 3-24: **Multi-pitched and gabled roofs.*** Avoid excessive use of multi-pitched and gabled roofs.

*Guideline 3-25: **Covered open space.*** Where appropriate, consider enhancing roof areas with usable open space.

*Guideline 3-26: **Ridge location.*** Consider the design and placement of ridge locations as well as direction in relation to side yards and atriums.

Guidelines for Building Design **Ground Floor Commercial**

Guideline 3-27: Storefront architecture and theme. Ensure that storefronts convey an individual expression of each tenant's identity while adhering to a common architectural theme.

Guideline 3-28: Storefront windows. Design storefronts with a focus on window design to create a visual connection between the interior and exterior.

Guideline 3-29: Window base. Incorporate traditional storefront elements by including a solid base for storefront windows. Use high quality durable materials such as smooth stucco or concrete, ceramic tile, or stone for the window base.

Guideline 3-30: Overhead cover. Provide shelter from the sun and rain for pedestrians along the public right-of-way where the buildings meet the street. Extend overhead cover across driveways or provide architecturally integrated awnings, arcades, and canopies subject to discretionary public encroachments.

Guideline 3-31: Awnings. Align awnings with others on the block, particularly the bottom edge of the awning. Coordinate the awning color with the color scheme of the entire building front.

Guideline 3-32: Recessed entries. Ensure that store entrances are recessed, not flush, with the edge of the building facade to articulate the storefront and provide shelter for persons entering and exiting.



Inviting pedestrian walkways and recessed storefronts are encouraged for ground floor commercial in mixed use developments

4. Landscaping and Outdoor Areas



Careful consideration of outdoor areas and landscaping are key to creating liveable neighborhoods.

Landscaping and Outdoor Areas

Workforce housing subdivisions are one way to achieve compact infill development. This type of development requires careful consideration of outdoor areas, in order to ensure that the development is “liveable” -- i.e. that it provides for quality of life. When laying out a workforce housing subdivision, the project designer should take multiple factors into consideration.

- **Front and Common Areas:** Are front yards and common areas appropriately designed and landscaped?
- **Private Outdoor Space:** Is the private outdoor space for each residence designed for maximum function?
- **Plant Materials:** Are the planting materials used in landscaping appropriate?
- **Privacy:** Has privacy been taken into consideration in site layout and design?

A project is consistent with the Landscaping and Outdoor Areas design guidelines if it achieves the intent of Objective 4, while meeting as many of the guidelines as possible.

Objective 4

Design landscaping that delineates the public, private, and transitional areas; enhances visual interest; and utilizes native and drought-tolerant plants.

Guidelines for Landscaping and Outdoor Areas **Front and Common Areas**

*Guideline 4-1: **Water efficiency.*** Use a range of low-water and drought-tolerant plant materials and ground cover to provide visual interest in place of turf grass.

*Guideline 4-2: **Fences and shrubbery.*** Use fences and shrubbery less than 3'6" tall (2' 6" at intersections and driveways for sight distance) in areas adjacent to the sidewalk (within 5' of front lot line), and common public areas.

*Guideline 4-3: **Shade trees.*** Plant shade trees within public areas, ideally spaced between 15' and 20' apart, to screen blank building facades and shade the driveway and parking areas.

*Guideline 4-4: **Grade.*** Whenever possible, use subtle variations in grade.

*Guideline 4-5: **Parkways.*** Plant parkways separating the curb from the sidewalk with ground cover, low-growing vegetation, or permeable materials that accommodate both pedestrian movement and clearance for car doors.

Workforce Housing

Guidelines for Landscaping and Outdoor Areas **Front and Common Areas**

Guideline 4-6: Integration. Design the landscape to be integrated with the building and for the intended use of the space.

Guidelines for Landscaping and Outdoor Areas **Private Outdoor Space**

Guideline 4-7: Private space. Designate fully private outdoor space whenever possible.

Guideline 4-8: Plants. Utilize plants that can be easily modified/ maintained by residents.



Native landscaping is encouraged in outdoor areas along walkways and front porches. Landscape features such as focal planter and mix of paving materials are encouraged.



Guidelines for Landscaping and Outdoor Areas **Private Outdoor Space**

*Guideline 4-9: **Balconies and roof decks.*** Provide balconies to enhance rather than substitute for actively used common open spaces. Balconies and roof decks should be generous enough in size to create usable spaces.

Guidelines for Landscaping and Outdoor Areas **Plant Material**

*Guideline 4-10: **Mulch.*** Apply mulch in between and around plants to conserve moisture and eliminate bare earth, which can look unsightly.



Native plants and ground covers are encouraged for all public area landscaping. Private outdoor areas or walkways are encouraged to utilize ornamental native plants with varying colors, textures and sizes to create interesting spaces.

Guidelines for Landscaping and Outdoor Areas **Plant Material**

*Guideline 4-11: **Ground cover.*** Use water-conserving ground cover instead of turf grass.

*Guideline 4-12: **Invasive plants.*** Avoid invasive plant materials.

*Guideline 4-13: **Grouping.*** Plant in groupings according to water needs.

*Guideline 4-14: **Natural features.*** Incorporate existing natural features and topography.

Guidelines for Landscaping and Outdoor Areas **Privacy**

*Guideline 4-15: **Privacy.*** Windows and balconies from separate dwellings should not face or overlook each other.

*Guideline 4-16: **Windows overlooking private yards.*** Minimize the number of windows overlooking neighboring interior private yards.

Guidelines for Landscaping and Outdoor Areas **Privacy**

*Guideline 4-17: **Privacy enhancement.*** Use translucent glass, landscaping, and screens to create privacy.

*Guideline 4-18: **Private outdoor space.*** Provide functional distances between building walls and vary height to maximize private outdoor space, light and views.

*Guideline 4-19: **Landscaping to screen walls.*** Plant trees, shrubs, and vines to screen walls between property lines. Use variations in color, material, and texture.

*Guideline 4-20: **Rooftop open space.*** Rooftop open space should be located away from the building edge to enhance privacy.