
SECTION 2: COMMUNITY DESIGN

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I. PURPOSE

The Community Design Section of the Meadow Vista Community Plan encourages the preservation of those unique features and characteristics which define the Meadow Vista community. Retention of the rural character of the area by upholding zoning limitations and by minimizing environmental impacts resulting from new development is a primary goal of this Plan. Due to the varied nature of the environmental settings in the Plan area (terrain, tree cover, streams, rock outcrops, etc.), as well as divergent land uses (commercial, single-family residential, rural, open space and recreational areas), this element contains several subsections to deal with the broad range of diversity within the Plan area.

The Community Design Section attempts to recognize those positive features which characterize

the Plan area and to provide specific guidelines for site development which will result in the overall enhancement of the community's appearance and function. Based on testimony at public hearings as well as the results of a community survey completed as part of this planning process, Meadow Vista residents and property owners feel strongly about preserving the essential small town atmosphere and rural setting which gives Meadow Vista its charm. Although population growth is anticipated within the Plan area, the nature of that growth must remain consistent with the Plan's Vision Statement as well as other sections of the Plan.

This section must be considered in the context of all of the other Community Plan Sections. The land use, housing, open space, transportation/circulation, and noise sections all contain policies which significantly affect community design.

II. GOALS, POLICIES, AND IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAMS

GOALS AND POLICIES

Goal 2.A: To promote and enhance the visual environment of Meadow Vista by requiring high aesthetic quality in all new development. [1/24]

Policies

- 2.A.1. The County shall require all new development (including major remodeling, reconstruction and development) to be designed in compliance with applicable provisions of the *Placer County Design Guidelines Manual, Meadow Vista Special District Guidelines*. [1.O.1.*]
- 2.A.2. The County shall promote and support the existing citizen design review committee as a means of assuring that future development is consistent with design standards and reflect community concerns. [7.2, 12/30]
- 2.A.3. The County shall require commercial and residential site layouts be designed with the intent to encourage human interaction, and to be compatible with the surrounding environment. [5.2]
- 2.A.4. The County shall require that all new development be designed to be compatible with the scale and character of the area. Structures, especially those outside of commercial centers, should be designed and located so that:
- a. They do not silhouette against the sky above ridgelines or hilltops;
 - b. Roof lines and vertical architectural features blend with and do not detract from the natural background or ridge outline;
 - c. They fit the natural terrain, and;

- d. They utilize building materials, colors, and textures that blend with the natural landscape (e.g., avoid high contrasts). [1.O.3.*]
- 2.A.5. The County shall require that buildings be of a size and scale conducive to maintaining the rural atmosphere of the Meadow Vista area. The architectural scale of non-residential buildings, as differentiated from size, shall be more similar to that of residential buildings than that of monumental buildings. Non-residential buildings shall generally be of small or moderate size and, where groups of buildings are used, they should be connected by plazas, terraces, porches, arcades, canopies or roofs, to provide a pleasant environment as well as safety and shelter to pedestrians. [4.6]
- 2.A.6. The County shall require that new rural and suburban development be designed to preserve and maintain the rural character and quality of the area. [1.O.4.*]
- 2.A.7. The County shall require that new development at entrances to the community be designed to include elements such as signage, landscaping, and appropriate architectural detailing to help establish a distinct identity for Meadow Vista. [1.O.5.*]
- 2.A.8. The County shall require that new development in the central town area, especially in any future "town square," provide activity pockets which include such features as benches, sitting ledges, and mini-parks along pathways, trails, and sidewalks as pedestrian amenities.
- 2.A.9. The County shall require that *specific plans* include design guidelines for all types of development within the area covered by the plan. [1.O.2.]
- Goal 2.B:** To ensure that development projects complement the rural nature of the area by minimizing the visual impact of manmade features on the rural landscape. [GOAL 1, 12/30]

Policies

- 2.B.1. The County shall ensure that rural residential and rural estate projects in the Plan area conform to/implement the Placer County Rural Design Guidelines.
- 2.B.2. The County shall require landscaping to be used to reduce the visual impact of all structures, including solid fences. Native vegetation should dominate where possible. Where existing vegetation is inadequate, the use of native plant materials is encouraged. Landscaping materials should provide an informal character and smooth transition between buildings, parking lots adjoining roadways and open space. [2.4]
- 2.B.3. The County shall require that where natural features are not available, landscaped buffer yards shall be provided to minimize the adverse effects of higher intensity uses. [5.1]
- 2.B.4. The County shall ensure that the design of any new road or major road improvement project within Meadow Vista maintains that the scenic and rural qualities of the area will be maintained. Such design shall minimize impacts upon natural resources, agricultural lands, and historic sites. [3.4, 12/30]
- 2.B.5. The County shall discourage the use of solid fences around property.
- 2.B.6. The County shall discourage new and encourage the modification/removal of existing outdoor lighting that shines unnecessarily onto adjacent properties or into the night sky. [1.O.9.*]

Goal 2.C: To preserve and protect the existing agricultural and cultural features which give Meadow Vista its unique rural identity. [GOAL 4]

Policies

2.C.1. The County shall require that the subdivision of property containing existing structures of cultural or aesthetic merit be carefully designed to preserve these structures and, where appropriate, utilize them as a focal point of neighborhood design. [4.1]

2.C.2. The County shall require that the structures of historic or architectural significance are identified and documented, and efforts shall be made to preserve them and use them as a focal point of community design. [4.2]

Goal 2.D: To take advantage of the best energy technology to maximize the energy efficiency of all buildings and structures. [GOAL 6]

Policies

2.D.1. The County shall promote energy and resource conservation in any future land development project especially through consideration of alternative energy sources (i.e. passive solar collection) or state of the art energy and water conservation measures. [6.1]

Goal 2.E: To establish an economically viable and vital downtown commercial village which is well designed to blend and complement the rural area and offers as many services as practical. [GOAL 7]

Policies

2.E.1. The County shall establish thematically consistent design elements for the commercial village. [7.4]

2.E.2. The County shall require architectural design review which allows variation in style but achieves a unified result by using common elements such as trees, plants, lighting, walkways, building materials, etc. encouraging both variation and repetition. [7.6, 12/30]

2.E.3. The County shall encourage the development of a new post office and community center in a central location within the downtown business district built around a town square. [7.7, 12/30]

2.E.4. The County shall work with the Placer Hills School District to redesign/rebuild its existing school campus on Placer Hills Road during the plan life to become an integrated part of the downtown area. [7.8]

2.E.5. The County shall require that display windows on new buildings in the downtown area be built facing the street. [7.10]

2.E.6. The County shall encourage pedestrian circulation by having collective parking lots between clusters of buildings rather than individual parking lots for each building. [7.11]

2.E.7. The County shall review the appropriateness of adding alternative routes to Placer Hills Road in the central town area, such as a loop road or roads, to accommodate an expanded (width) commercial area, including the possibility of a future "town square."

2.E.8. The County shall encourage the development of professional offices and similar low intensity commercial uses, as a buffer between retail commercial areas and adjoining residential developments. [7.15]

2.E.9. The County shall limit night lighting, visible from the exterior of a building and the project's boundaries to that necessary for security, safety, and identification. Night lighting shall also be screened from adjacent, residential areas and not be directed in an upward manner nor beyond the boundaries of the parcel on which the building is located. [7.1]

Goal 2.F: To create residential development which complements the rural surroundings, demonstrates an appreciation of natural open space areas, provides opportunities for non-auto transportation alternatives, and accommodates/encourages neighborhood interaction. [GOAL 8, 12/30]

Policies

2.F.1. The County shall develop a neighborhood design plan for the community that emphasizes pedestrian connectors within neighborhoods as well as between other residential areas. Other themes to be emphasized include small neighborhood parks, and school/county transit bus stops, where appropriate. [8.8]

2.F.2. The County shall encourage property owners to leave a pathway adjacent to roadways for pedestrian use. [8.10]

2.F.3. The County shall require subdivision design to provide opportunities for interaction within the project site, as well as with the surrounding environment.

Goal 2.G: To protect the visual and scenic resources of Placer County as important quality-of-life amenities for county residents and a principal asset in the promotion of recreation and tourism. [Goal 1.K]

Policies

2.G.1. The County shall require that new development in scenic areas (e.g., river canyons, lake watersheds, scenic highway corridors, ridgelines and steep slopes) is planned and designed in a manner which employs design, construction, and maintenance techniques that:

- a. Avoids locating structures along ridgelines and steep slopes;
- b. Incorporates design and screening measures to minimize the visibility of structures and graded areas;
- c. Maintains the character and visual quality of the area. [1.K.1.]

2.G.2. The County shall require that new development in scenic areas be designed to utilize natural landforms and vegetation for screening structures, access roads, building foundations, and cut and fill slopes. [1.K.2.]

2.G.3. The County shall require that new development in rural areas incorporates landscaping that provides a transition between the vegetation in developed areas and adjacent open space or undeveloped areas. [1.K.3.]

2.G.4. The County shall require that new development incorporates sound soil conservation practices and minimizes land alterations. Land alterations should comply with the following guidelines:

- a. Limit cuts and fills;

- b. Limit grading to the smallest practical area of land;
- c. Limit land exposure to the shortest practical amount of time;
- d. Replant graded areas to ensure establishment of plant cover before the next rainy season; and
- e. Create grading contours that blend with the natural contours on site or with contours on property immediately adjacent to the area of development. [1.K.4.]

2.G.5. The County shall require that new roads, parking, and utilities be designed to minimize visual impacts. Unless limited by geological or engineering constraints, utilities should be installed underground and roadways and parking areas should be designed to fit the natural terrain. [1.K.5.]

2.G.6. The County shall require that new development on hillsides employ design, construction, and maintenance techniques that:

- a. Ensure that development near or on portions of hillsides do not cause or worsen natural hazards such as erosion, sedimentation, fire, or water quality concerns;
- b. Include erosion and sediment control measures including temporary vegetation sufficient to stabilize disturbed areas;
- c. Minimize risk to life and property from slope failure, landslides, and flooding; and
- d. Maintain the character and visual quality of the hillside. [1.K.6.]

2.G.7. The County shall require the number and extent of roadway cuts and fills required in construction, reconstruction, and road maintenance be kept to a minimum consistent with standard design practices. [3.3]

2.G.8. The County shall require that roads, trails, and paths be designed and constructed to minimize erosion and other disturbances to the natural terrain and vegetation. Such facilities shall be designed for economical maintenance. [3.6]

2.G.9. The County shall ensure that roads and other public works' projects incorporate aesthetic values, as well as utility, safety and economy. [2.2]

IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAMS

1. New development projects shall be reviewed for consistency with the Community Design Section's goals and policies contained herein, the Rural Design Guidelines, and the County's Design Guidelines and Landscape Design Guidelines available under separate cover at the Planning Department.

Responsible Agency/Department: Principally Planning Department, but may involve other Land Development Departments/Meadow Vista Design Review Committee

Time Frame: Ongoing

Funding: Permit Fees

2. Incorporate the design guidelines for the MVCP area contained herein, into the Placer County Design Guidelines, Special District Guidelines.

Responsible Agency/Department: Planning Department

Time frame: As a part of the MVCP update

Funding: General Fund

III. DISCUSSION

1. Design Guidelines

A set of design guidelines (for incorporation into the Placer County Design Guidelines, Special District Guidelines section) has been adopted for the community of Meadow Vista, which in conjunction with the Community Plan, is intended to promote a rustic, rural village theme in its commercial development and help distinguish the Meadow Vista area from other areas in the County through the identification of design, materials, colors, and landscaping deemed appropriate for the area. The Meadow Vista Design Review Committee has been instrumental in updating these guidelines which were originally adopted by the County in 1983.

New construction should include the parameters that follow. In addition, figures are included to provide visual examples of appropriate implementation of these parameters.

A. Architecture

- Rustic, rural village concept.
- Contemporary architecture using natural materials may be acceptable.
- Moderate to steep pitched roof (minimum pitch of 5 in 12 required for majority of roof area).
- Unique features such as covered porches with supporting pillars are encouraged.
- Significant wall articulation and multi-planed roofs are required.

B. Materials

- Natural wood (or materials used to simulate wood).
- Brick.
- Rock and stone (or veneer that closely resembles such materials).
- Split face concrete block.
- Fire resistant shingles (e.g. asphalt, concrete, tile).

C. Colors

- Muted natural hues including browns, greens, or blues as the dominant color.
- Trim colors may vary to harmonize and/or accent the dominant color.

- Bright and glaring colors (e.g. primary colors, fluorescent colors, etc.) are to be avoided.

D. Signs

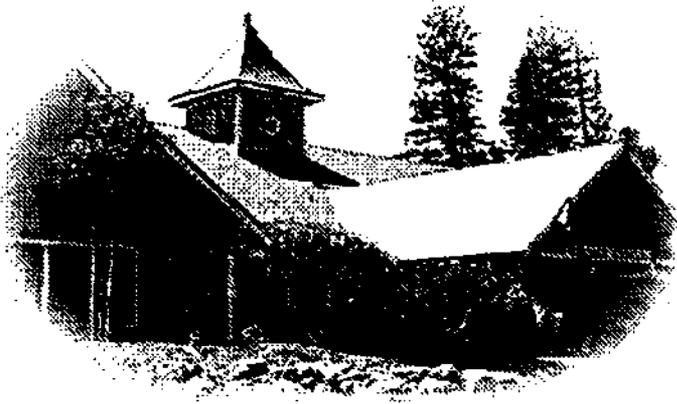
- Sign colors and materials shall be those listed above under Materials and Colors.
- Freestanding signs shall not exceed a height of 15' and be no higher than the principle roof line of the tallest building on the parcel.
- Freestanding signs shall not exceed an area of 24 square feet of sign copy.
- Freestanding signs shall be either a monument style or post with a planter base.
- Building signs shall not exceed 24 square feet. On buildings with covered walkways along the building frontage, two additional square feet of signage may be placed under the cover and perpendicular to the building.
- In the case of a building with two or more tenants, the building owner is responsible for submitting and obtaining approval of a master plan for the signage for the building including size, material, color, and location. Individual tenant signs should be reviewed for size, material, color, and location to ensure harmony between the sign and the building design and surrounding environment.
- Sign designs permitted include monument, post with planter base, and building.
- Non-illuminated signs are encouraged. If illuminated, such illumination shall be low intensity, defused, stationary and constant.
- Signs shall be non-moving, stationary structures (all components).
- If translucent material is used, it shall comprise a minor portion of the sign surface.
- International standard symbols are favored for directional signs.

E. Landscaping

- Preservation of native plant material shall be encouraged.
- Emphasis shall be placed on creating significant landscape areas which include native and the non-native, drought tolerant plant materials.

- Encourage repetition of landscaping elements from one property to another to provide a unifying effect.
- Provide a landscaped buffer area with a pedestrian pathway/sidewalk between roads and parking lots or buildings.
- Landscape areas shall include a substantial number of deciduous trees for summer shade and winter sun.
- All landscape areas shall be irrigated automatically.

**Figure 2.1
Desirable Features in Rural Areas**



Multi-planed Steep Pitched Roofs



Covered Porches with Supporting Pillars



Preservation of Native Plant Materials



Significant Wall Articulation



Unique Features

F. Parking

- Off-street parking shall be separated from roads by planters, retaining walls, fences, curbs, islands or other landscaped separators.
- In an effort to encourage pedestrian circulation and a town square concept, collective parking lots are preferred over individual parking lots for each building.

G. Pedestrian Access

- Areas shall be designated for safe pedestrian travel in front of, as well as, to and from business establishments.
- Adjacent parcels shall be connected by pathways/sidewalks.

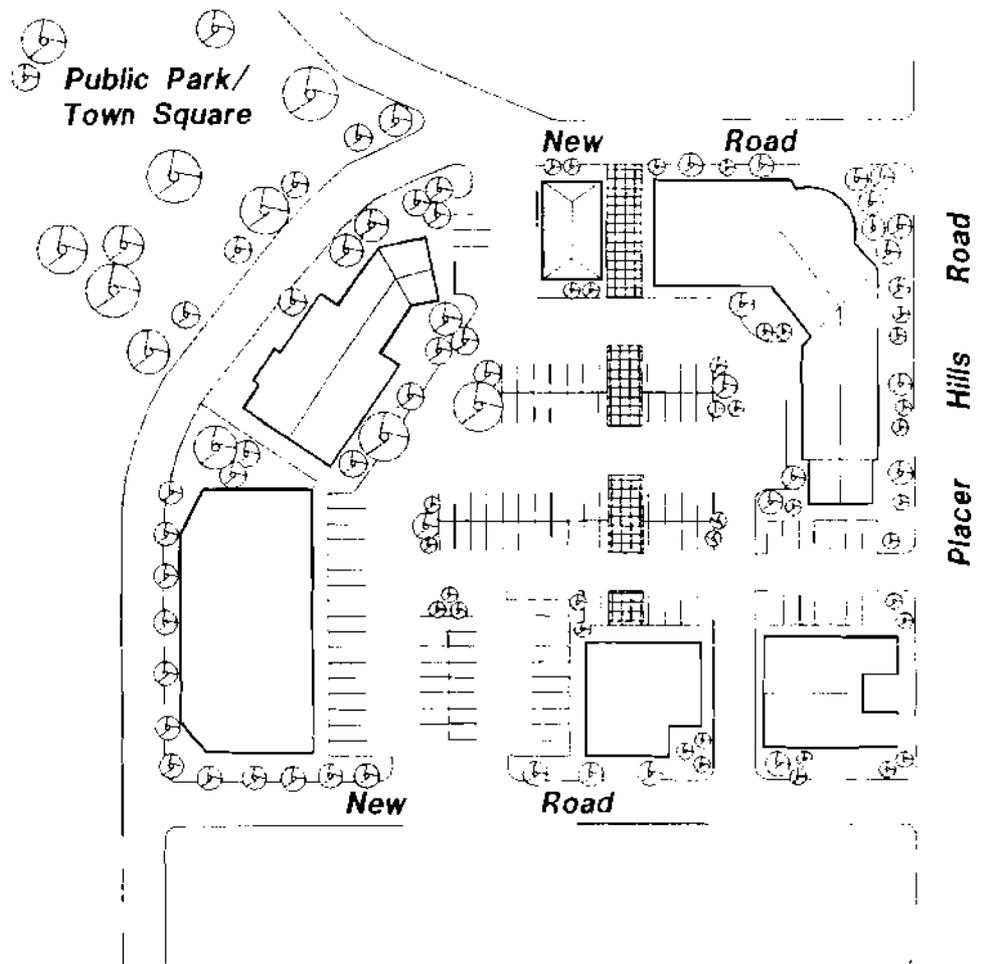
H. Lighting

- Outdoor lighting shall be directed downward and screened to minimize light pollution of the night sky and spill-over of light onto surrounding properties and roads.
- Outdoor lighting shall be limited to that necessary to provide public safety.
- Provide for a reduced lighting standard when the business and/or property is not in use.

I. Utilities/Drainage

- All utilities shall be undergrounded within the project's property boundaries.
- Adequate drainage systems must be integrated into the overall design and landscaping plan.

Figure 2.2
Example of Shared Parking Facilities



J. Supplementary Guidelines for Professional Office Zoned Areas

- Buildings shall be of residential exterior design.
- Exterior materials shall not be metal, but rather wood, brick, stone, or other materials typical of residential-style construction. Exceptions may be made for roofs under special conditions.
- Parking areas shall be located out of view of adjacent residential areas, where possible.
- Access to parking lots and service entrances shall not be from residential roads, if possible.
- Exterior lighting shall be directed downward and screened to eliminate shining onto adjacent residential areas or into oncoming vehicular traffic.
- Signs shall be located so as not to be visible from adjacent residential areas, if possible.
- Building coverage shall not exceed 10% of the lot area.
- Minimum lot sizes shall be 40,000 sq. ft. (comparable to the surrounding residential minimum lot sizes).

The above two bullets regarding coverage and minimum lot sizes are not applicable to parcel 1 of Parcel Map 75639 (a portion of Assessor's Parcel Number 074-162-014).

2. Scenic Corridors

The scenic corridors are areas of special concern for protecting hillside and ridgelines, areas of unique vegetation, and areas which provide scenic vistas.

Goals and policies contained in the Plan and the Placer County Rural Design Guidelines require landscaped corridors along circulation routes, minimum disturbance to vegetation and natural terrain, and landscaping that visually integrates development with the natural qualities of the Plan area. Each project will be reviewed during the development review process to ensure that elements of the Rural Design Guidelines and the Plan's goals and policies have been incorporated into the project design.