The Design Traditions of Carmel

RESIDENTIAL DESIGN GUIDELINES INTRODUCTION AND DESIGN CONCEPT REVIEW

Adopted by City Council May 1, 2001

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Introduction to the Design Review Process

This booklet is an introduction to the City's Residential Design Review Process and Guidelines that are used in development review. The guidelines are presented in two booklets:

- Guidelines for Design Concept Review are presented in this booklet.
- Guidelines for Final Details Review are published in a separate booklet.

What are Design Guidelines?

Design guidelines convey community consensus about neighborhood design. As such, they provide a common basis for making decisions about work that may affect the appearance of individual properties or the overall character of Carmel. While guidelines provide direction, they are not intended to be inflexible nor used like ordinances. Instead, they are to be used to promote communication about how design changes can blend into and enhance community character. While the guidelines may suggest methods to achieve design objectives, the City recognizes that there may be other methods.

Why have Design Guidelines?

These guidelines inform the designers, architects and property owners about design objectives the citizens hold for their residential areas. They indicate an approach to design that property owners may use to make decisions about their buildings and to maintain the city's traditional character. The guidelines also provide the city, through the Design Review Board, Planning Commission, Staff, the Forest and Beach Commission and the Preservation Committee, a basis for making informed, consistent decisions about design.

The Scope of the Guidelines

The guidelines address all projects in the R-1 zoned areas of Carmel. Please note that the City of Carmel-by-the-Sea will not issue a construction permit for exterior additions, remodeling or new buildings without design review approval from the Design Review Board, the Planning Commission or Staff. These guidelines also will aid property owners and their architects in developing appropriate designs strategies. The guidelines focus on maintaining the traditional character of Carmel.

Note that other regulations also may affect design in Carmel, including the following:

- The Land Use Code of the City of Carmel-by-the-Sea
- California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA)

A Quick Guide to the Design Guidelines

The purpose of the Design Review System is to assure that alterations and new construction in Carmel will respect the design traditions of the community, while accommodating reasonable development and change. This Quick Guide provides a summary of the fundamental design principles upheld in the guidelines and introduces the basic sequence of issues that one should consider when developing a design concept.

Key Principles of the Design Guidelines

These key principles form the foundation of the guidelines:

1. Respect Carmel's design traditions.
This includes consideration of community-wide features, the character of the neighborhood and of the immediate block.

2. Respond to the context.
The built environment should be in balance with the forest character.

3. Balance design objectives.
Achieve a sense of being integrated with the community, while also promoting diversity of design on individual sites.

4. Develop a design in phases.
Develop broad concepts of site design and basic massing first. Then refine the design with the more detailed guidelines.

The enduring principles of design in Carmel-by-the-Sea are variety, modesty and simplicity. While there is wide diversity in design it is the goal of these guidelines that each house draw from and contribute to its neighborhood by generously providing for open space and preserving the City's traditions of simple homes set amidst a forest landscape.

Planning a Project

When planning a project in Carmel, one should define a basic design approach that will meet the owner's needs and at the same time be compatible with the neighborhood. Follow these steps in planning such an approach.

Consider the context of the project.

1. Consider the character of the city at large:
   - General character of the community
   - General approach to design
   - Sense of open space
2. Consider the character of the neighborhood:
   - Street character & orientation
   - Vegetation
   - Building scale
3. Consider the character of the block:
   - Building setback variations
   - Dominant tree species
   - Public and private views
   - Street edge character
   - Building design, height and size

In considering the context, the design guidelines encourage a continuity of landscape design, especially as seen from the street, while they also promote a diversity in architectural character. Therefore, an objective is to strike a balance between relating to the forest context by using similar landscape elements while also maintaining the tradition of variety in building design.

Consider the resources of the site.

1. Assess the topographic features:
   - Design with the topography and use slopes to create second levels above or below ground.
2. Trees and vegetation
   - Identify trees and vegetation that are important to the urban forest or that add character to the site or neighborhood.
3. If you have a historic building or a building of traditional character, consider an addition rather than a demolition/rebuild.

Consider your program requirements.

1. Define basic functional needs.
2. Balance these with Carmel traditions.
3. Adjust your program to fit the parcel size and site constraints.

Summarize the basic project approach.

1. This should balance considerations of context, site resources and program requirements.

How the Guidelines are Organized

These design guidelines are presented in a sequence that follows the City's design review process. When proposing a project, applicants first should become familiar with the City's design traditions and its goals for preservation of character. Next, applicants should consult with the City's planning staff and the City Forester to develop a preliminary site assessment map. This will aid in understanding the resources of the site and issues that will need to be addressed in the design. Based on these preliminary steps, applicants should then develop concept plans and complete a Design Concept review. After this, a Final Details review is scheduled. Only after this final review can a project proceed to construction.

This first Design Guidelines booklet focuses on broad-scale design issues which should be used during the Design Concept review stage. This includes design principles which apply neighborhood-wide as well as design guidelines for site planning and for the mass and scale of a building.

The second Design Guidelines booklet focuses on specific building and site design issues which should be used during the Design Details review stage. These include design guidelines for architectural character, details and materials. Other general design guidelines, such as solar access, views, energy conservation and utilities are also included.

The City uses the design guidelines to determine the appropriateness of a proposed project. In doing so, it evaluates each application on a case-by-case basis to determine that the proposed design meets the intent of the guidelines. This often requires careful judgement and a balancing of competing design objectives.

The Format for a Guideline

Each design guideline in this document typically has four components:

1. **Design Objective** - describes a desired state or condition of the design element being discussed.
2. **Design Guideline Statement** - typically performance-oriented, describes a desired design treatment.
3. **Supplementary Information** - may include suggestions on how to meet the objective, additional requirements, or may provide an expanded explanation. This information is listed in bullet format.
4. **Illustrations** - may be provided to clarify the intent of the guideline.

(These components are illustrated below.)

It is important to note that all components of a design guideline constitute the material upon which the City will make its determination of the appropriateness of a proposed project.

Section Heading

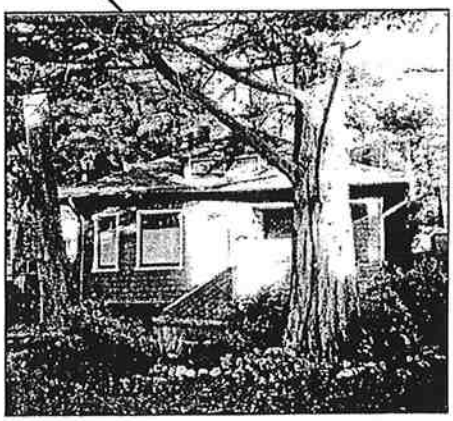
(1) ***Roof Form***

Varied roof forms are typical in a block and this tradition should be continued.

(2) #. **Simple primary roofs, with subordinate attachments such as dormers, are appropriate.**

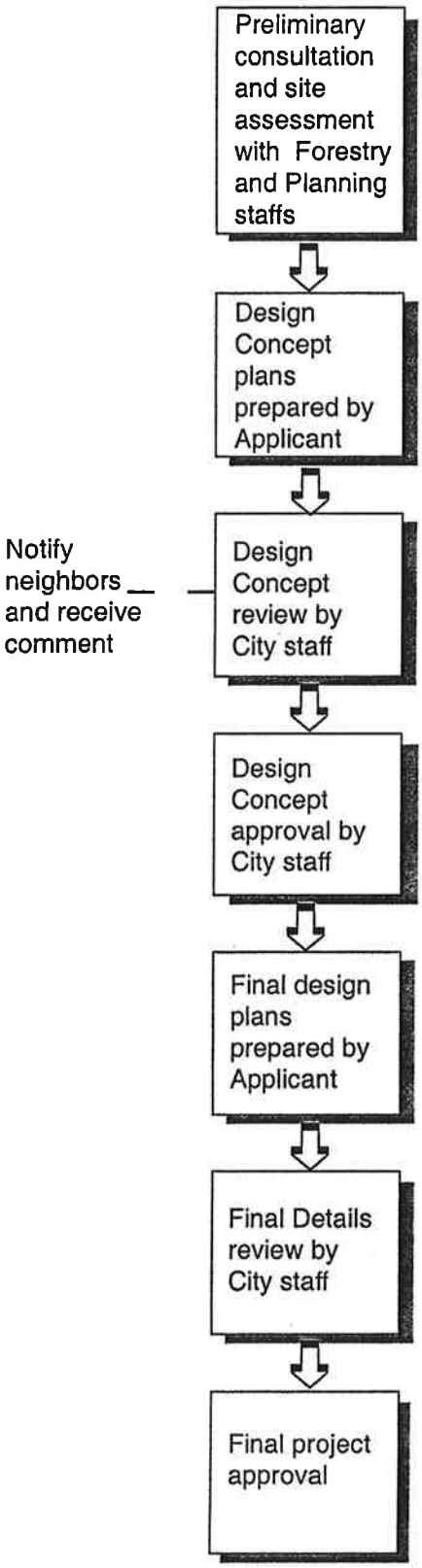
(3)
- For example, basic gable and hip roofs are traditional and their use is encouraged.
- Flat roofs may be used to a limited extent on smaller, one-story structures. They should not be used on large buildings or two-story elements.
- Avoid complex roof forms that call attention to the design or add unnecessary detail.
- Mansard roofs typically add more mass than other forms and are discouraged. A sloping roof "skirt" that conceals a flat roof is particularly out of character. Similarly, a gable roof that is "clipped" at the top adds unnecessary complexity to a design and should be avoided.

(4)



Simple primary roofs with subordinate attachments, such as dormers, are appropriate.

Sample of the guideline format used in this document



Track 1 Review Process

The Three Design Review Tracks

The Design Review System is organized into three separate tracks, which correspond to the complexity of review or to the degree of flexibility that is sought for an individual project.

Review Track 1:
Final Review decision by staff

The Track 1 review track is available for additions and alterations that do not involve substantial increases in the size of buildings. Reviews are conducted by staff, and typically involve site visits, plan review and design consultations. For staff approval, all of the relevant Land Use Code provisions and Design Guidelines must be met. Flexibility is available only where clearly defined in municipal code standards that can be measured.

Referrals:
At any time that staff or the applicant is concerned about the nature of the project or the interpretation of the standards and guidelines, the project may be scheduled before the Design Review Board or the Planning Commission for discussion.

This is the most expeditious but least flexible track of review. It is provided for owners with simple projects and for small additions in order to proceed through the process quickly and with a high degree of predictability.

All design review tracks are subject to the California Permit Streamlining Act. This law requires the City to determine an application is complete within 30-days of application submittal. Once complete, the City then has 60-days to take final action. The only exceptions are (1) when environmental review is required or (2) when the applicant specifically requests a continuance.

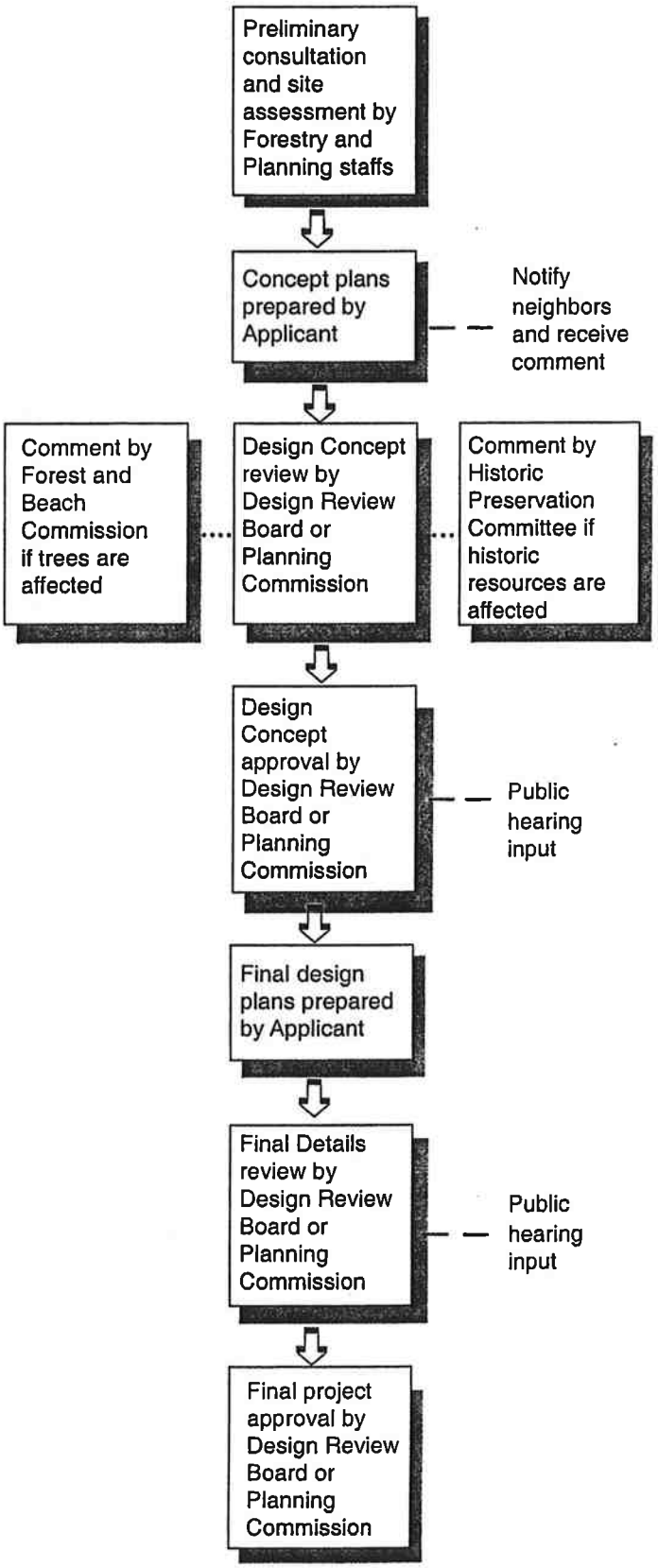
Review Track 2: Final Review decision by Design Review Board or Planning Commission

This level of review is designed for projects where (1) it is not clear that the design meets all design guidelines or that (2) could have a significant impact on the neighborhood context or (3) in which the applicant seeks to make use of incentives that are available under conditions that require interpretation of compatibility with the context. This review track also applies to all new homes and to alterations that increase floor area by more than 25%.

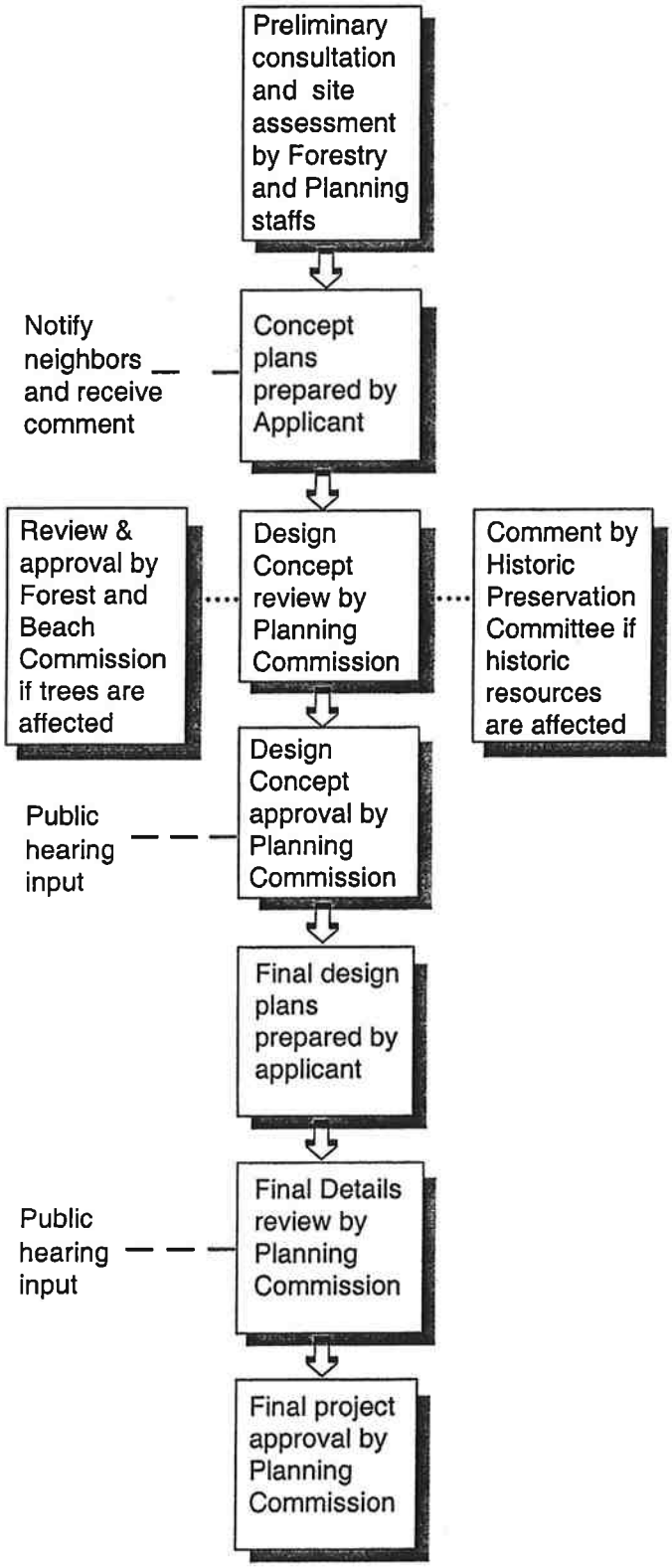
Projects that require a land use permit or environmental review will receive design review by the Planning Commission. All other projects in Track 2 receive design review by the Design Review Board.

Preliminary reviews are conducted by staff and then are referred to the Design Review Board or the Planning Commission for Design Concept review. Final Details review is conducted by the Design Review Board or Planning Commission after concept approval.

Greater flexibility in interpretation of the guidelines and in the application of incentives is available in this track, as compared with Track One. While it may take some additional time, the outcome, at least in terms of minimum standards, is relatively predictable.



Track 2 Review Process



Track 3 Review Process

Review Track 3:
Final Review decision by Planning Commission

This review track is the most flexible process and is included to accommodate innovation and diversity while still respecting the City's design traditions. This track is designed for complex projects and for those in which the applicant seeks special exceptions from certain standards and guidelines because of unique circumstances of the site or in which they believe the overall design will be compatible with the context even though it does not directly meet some of the standards and guidelines. This is a "Planned Development" process.

The objectives in the ordinance and design guidelines and the background text in the guidelines serve as the basic principles or performance standards for determining appropriateness of any proposed work. Except for floor area and volume standards, most dimensional standards such as heights, setbacks, coverage and number of stories could be relaxed by the Commission.

Planned Development Requirements:

Since the Track 3 review potentially allows for significant deviations from design standards, it is important to provide enough information to the public and to decision-makers. Depending on project scope, the following may be required:

- Model of site and project
- Neighborhood-block plan
- Special notice to neighbors explaining the project
- Narrative explaining how City objectives are met
- Higher fees to offset longer processing costs

Design Concept Guidelines

This section contains guidelines for the design and review of concept plans. The guidelines focus on broad design considerations that relate to the basic organization of uses on a site, treatment of the urban forest and the massing of buildings. A primary consideration is that a design be compatible with the design traditions of Carmel, including maintaining the urban forest character and promoting buildings that are in scale with the context while encouraging diversity in individual houses. An accompanying booklet addresses Residential Design Guidelines Final Details Review.

Neighborhood-wide Guidelines

The Preliminary Site Assessment

Each site is considered part of a larger neighborhood and should contribute to neighborhood character. Important elements of neighborhood character include the local forest and open space resources, the character of the street edge, the massing, arrangement, and materials used in other homes nearby and the local patterns of topography, access and views.

The first step in developing a plan for a project is to assess the context of the neighborhood as well as the resources and constraints of the site.

However, each site is also unique and will present its own design challenges and opportunities. Therefore, the first step in developing a plan for a project is to assess the context of the neighborhood and the resources and constraints of the site. A plan showing existing conditions on the site and in the immediate vicinity should be prepared by a licensed surveyor or engineer. This site plan will show topography, drainage features, existing trees and structures, the edge of the street and other features useful in developing a design concept for the project.

This plan must be reviewed in the field by the City Forester and a planner. During this field review, qualitative assessments will be made regarding the health and importance of each tree, whether above-or below-ground areas should be avoided and whether specific existing structures may qualify for incentives offered to preserve traditional or historic buildings. Observations about the neighborhood design context, street and right-of-way character, views or other conditions will be noted as well.

A copy of the site assessment will accompany the project through the design review process to aid in the evaluation of the project by decision-makers. This site assessment should be used by the architect or designer to develop both the design concept for the project and a forest enhancement/maintenance plan for the site. The forest enhancement/maintenance plan will be required during the concept phase of design review and should address the following issues:

- Which trees will be retained, removed or pruned due to the project?
- Will new trees be added (where, how many, what species)?
- Which trees are considered most significant to the site and why?
- How does the proposed project relate to these significant trees (setbacks, pruning, screening)?
- How will the remaining and proposed trees on the site relate to the composition of the forest in the immediate neighborhood?
- Are there any significant belts of native or planted vegetation that are important to the character of the site? Will they remain or be removed?
- What is the character of the adjacent right-of-way? How will it be preserved or enhanced by the project?
- Are any special protective measures planned that go beyond the minimum City requirements for tree protection?

Prior to submittal of design plans for projects that will alter the building footprint, add a second story or involve excavation, the City requires preparation of a preliminary site assessment.