

**RURAL  
DESIGN  
GUIDELINES**

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## FOREWORD

The goals of these Rural Design Guidelines are to (1) identify and document the area's rural characteristics, and (2) establish the guidelines, for any future development, which will (3) serve to preserve and protect the unique rural qualities of the area for future generations.

These Design Guidelines will be implemented during the review and approval process for residential subdivisions (over 4 lots) where the zoning is typically one acre minimum or greater, and/or located in a predominantly rural area. Application of these Rural Design Guidelines (primarily for rural residential uses), in addition to the Placer County Design Guidelines and Landscape Guidelines (primarily for commercial, office, and multi-family residential uses), and Planned Residential Development Guidelines will advance the County's objectives through the creation of a consistent, high quality character of development without compromising the integrity of the Community's pastoral and scenic character.

Much of what follows is based on the American Planning Association's report entitled, *Preserving Rural Character*, (report #429) by Fred Heyer, AICP (available at the Planning Department).

As noted in the Report from the California Senate Urban Growth Policy Project (Senate Resolution 39 of 1988), the State Statutes on planning and zoning enact a number of policies to govern development decisions. Among them are the following:

- o Discouragement of urban sprawl and encouragement of efficient development patterns;
- o Use of land as an exhaustible resource, not just a commodity, . . . essential to the economy, environment and general well-being of the people of California;
- o Preservation of agriculture and open-space lands.

One of the values of life in a "rural" area is that there are generally fewer restrictions than there are in more urbanized areas. While rural design guidelines admittedly recommend that some limits be placed on what can be done with one's property, guidelines are crucial for maintaining the rural character of the area. Guidelines serve to document rural values and features so they can be protected and preserved.

Pressures for development can be hard to resist, and as more people move in, the ideals and benefits of rural life become threatened. There are pressures to change, to become more urban. Rural design guidelines provide a template with which development proposals can be measured. Rural design guidelines can also be a resource for developers to become accustomed to the qualities and characteristics consistent with rural lifestyles.

We must understand that we are both owners and caretakers of our property. Some folks seem to be able to place a house in the middle of a forest without touching the surrounding trees, soil and water. Others have to force their housing project onto the land without consideration of the long term damage. Trees, wetlands, stream beds and the like are part of the natural resources that must be saved to the maximum extent possible.

# RURAL

## Definition and Local Interpretation

From Webster's Dictionary, "Rural is derived from the Latin word *ruralis* for open land, more of room; of or relating to country, country people. . ." Webster also provides many synonyms and contrasts rural to urban features.

Rural is also a state of mind, a feeling. Rural is natural, not structured. Rural is open space, trees, orchards, farms and ranches on a small to large scale. This compares to an urban area where homes are relatively close together, orderly, carefully manicured and there is little open space or room to roam before encroaching on your neighbor. Rural could be a hobby farm including the raising and keeping of a variety of animals. Rural is being able to see the Milky Way without interference of street lights or your neighbor's porch light. Rural is wild animals on your property as compared to dogs and cats in the back yard of an urban home. Rural is being able to hear the birds, geese, frogs and crickets over the sounds of highways and modern life.

Living in a rural environment means taking more risks. In a rural area, you are farther away from the police, medical and fire services of a larger city. Stores, the library and other conveniences are also farther away. Rural roads may be more dangerous because they may be narrower and animals may unexpectedly cross the road; but for those same reasons, rural roads are more attractive and scenic than a highway. Rural may include other risks such as a dry well or backed-up septic tank, but this is part of the rural experience.

Part of the decision to live in a rural area is to weigh the benefits against the risks. Many people have made the decision and prefer to live in a rural area and want to preserve those rural values.

Those who desire a more manicured and ordered environment may seek a suburban or even urban existence. Those who have chosen the rural existence have the responsibility of maintaining its character and beauty.

## Greenbelts, Open Spaces, Native Vegetation, Habitat and Wildlife Protection

### A. Goals:

1. To set aside interconnected greenbelts and open spaces as a resource to be maintained in a natural state for the protection of native vegetation and wildlife, as well as for community enjoyment.
2. To retain in their natural condition all stream influence areas, including flood plains and riparian vegetation areas, while allowing for limited stream crossings for public roads, trails and utilities.
3. Identify a series of corridors for the free movement and habitat of wildlife.

4. Conserve the natural water purification capabilities of watersheds and wetlands in order to protect the quality of both the natural and domestic water resources.
5. Conservation of the natural landscape, including minimizing disturbance to natural terrain and vegetation, should be an overriding consideration in the design of any project, paying particular attention to its protection and the preservation of existing native vegetation. (Granite Bay Community Plan, Conservation, Policy 3)

**B. Implementation Techniques:**

1. Open space should be maintained a minimum of 100 feet from the center line of any permanent streams, and a minimum of 50 feet from intermittent streams to (a) reduce, by natural filtering, the possibility of contamination of the stream from fertilizers and other manmade compounds, and (b) to provide a corridor for wildlife to live and move in relative safety.
2. Those areas rich in wildlife or of a fragile ecological nature, e.g. areas of rare or endangered species of plants, riparian areas, etc., should be avoided in land development. Where necessary, in order to preserve these areas, they should be publicly acquired (or given via an irrevocable offer of Trust) to ensure protection. (Granite Bay Community Plan, Conservation, Policy 6)
3. For all projects, the purpose of the open space should be determined and specified on maps and/or project conditions as to its purpose.
4. A natural preserve should not be focused on one parcel, but should be an integral part of adjacent parcels to form a connected corridor of open space.
5. Open space land used to preserve a natural feature should be deeded to the County, a homeowners' association, or to a suitable non-profit land trust to ensure the original intent of open space is preserved for future generations.
6. If the land is designated as a natural preserve or similar protective easement, then no substantial disturbance is allowed, except for the benefit of fish, wildlife, water quality and regeneration of trees, fire protection and the like. Maintenance in a stream zone should be to remove material only if a hazard may result. Removing standing or down dead trees and vegetation is often unnecessary as it forms part of the natural food chain and may damage the natural habitat. Maintenance of paths is restricted to the path itself.
7. Pedestrian and equestrian trails and pathways may be established in natural preserves when appropriate. Trails should be constructed and maintained as naturally as possible. At least two public access points from a public roadway should be included in open space design.
8. Although it is recognized that this is difficult, the onversion of agricultural land back to native trees and plants should be encouraged when agricultural activities are discontinued and the opportunity arises to do so.

9. Every effort should be made by the use of deed restrictions, CC&R's, and educational materials to notify landowners of the purpose of the open spaces and easements and the responsibilities which they have to protect and preserve these areas for the purposes set forth in the conditions of project approval.
10. Where sensitive natural resources are to be protected, management plans should be required. The sensitive features should be identified in the management plan. The management plan should outline the measures to be implemented for the protection and enhancement of the sensitive area, and should also identify areas on adjacent properties which could be linked or connected to result in open space corridors and greenbelts such as those described in the following section related to trees (the management plan may be the same as a Mitigation Monitoring Program).
11. The presence of native and other trees on rural residential lots can add significantly to property values as well as provide benefits for wildlife, create natural cooling, and add to the attractiveness of an area. The retention of trees should be encouraged for aesthetic, economic, and environmental reasons.
12. During the review of new development projects, the County's Tree Preservation Policies should be consulted for additional guidance (See Appendix A).

**C. Discussion:**

One predominant factor that differentiates an urban area from a rural area is open space. Open Space is often set aside for the protection and preservation of the following natural features:

1. Meandering drainage or stream bed areas;
2. Riparian/wetland areas;
3. Watersheds;
4. Common lot areas;
5. Oak woodlands, Savanna and Chaparral zones;
6. Historical, agricultural, cultural, and archeological resources;
7. Endangered/threatened plant/wildlife habitat.

A natural corridor is one preferred method to provide open space for both regeneration of trees and shrubs, and for wildlife habitat. Preservation of natural vegetation in riparian and wetland areas prevents erosion.

One of the major qualities that exemplify a rural setting is a grove of majestic oak trees. Native oaks have been part of the area long before the first European settlers arrived. The connection of oak woodlands and riparian areas as natural corridors are important in order to provide safe migration paths for wild animals. Corridors and open spaces are used to protect whole wooded areas which provide a habitat for regeneration of new trees and protection of existing trees.

## Planned Residential Developments (PDs)

### A. Goals:

1. To preserve natural resources such as riparian habitats, natural waterways and other environmentally sensitive areas.
2. To preserve cultural or historically sensitive areas.
3. To provide on-site public and/or private recreational opportunities.

### B. Implementation Techniques:

1. Varied lot sizes within Planned Residential Developments (PDs) allow flexibility to create site sensitive projects in order to meet or exceed the goals and policies of a community plan.
2. The layout of the lots, roadways and open space is site specific and must be based on constraint mapping that depicts geologic, hydraulic, topographic vegetative and other natural, cultural or historic features.
3. It must be recognized that the maximum density permitted by the zoning may not be achieved due to the above constraints. The size and number of parcels within the remaining developable area is dependent upon compatibility with surrounding properties and the goals and policies of the community plan, including the intent of the land use district(s) in which the project is located.
4. PDs are allowable only where they benefit the local community, for example, where they protect a stream bed, wildlife corridor or grove of oak trees. Any protected areas should be held under common ownership of the homeowners association or deeded to the County or a suitable non-profit trust and not as easements within individual residential lots. The overriding benefit of a PD would not be to add more home sites to a parcel of land.
5. PDs also provide a buffer between sensitive environmental areas such as groves of trees and steep slopes.
6. Common open space areas should maintain and complement the natural environment by utilizing native drought-tolerant plant species in landscape design and minimize extensive use of planted turf areas.
7. Recreational improvements, consistent with the Zoning Ordinance and the specific community plan and community needs, must be included within PDs.

**C. Discussion:**

PD designs that result in clustered lots which give a conventional, uniform appearance (i.e. tract homes, urban subdivisions) are not considered to be consistent with a rural environment. Protection of site sensitive areas and adherence to the community plan will take precedence over the maximum number of lots allowed by the zoning.

**Lighting**

**A. Goal:**

1. To provide a minimum of artificial lighting on residences, other structures, and along roadways to limit the amount of light pollution.

**B. Implementation Techniques:**

1. While street lights may be useful at particularly busy intersections and streets, their use should be discouraged on other more rural streets and lanes.
2. Street lights should be minimized along county roads and within subdivisions while following Placer County road standards. Street lights may be appropriate for large subdivisions entering on roads with a high posted speed limit.
3. If a street light or an area light is required, it should be of the type specified below to protect neighbors from direct rays. Area lighting should be shielded such that direct rays do not pass property lines. Low pressure sodium lamps are encouraged while halogen type lights are discouraged.
4. Where required, the street lamp should be:
  - a. Of the high pressure sodium type and of a "cobra head with flat bottom" style or fully shielded such that light is directed only downward.
  - b. Mounted on a wood pole at a height and wattage recommended by PG&E and appropriate for a rural area.
5. Parking lot lamps should be mounted such that they point downward without direct rays extending past the parking lot, building entrance, walkway, or area intended to be illuminated.
6. Lights on billboards should be mounted on the top of the sign and point downward without direct rays extending past the sign.

**C. Discussion:**

The proliferation of outdoor lights is considered "light pollution." There are instances, in urban development, that street lights are desirable, but generally not so in a rural community. In the day, one gets a feeling of rural by being able to see open space. In the evening, the rural

feeling is created by the absence of outdoor lights which allows for the enjoyment of the night sky without interference.

The possible hazards of dark roadways should be balanced with preserving a rural environment. There is concern about street lights and their ability to prevent accidents by warning drivers of an intersection. While this may be true, only a portion of collisions occur at intersections and it is unknown if the lack or presence of a street light would have prevented a collision.

Other collision factors to be considered that are not related to street lighting are: driver attentiveness, alcohol, familiarity with the area, or various roadway hazards. The absence of street lighting allows the motor vehicle operator to maintain night vision, and avoids the false sense of security that a street light will prevent a collision.

Natural wood poles blend into the background much better than a steel pole, thus preserving a rural appearance during the day.

Halogen lights are not desirable because the light is very obtrusive, can be seen from great distances and are difficult to shield.

### **Lot Design**

#### **A. Goals:**

1. To encourage lot designs which are attractive and functional.
2. To assist in designing home locations on lots to preserve the local rural character.
3. The design of lots that depend on its own resources for water supply and sewerage disposal are encouraged to be self-supporting for the life of the structure.

#### **B. Implementation Techniques:**

1. The American Planning Association's report entitled, *Preserving Rural Character*, (report #429) is recommended for use as a guide for designing lots which preserve rural character and help to abate environmental concerns (available at the Planning Department).
2. Orchards or other agricultural type activities are encouraged.
3. The distance between a structure and any road should vary from lot to lot which gives a more random appearance rather than a series of structures in a line.
4. The use of native, or native-appearing drought-tolerant landscaping is preferred over water-intensive ornamentals.
5. Buildable portions of lots should be designed to protect natural resources/features by incorporating trees, wetlands, streams, rock outcroppings, etc. into the overall

project for long term preservation. It is not always necessary to completely avoid these resources, they can often be incorporated into a project design. Residences should be located on the edges of topographical changes and vegetation areas (i.e. wooded areas), or just below ridge lines.

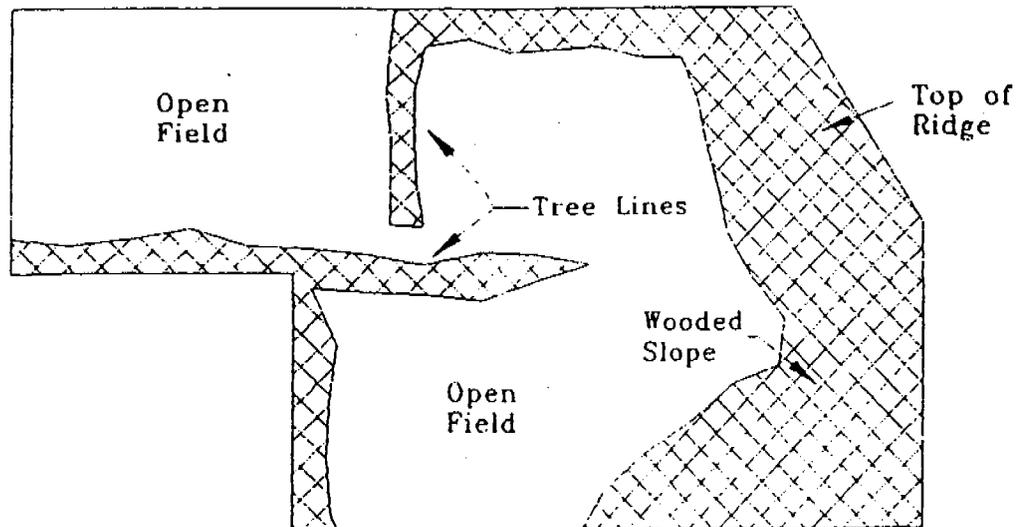
6. Any design with an on-site sewer and water supply must not rely on future improvements in the area to solve any problems with these utilities.

**C. Discussion:**

Lots averaging one acre or larger are encouraged to allow greater buildable areas for such improvements as buildings, decks, pools, and accessory structures. Smaller lots usually take on the appearance of conventional suburban subdivisions with homes located the same distance from the street and from each other, with uniform driveway treatments and building orientation.

Thus, the opportunities to develop the random look and feel of a rural area is lost. Larger lot designs inherently preserve the area's rural flavor and offer the most flexibility in designing a new home site.

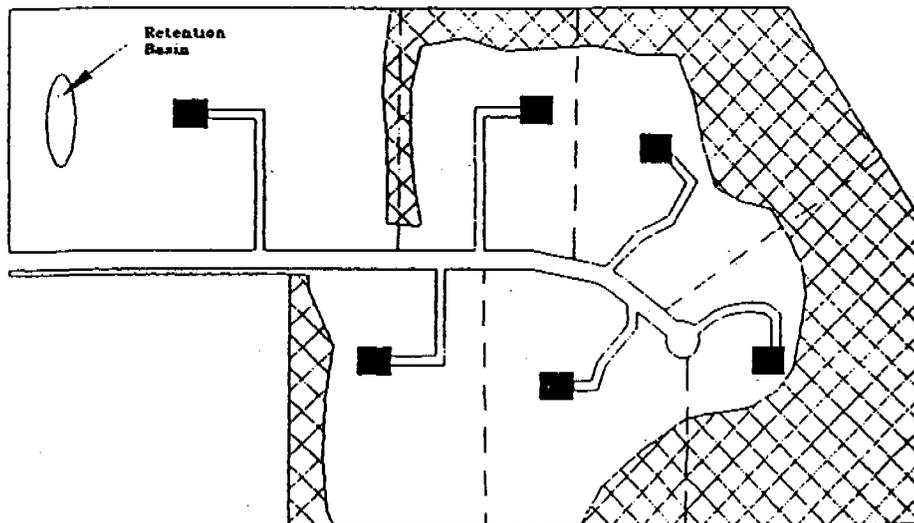
## Existing Site Conditions



### Physical features:

|               |                   |
|---------------|-------------------|
| Oak Woodlands | 15 Acres          |
| Open Fields   | Zoning: 2.3 Acres |
| Steep Slopes  | Lui. 0.44         |

## Site Plan I - Conventional Development (6-2.3 Acre Lots)



### Advantages:

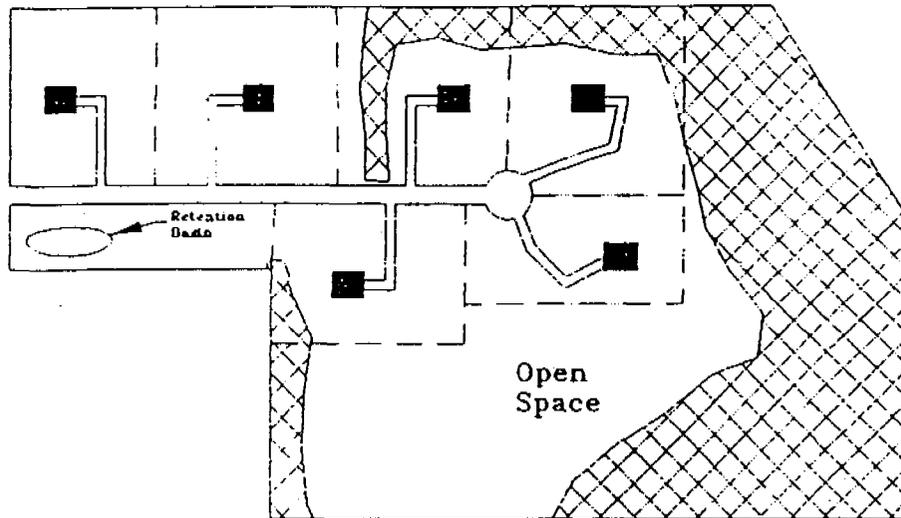
- Large rural estate lots
- Maximum spacing between homes
- Greater compatibility with adjoining land uses (ie. lot size) <sup>9</sup>

### Disadvantages:

- Extensive tree removal
- Grading and disturbance on steeper slopes
- Long single entry road
- Maximum paving

## Site Plan II - Cluster Development (PUD)

(6-1 Acre lots plus ± 8 Acres common open space)



### Advantages:

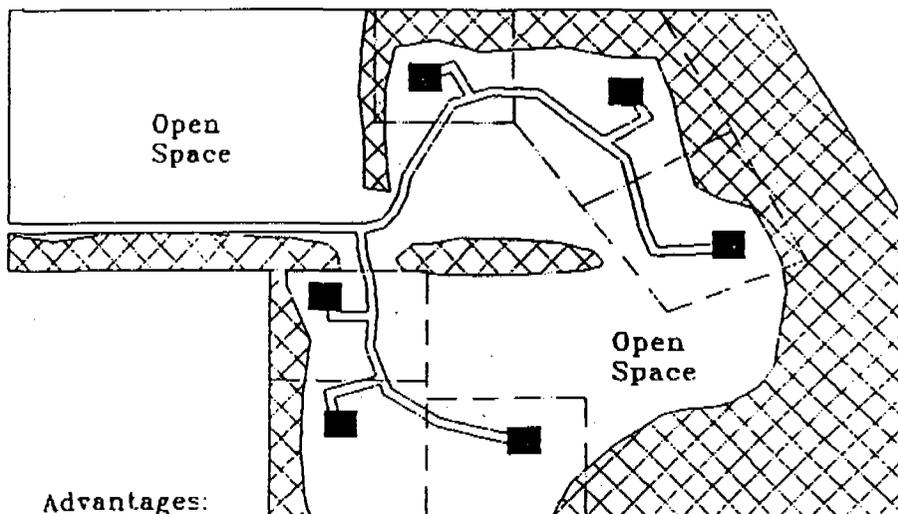
- Expansive open space
- Shorter roadway—less paving
- Preserved wooded slope
- Maximum tree protection

### Disadvantages:

- Limited accessibility for project residents to common open space
- Incompatible with adjoining properties impacted by smaller lots
- Denser residential building area (ie. less spacing between homes)

## Site Plan III - Alternative Cluster Development (PUD)

(6-1 Acre lots plus ± 8 Acres of common open space)



### Advantages:

- All lots provided direct access to common open space
- All homes adjacent to woodlands
- Maximum tree preservation
- Expansive open space
- Preserved wooded slope
- Greater spacing between homes
- Greater likelihood of being compatible

### Disadvantages:

- Longer roadway with more paving
- Shared roadways crossing private lots

## Preservation of Scenic Areas

### A. Goal:

1. To avoid creating predominant landmarks which impose on the landscape and the natural skyline in ways that cause the contiguous rural landscape to be interrupted.
2. To protect the Folsom Lake, and other large bodies of water, view sheds (as viewed from the lake area), and public view corridors along major County roadways and Interstate 80 from actions which degrade their scenic quality.

### B. Implementation Techniques:

1. Homes and accessory structures should blend into the environment.
2. Where possible, structures should be tucked along tree lines or along other topographical changes in contour.
3. On lots located along ridge tops, houses and accessory structures should be built just below the ridge line where there are no existing trees to prevent the structures from becoming the predominant feature on the rural landscape. Otherwise, such development should be screened by new plantings of sufficient height and bulk at maturity to minimize visual encroachment to the greatest extent possible.
4. One method of ensuring that structures do not emerge above the tree tops involves the use of a helium balloon on a string. The helium balloon is allowed to rise until it begins to emerge above the tree tops. The length of string used to elevate the balloon to the level just below the tree tops is used to determine the height of structures in that specific area.
5. Whenever possible, buffers of natural vegetation and wooded areas should be situated between roadways and structures. The affect of this is to tuck structures away, creating the illusion of a continuous rural landscape and to avoid the appearance of imposing structures on the landscape.

### C. Discussion:

Maintenance of the natural landscape as the dominant visual feature is probably one of the most important rural issues. Structures that dominate the landscape interrupt the rural continuity of the area.

## Fences

### A. Goals:

1. To maintain the continuity of an open rural environment by encouraging fencing designs that are as visually permeable as possible.
2. Where appropriate, fencing should be installed to identify land which has been designated as environmentally sensitive and provide a permanent reminder for property owners that a sensitive area exists; and be designed to allow for the free movement of wildlife in the area.
3. Discourage walled developments which create subcommunities that do not identify with the larger surrounding communities.

### B. Implementation Techniques:

The implementation techniques are organized in the following categories:

#### PROJECT BOUNDARIES/BOUNDARIES OF PRIVATE LOTS:

1. When open iron fencing is proposed, encourage the use of top caps rather than spikes and spires that could potentially harm migrating wildlife.
2. Fencing should not exceed a six foot height.
3. The following fencing types are recommended:
  - a. Solid wood, untreated and unpainted cedar or redwood (natural stain is acceptable)
  - b. Dark colored chain link
  - c. Stone or masonry walls less than 3 feet high
4. Barbed wire is discouraged, except where necessary for agricultural operations.

#### ALONG ROADWAYS:

5. The use of hedges, trellised vines, or berry bushes are encouraged to satisfy privacy needs.
6. Fencing along roadways should not significantly restrict the visual landscape or inhibit the perception of rural open space.
7. Sound walls and solid fencing along roadways are to be discouraged due to their detracting to the rural nature of the area. Options other than sound walls are to

be considered where noise is a problem. These include earthen berms with trees or increasing the distance between a structure and the noise source.

8. Fences should be set back from roadways a distance sufficient to abate traffic safety concerns (usually adequately addressed in planning setback ordinances), and to avoid creating the appearance of a "tunnel" effect.
9. Plans for fencing along roadways should be carefully reviewed to ensure that they do not create a physical or visual hazard.

#### ENVIRONMENTALLY SENSITIVE AND OPEN SPACE AREAS:

10. An open rail type fence around any area designated as environmentally sensitive is recommended. As an alternative, three wire fencing on wood or "T" bar posts is acceptable if the bottom two wires are not barbed. Areas to be fenced include riparian/wetlands, tree preservation areas and the like. The above type fences are specified in order to allow the free movement of wildlife in the area, and are less visually obtrusive and are in keeping with a rural setting. Fencing need not be required along property lines where a similar environmentally sensitive feature exists.

#### OTHERS:

11. Fences around or along canals, ponds and lakes may be necessary to prevent the dumping of materials in the water and to prevent children from falling into the canals or ponds.

#### C. Discussion:

Open rail fencing is encouraged as it is most conducive to the free passage of wildlife. Open rail fencing is also considered to be the least visually invasive fencing structure in a rural landscape.

Iron fences with spikes on the top can be a safety hazard because leaping deer and other wildlife may be impaled on the spikes.

It may be necessary to restrict access of children to canals, landscape ponds, detention ponds and lakes. However, fences should be used only after other alternatives have been considered (i.e. shoreline treatment, thorny vegetation). The guidelines noted above should be used wherever fencing in these areas is necessary.



- ▶ SPLIT RAIL - PREFERRED FOR SENSITIVE AREAS



- ▶ RAIL FENCES: GOOD EXAMPLES OF RURAL FENCING



▶ SPIKE TIPPED WROUGHT IRON - DANGEROUS TO WILDLIFE



▶ SOLID WALL - URBAN TYPE

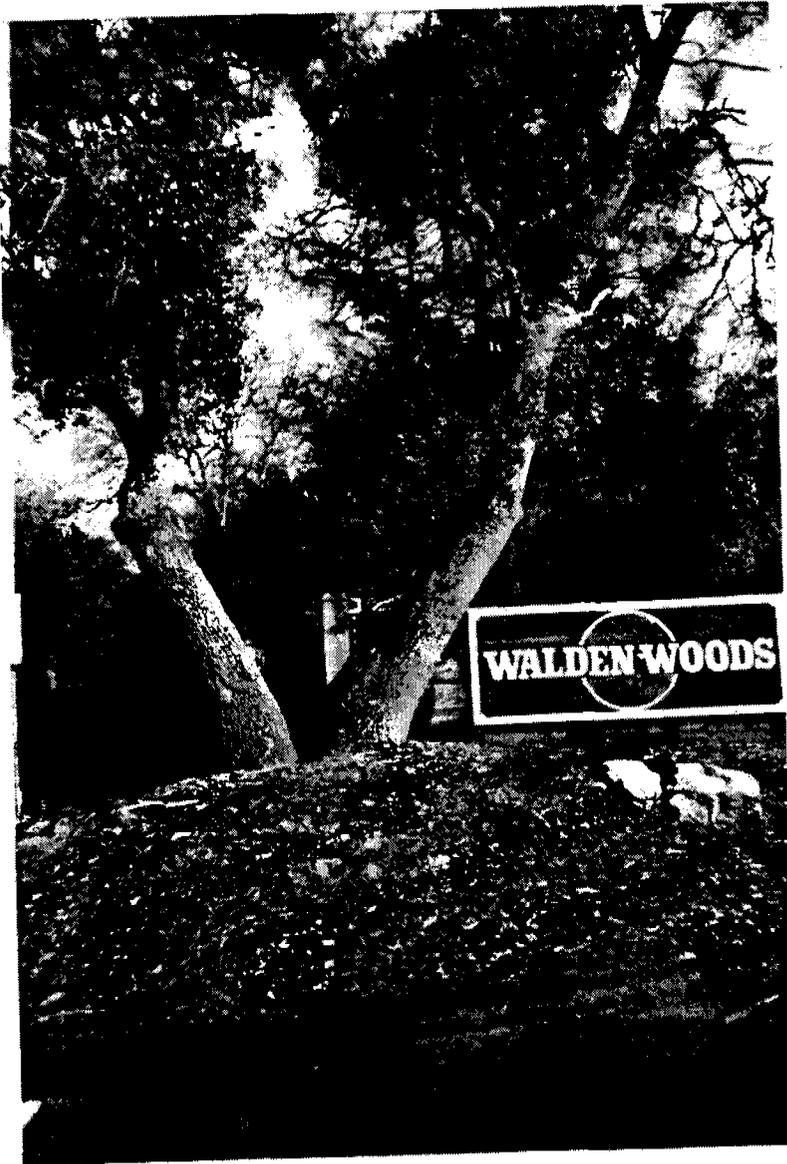
## Subdivision Entrance Features

### A. Goal:

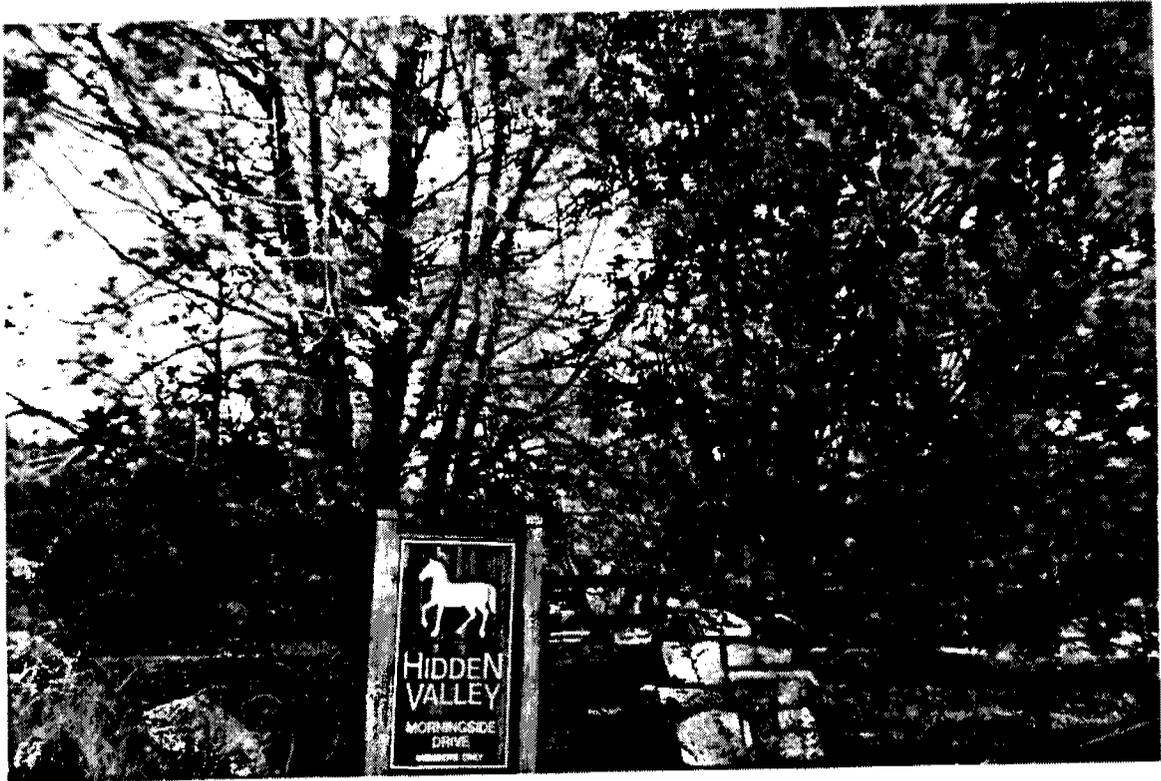
1. To minimize the visual impact of man-made structures on a rural landscape, and to ensure the community-wide continuity of a rural appearance.

### B. Implementation Techniques:

1. Permanent advertising or sales signs are not appropriate and should not be allowed. Signs should include the subdivision's name only
2. Where signs/marques are deemed appropriate, a building envelope should be designated for such purpose.
3. Where signs/marques are deemed appropriate, they shall not be greater than a maximum of 50 square feet.
4. Structural entrance features should satisfy zoning ordinance setback requirements and DPW sight-clearance standards.
5. The use of indigenous natural materials are encouraged.
6. Existing natural vegetation and wooded areas should be incorporated into the entrance design.
7. The entrance may be further enhanced with the use of imported native vegetation.
8. Non-native and "formal" type landscape design and vegetation are discouraged.
9. Lighting of entrances should be restricted to the parameters set forth under the rural lighting standards.
10. If the subdivision intersections are illuminated, further entrance lighting is not necessary and should be discouraged.
11. The use of entrance lighting should be limited, but if allowed for safety reasons, entrance feature lighting should be restricted to identification purposes with only directed and shielded lighting on the identifying portion of the entrance feature.
12. Extensive use of lawn is discouraged due to its urban/suburban ornamental appearance which is contrary to the rural landscape.



- ▶ APPROPRIATE ENTRANCE FEATURES. GOOD USE OF NATURAL VEGETATION, AND MATERIALS



- ▶ APPROPRIATE ENTRANCE FEATURES - GOOD USE OF NATURAL MATERIALS AND VEGETATION



- ▶ EXCESSIVE ENTRANCE FEATURES - GUARD HOUSE, WROUGHT IRON WITH SPIKES, LIGHTS, MASONRY WALLS OVER 3'



▶ GOOD USE OF INDIGENOUS MATERIALS



▶ EXCESSIVE USE OF LAWNS, WALLS, AND LIGHTS

13. Setback and natural landscape buffers should be used to provide a subtle screen for the privacy of the subdivision's residents and to reduce the urban appearance on the rural landscape. The use of existing wooded areas and vegetation is encouraged.
14. When visible from public areas, or private common areas, structures such as culverts, headwalls, bridges, etc. should be faced or adorned with materials which will blend with the adjacent landscape. The use of native, natural materials is encouraged. Where the use of native, natural materials is not feasible, conventional materials like concrete should be dyed and textured to blend with the natural landscape.
15. Gated subdivisions or communities are not appropriate in areas where these design guidelines apply. Entrance features having the appearance of a gated entrance (*i.e.* guard houses, permanently open gates, etc.) are also not appropriate.

**C. Discussion:**

Large and elaborate entrance features, marques, gates, and lighting tend to mar the rural landscape and nightscape and also create a mood both inside and outside of the development which is not conducive to a healthy, homogeneous, interactive community.

**Rural Roadways**

**A. Goals:**

1. To preserve the rural flavor and scenic value of the plan area by design and placement of the road system to maintain open space through the use of adequate setbacks from main roads and structures.
2. To provide a safe path for pedestrians, equestrians, and bicycles on major plan area roads by providing separated trails within or adjacent to the road right-of-way. If possible, the path should be separated by a row of oak or other trees. Any additional right-of-way provided for trails beyond that necessary for roadway requirements should not be deducted from density yields.
3. To avoid the use of standard cement curb, gutter and sidewalks in the rural environment except where otherwise required by the Placer County Land Development Manual (road standard plates).
4. To meet CDF and local fire department road standards.
5. Provide a road alignment that works around trees and rock outcroppings as much as possible, with appropriate protection for safety considerations such as minimum design speeds and protection of motorists from fixed objects.

**B. Implementation Techniques:**

Roadways should be designed to be as narrow as possible while still complying with the Land Development Manual rural road plate standard.



- ▶ GOOD EXAMPLE OF RURAL ROAD CURVING AROUND EXISTING ROCKS



- ▶ EXAMPLES OF CEMENT CURB AND GUTTER WITH A DECOMPOSED GRANITE PATH
- ▶ RECOMMEND FOR CONNECTOR TRAILS THROUGH HIGHER DENSITY AREAS

1. The design should also take into consideration pedestrian, equestrian and bicycle traffic. A class 1, 2 or 3 bike path and separated equestrian/pedestrian trail is encouraged where identified in a community plan or recommended by the County's Parks Administrator.
2. Roadways are preferred as a boundary between open space and housing instead of a back yard. This would provide a common feeling of ownership of the open space and provide more natural boundaries to homes. Enforcement of open space protection should also be easier if private lots are separated from the common open space by a rural road.
3. Roadways should follow the natural topography of the land, avoiding as much cut and fill as possible. Where minimum road standards are met, existing lanes and rural roads should be incorporated into the subdivision design.
4. Long, straight, wide roads are to be discouraged for a rural area due to the combination of excessive speeds and danger of animal crossings.
5. When a road design which is inconsistent with the Land Development Manual is considered for approval by the Planning Commission and/or the Board of Supervisors, the Commission and/or Board shall adopt findings that articulate the balancing of interest required by this provision and demonstrate the specific scenic and/or rural values which will be protected in exchange for the modifications to the road design. For those projects where these findings are made, a condition of approval shall be applied to the project requiring the applicant's engineer to certify on the project improvement plans that the final road design is safe and consistent with reasonable engineering standards in effect for such a roadway.

**C. Discussion:**

A rural road system should include more bends and scenic curves than more urbanized straight streets. Safety must also be considered so that roads are wide enough to be comfortable while driving, and allow for maneuvering room in the event of an emergency, while also considering other design features, such as scenic values and environmental resources.

Many roads in the County are two lanes which adds to the rural feeling of the area. Good examples of rural roads can be found in the Horseshoe Bar/Penryn Community Plan area along Horseshoe Bar Road, Lomida Lane, and Shirland Tract Road, where their natural curves fit into the terrain (see photo). In the Auburn area, Mt. Vernon, Wise Road, and Dry Creek Road are additional good examples. Winding rural roads tend to slow down drivers.



- ▶ EXISTING RURAL FEATURES - BARN, GRANITE FENCE POST



- ▶ EXISTING RURAL FEATURES - BARN AND FEED SHEDS

## **Agriculture**

### **A. Goal:**

1. To encourage development for agricultural purposes where the land will support agriculture and not just development solely for homes and business.
2. To protect and encourage farming and ranching operations based on the past, present and future economic value of farming and ranching operations in the plan area.

### **B. Implementation Techniques:**

1. Land "not in production" could be revitalized and put back into production.
2. Where agricultural lands are in production (or previously in production), encourage agricultural pursuits in combination with clustered development designs (i.e. Clos-du-Lac with its vineyard and olive orchard plans, and Hidden Valley with the open space pasture areas for common use by residents).

### **C. Discussion:**

Agriculture provides jobs, food, fiber and open space. Placer County used to be one of the prime agriculture areas in California, but there has been a decline in agricultural production in the County due to urban sprawl, development, off-shore competition and the inability of younger families to acquire large enough parcels of land to make food production a viable business.

Agricultural land is being replaced with homes at an ever increasing rate. Even when older orchards are converted to housing, there is still value in some of the land being used for small scale production such as a hobby farm.

Given the fate of the Santa Clara Valley and Orange County which were once prime agricultural lands, but have now been virtually paved over with urban development, care must be taken that a similar fate is not imposed on Placer County.

Typical agricultural operations in Placer County include orchard production and livestock breeding and training. (Also refer to Discussion comments under the Recreational Facilities section).

## **Existing Historical and Cultural Features**

### **A. Goal:**

1. To preserve and protect the existing historical, cultural and archeological features which give the plan area its unique rural identity.

**B. Implementation Techniques:**

1. Existing historical, cultural or archeological features should be incorporated into the subdivision design wherever possible. If possible, include these features in open space lots.
2. Protection of historical, cultural, and archeological resources should be addressed in management plans of the type described in the section on Greenbelts, Open Spaces, Habitat and Wildlife Protection as a condition of project approval.
3. Local historical societies should be consulted with regard to historical or archeological value, proper handling, and academic documentation, before any historical or archeological features are removed or relocated. Cases involving archeological features should require the consultation of proper academic authorities from the local colleges or university.

**C. Discussion:**

Existing historical, agricultural, cultural and archeological features are often the landmarks which provide the unique identity of a rural community. Examples of these types of features include:

1. The water tower which can be seen from I-80 in Newcastle;
2. The old packing sheds in Newcastle, Penryn, and Loomis;
3. The granite fence posts seen along the rural roads;
4. Old barns, feed sheds and pump houses;
5. Rock fences and boundary markers;
6. Indian grinding rocks;
7. The mature stand of Palm trees along English Colony, Butler, Del Mar, Sisley, Clark Tunnel, and Newcastle Roads;
8. Historic schoolhouses and other historic buildings found throughout the County.

Whenever possible, these resources should be incorporated into development designs.

**Recreation Facilities**

**A. Goal:**

1. To identify and encourage the development of recreation resources compatible with a rural way of life and rural environments.
2. To develop and maintain the features which hold Placer County as one of the leading equestrian areas/per capita in the nation, for both the economic value that it yields and the rural values that it promotes.

**B. Implementation Techniques:**

1. Include equestrian and pedestrian trails along with bike paths as recreational facilities.
2. Examples of rural recreational facilities include:
  - a. Equestrian arenas;
  - b. Self-guided nature trails;
  - c. Pedestrian/equestrian trails and bike paths.

**C. Discussion:**

Recreational resources and facilities should match the demands of local residents, while being environmentally consistent with a rural environment.

The economic value of equestrian activities of all types should be recognized. Placer County supports one of the largest equestrian populations per capita in the United States. Horse owners in Placer County purchase feed, tack, and other supplies to support their equine interests. In addition, Placer County's internationally-known trails attract equine enthusiasts from outside the County on a regular basis, who purchase food, gasoline, and other supplies while coming to ride in the County. The County also attracts national and international riders who come to train and compete on the County's trails. Local trails are the site of an international, Olympic level equestrian competition, the Tevis Cup Endurance Ride. Placer County is also known as the birthplace of equestrian endurance competition.

REF: T:\CMD\CMDP\RDG.796

Appendix A

**PLACER COUNTY**

**TREE PRESERVATION**

**POLICIES**

**OCTOBER, 1991**

Resolution # 91-353

## **I. PURPOSE AND INTENT**

For centuries native oak trees have existed as dominant and magnificent features of the landscape of the Sierra Foothill region. Over the years trees have been cleared to accommodate agriculture, burned as firewood and removed to facilitate development. Only a portion of the original oak woodland forest remains today. The removal of oak and other native trees continues to the present time and occurs at a much faster pace than natural revegetation in areas of development.

Trees are key elements in our living system, the boundaries of which do not conform to the arbitrary property lines of individual lots and parcels, and upon which the continued health and welfare of this community depends. It is acknowledged that the preservation of trees enhances the natural scenic beauty, improves air quality, water quality, reduces soil erosion, preserves significant natural heritage values, preserves wildlife habitat, and helps to reduce energy consumption for air cooling by providing shade. Trees in a community or neighborhood also provide a sense of identity and tradition, and they enhance property values which encourages higher quality development.

As development of vacant land occurs, loss of some tree cover may be unavoidable. However, it is the County's intent to reduce the loss of trees to reasonably acceptable levels while at the same time providing for fuel reduction and fire prevention activities to protect the residents of the County from such catastrophic losses that can occur. Therefore, it has become necessary for an ordinance to be established to preserve and protect the remaining native oak and other species of trees within Placer County. The spirit of this Ordinance is to encourage an atmosphere of mutual cooperation between members of the development community, private citizens, and County officials in attempting to retain tree cover within the County. Furthermore, the ordinance is to provide for educational programs and materials to promote an awareness of the value of trees, and provide information to the public relating to the care, maintenance, and planting of trees.

Thus, it shall be the policy of this County to preserve trees wherever feasible, through the review of all proposed development activities where trees are present on either public or private property, while at the same time recognizing individual rights to develop private property in a reasonable manner. In the spirit of reasonableness the Tree Ordinance does not categorically prohibit tree removal and contains numerous exemptions for specific types of activities. It is also recognized, that due to the extremely diverse terrain and vegetation within the County, different policies may be applicable to specific areas of the County.

## **II. TREE PRESERVATION POLICIES**

To assist in the implementation of the Placer County Tree Preservation Ordinance, the following has been adopted by Resolution of the Board of Supervisors as a set of policies relating to Tree Preservation.

- A. Where groves of native trees, native tree corridors, or significant stands of native tree habitats are located within a project boundary, efforts should be made to preserve the groves, corridors, or stands of trees. This approach is particularly appropriate for planned unit developments but may include other residential, commercial, or industrial projects as well.
- B. In lieu of penalties/replacement on large projects, mitigation could include preservation of an area on or off-site through dedication of open space easements, rezoning to open space, or public ownership.
- C. In certain cases, the County may consider the relocation of Native Oak Trees from one area in a project to another. Credit shall be given for relocation on the same basis as replacement. The guidelines and limitations for relocation are as follows:
  - 1. The tree(s) being recommended for relocation must be approved by the Approving Body whose decision will be based upon factors relating to health, type, size, time of year and proposed location.
  - 2. The size of the relocated tree may not exceed six inches (6") in diameter. Exceptions to this policy may be made if a larger diameter nursery-grown Native Oak Tree is available and can be reserved for a period of one (1) year.
- D. Application Evaluation Criteria - When evaluating tree removal, the following criteria will be considered:
  - 1. The proposed building's gross floor area in relation to the "usable" size of the site, and the amount of usable space on the parcel which does not require the removal of Protected Trees.
  - 2. Design features in comparison with other existing or approved building developments in the same vicinity and zone which have or had Protected Trees on the parcel.
  - 3. Factors that are unique to the proposed property such as topographic constraints, lot configuration and other physical limitations.
  - 4. The overall health, age and structural condition of the potentially impacted Protected Trees.
  - 5. The percentage of trees removed as compared to the existing trees on-site.

6. Whether or not the tree removal conforms to the policies contained in approved community plans and general plans.
7. Whether or not the degree of encroachment is likely to result in the subsequent decline of the affected Protected Tree or create a future risk to public safety or pose a hazard to adjacent structures.
8. The approximate age of the Protected Tree compared with the average life span for that species.
9. Age of the Protected Tree with regard to whether or not removal of the Protected Tree would encourage healthier, more vigorous growth of younger similar trees in the area.
10. The number of existing Protected Trees in the area.
11. If the tree has the potential of being designated as a "Landmark Tree."
12. The effect of removal on soil stability/erosion, particularly near water courses or on steep slopes.
13. The potential for the Protected Tree to be a public nuisance, or interfere with utility service, as well as the proximity of existing structures.
14. Present and future shade potential with regard to solar heating and cooling.
15. Whether or not there are any alternatives that would allow for the preservation of the Protected Tree.
16. Any other information the Approving Body finds pertinent to the decision, including, if necessary, information obtained at a public hearing.

E. General Policies and Procedures

Great Care must be exercised when work is conducted upon or around Protected Trees. The purpose of this section is to define procedures necessary to protect the health of the affected Protected Trees. The policies and procedures described in this section are intended to apply to all permitted encroachments into the Protected Zone of Protected Trees. All Tree Permits shall be deemed to incorporate the recommendations of this section except as the Tree Permit may otherwise specifically provide.

1. Trenching within the Protected Zone of a Protected Tree, when permitted, should only be done with hand tools, in order to avoid root injury. Special consideration should be given to soils with heavy rock where hand tools may not be appropriate.
  2. Minor roots less than one inch (1") in diameter may be cut, but damaged roots should be traced back and cleanly cut behind any split, cracked or damaged area.
  3. Major roots over one inch (1") in diameter should be left undisturbed. Depending upon the type of improvement being proposed, bridging techniques or a new site design may need to be employed to protect the root and the tree.
  4. If any native ground surface fabric within the Protected Tree Zone must be removed for any reason, it should be replaced within forty-eight (48) hours.
  5. An independent low-flow drip irrigation system may be used for establishing drought-tolerant plants within the Protected Zone of a Native Tree. Under normal conditions irrigation should be gradually reduced and discontinued after a two (2) year period.
  6. Planting live material under Native Oak Trees is generally discouraged, and it will not be permitted within six feet (6') of the trunk of a Native Oak Tree with a DBH of eighteen inches (18") or less, or within ten (10) feet of the trunk of a Native Oak Tree with a DBH of more than eighteen inches (18"). Only drought-tolerant plants should be permitted within the Protected Zone of Native Oak Trees.
  7. Every effort should be made to avoid cut and/or fill slopes within ten feet (10') of the Protected Zone of any Protected Tree.
  8. No filling or grading should be permitted which will cause a net change in water drainage into the protected zone of a protected tree.
- F. In order to initiate the funding for educational programs (until the Tree Preservation Fund is well established), the Board of Supervisors should provide funding for such programs within the first year of the adoption of this Ordinance.

**Appendix B**

**RESOLUTION #97-198**

**ADOPTING THE  
PLACER COUNTY  
RURAL DESIGN GUIDELINES**

**BEFORE THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS  
COUNTY OF PLACER, STATE OF CALIFORNIA**

In the matter of: A RESOLUTION ADOPTING THE  
PLACER COUNTY RURAL DESIGN  
GUIDELINES—COUNTYWIDE APPLICATION

Reso. No: 97-198

Ord. No: \_\_\_\_\_

First Reading: \_\_\_\_\_

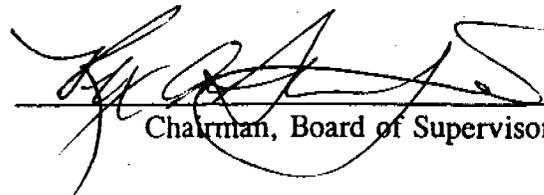
The following Resolution was duly passed by the Board of Supervisors of the County of Placer at a regular meeting held July 8, 1997, by the following vote on roll call:

Ayes: WEYGANDT, WHITE, SANTUCCI, WILLIAMS, BLOOMFIELD

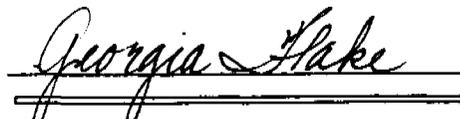
Noes: NONE

Absent: NONE

Signed and approved by me after its passage

  
Chairman, Board of Supervisors

ATTEST:  
Clerk of said Board

  
\_\_\_\_\_

**THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS OF THE COUNTY OF PLACER, STATE OF CALIFORNIA, DOES HEREBY RESOLVE:**

**WHEREAS**, the Board of Supervisors of the County of Placer, State of California, held a public hearing in the time and manner prescribed by law to consider the adoption of the Rural Design Guidelines; and

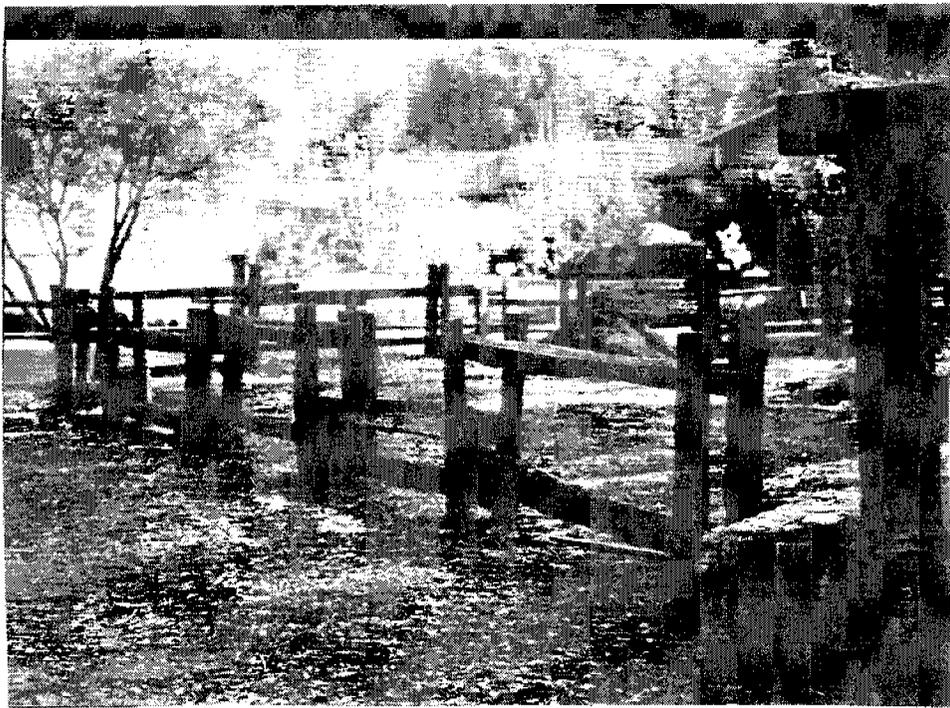
**WHEREAS**, the Board of Supervisors has considered the recommendations of the Placer County Municipal Advisory Councils, the Planning Commission, County Staff, local community groups, individuals, and the oral evidence of all individuals wishing to comment; and

**WHEREAS**, the Rural Design Guidelines are statutorily exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act; and

**WHEREAS**, the Board of Supervisors finds that the Placer County Rural Design Guidelines will be implemented during the review and approval process for residential subdivisions where the permissible lot size is one acre and larger, and will advance the County

s objectives through the creation of a consistent, high-quality character of development without compromising the integrity of the County's pastoral and scenic character.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** that the Placer County Rural Design Guidelines are hereby adopted as shown in Exhibit A attached hereto, and supersede and replace the Rural Design Guidelines adopted for the Horseshoe Bar/Penryn Community Plan, located at the Placer County Planning Department.



- ▶ SPLIT RAIL - PREFERRED FOR SENSITIVE AREAS



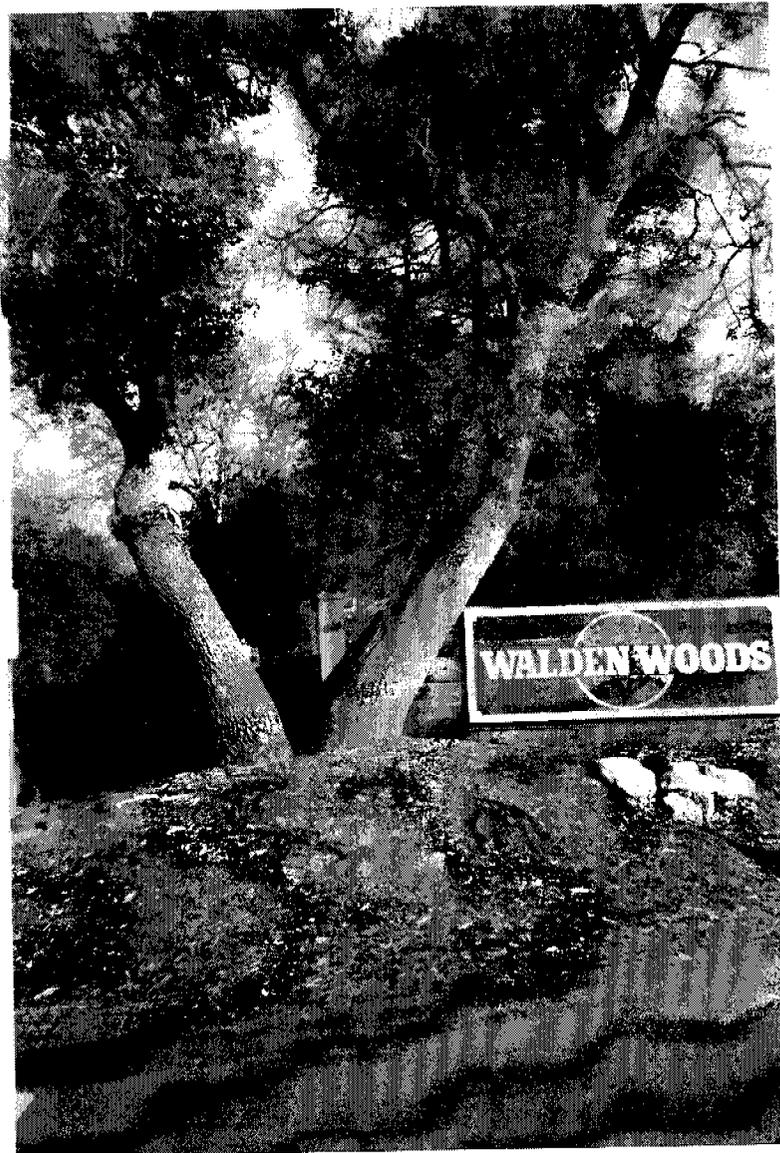
- ▶ RAIL FENCES: GOOD EXAMPLES OF RURAL FENCING



- ▶ SPIKE TIPPED WROUGHT IRON - DANGEROUS TO WILDLIFE



- ▶ SOLID WALL - URBAN TYPE



- ▶ APPROPRIATE ENTRANCE FEATURES. GOOD USE OF NATURAL VEGETATION, AND MATERIALS



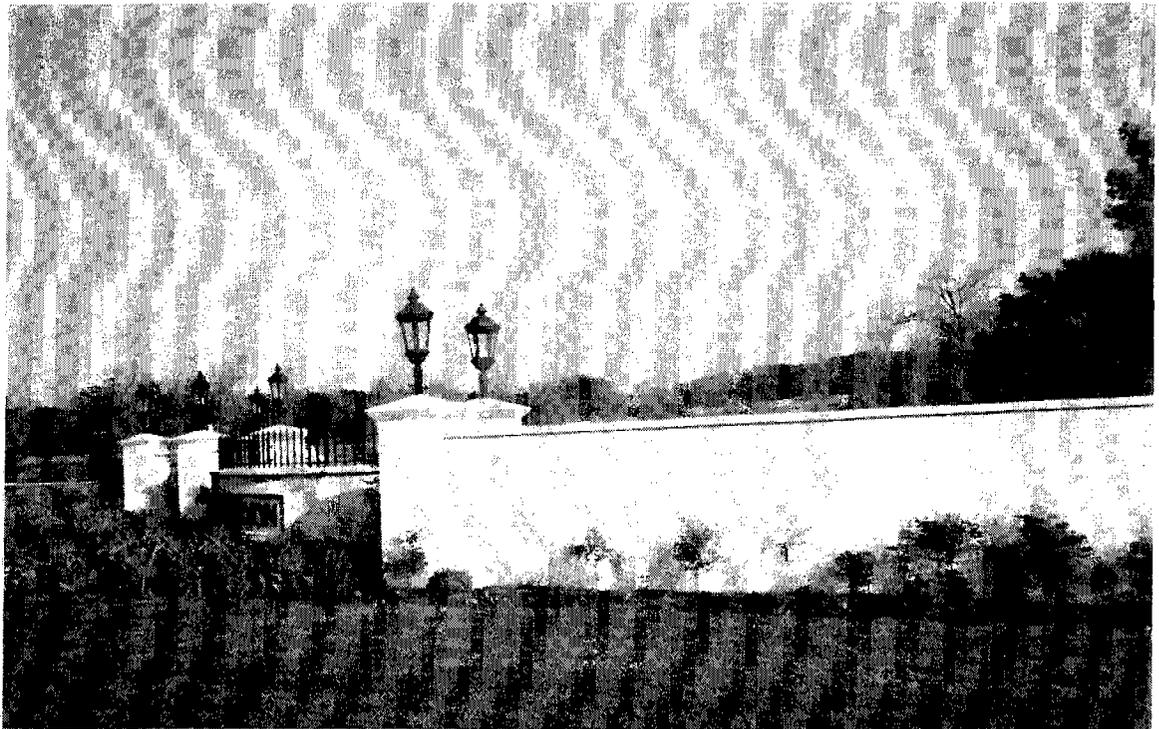
- ▶ APPROPRIATE ENTRANCE FEATURES - GOOD USE OF NATURAL MATERIALS AND VEGETATION



- ▶ EXCESSIVE ENTRANCE FEATURES - GUARD HOUSE, WROUGHT IRON WITH SPIKES, LIGHTS, MASONRY WALLS OVER 3'



▶ GOOD USE OF INDIGENOUS MATERIALS



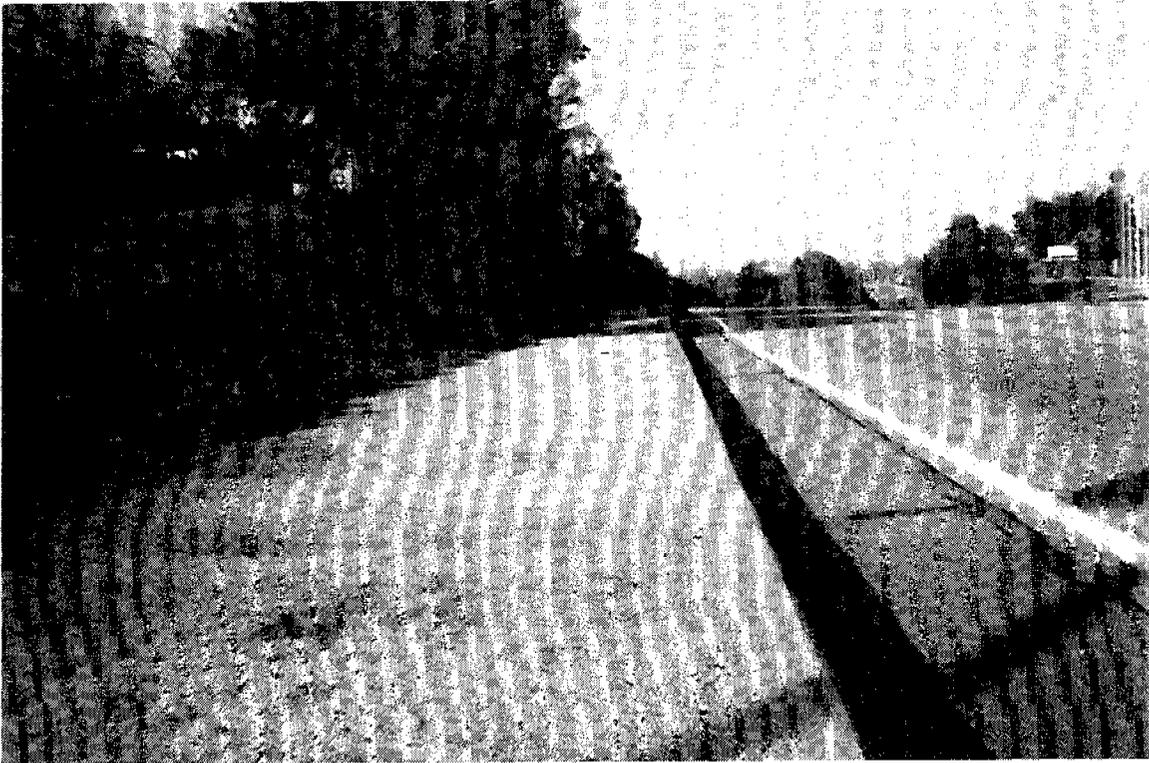
▶ EXCESSIVE USE OF LAWNS, WALLS, AND LIGHTS

**B. Implementation Techniques:**

Roadways should be designed to be as narrow as possible while still complying with the Land Development Manual rural road plate standard.



- ▶ **GOOD EXAMPLE OF RURAL ROAD CURVING AROUND EXISTING ROCKS**



- ▶ EXAMPLES OF CEMENT CURB AND GUTTER WITH A DECOMPOSED GRANITE PATH
- ▶ RECOMMEND FOR CONNECTOR TRAILS THROUGH HIGHER DENSITY AREAS



- ▶ EXISTING RURAL FEATURES - BARN, GRANITE FENCE POST



- ▶ EXISTING RURAL FEATURES - BARN AND FEED SHEDS