

ARCHITECTURAL AND SOLAR GUIDELINES

These guidelines are intended to promote high quality architectural design and preserve the character of the neighborhood and community through the design review process.

Green highlight indicates a subjective, or “potentially” subjective requirement:

Solar Impact Study

Section I. INTRODUCTION

B. General Design Policies

1. The staff and Commission encourage the use and incorporation of basic design elements characteristic of Foster City in development proposals, such as human scale, natural materials, landscaping, sensitivity to precepts of quality in design, and respect for the existing physical, social and cultural environment.

However, because physical and economic conditions and the technologies and methods of building and development are constantly changing, proposed developments and building modifications are not necessarily required to exactly match their surroundings.

2. There is no overall "Foster City design theme" other than nautical. Individual architectural expression is encouraged. Good architecture is based upon: 1) the compatibility of the building design with its proposed function; 2) the compatibility of the building with its environment; and 3) its relationships or harmony of proportion, materials and colors.
3. It is the intent of the staff and Commission that the design is appropriate to the City and the neighborhood for which it is proposed, to ensure that the proposal complies with City design standards, to reject proposals which do not meet the minimum standards, and to approve those proposals which meet or exceed those standards.
4. The staff and Commission do not solve design problems for an applicant, but strive to provide direction to the applicant for needed redesign, through the guidelines contained herein.
5. The staff and Commission are primarily concerned with the design aspects of developmental proposals. Technical issues, such as building codes and civil engineering, are not resolved by the Planning Commission. Such matters should be resolved prior to design consideration.
6. Design services, materials and construction which result in quality design products, need not be more expensive in the long run than those which result in poor design. Quality in all aspects of architecture and construction is to be expected, in order to preserve the character of the neighborhoods and protect the investments of all property owners in the community. Proposals that would likely result in the deterioration of the proposed

construction in the short run, or would likely demand undue expense in continual maintenance, are generally not accepted.

7. Higher degrees of architectural design are required on all waterfront properties and on all elevations which are visible to the public.
8. All projects are expected to comply with the City's building security regulations, which were adopted for the protection of property owners. During the early planning stages of the proposal, the Foster City Police Department should be contacted for their review of the plans. Their suggestions and assistance have been most helpful to applicants.
9. Foster City has adopted certain fire safety construction standards which applicants should review with the Fire Department, also in the early planning stages of the project.

SECTION II. ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW GUIDELINES

A. Site Planning

1. All structures should be designed to be compatible with their function and located to minimize the constraints and take advantage of opportunities presented by both the site and neighboring properties.
2. Recognition should be given to the strong effects of wind and sun in Foster City and the opportunities for using solar energy. Consideration should be given to solar efficiency in building orientation, and to preserving the solar access of adjacent properties.
3. Natural amenities such as the water, landscape and views should be preserved and incorporated into site designs. Where a project is located on the waterfront, the design should take full advantage of this feature by maximizing the orientation of the project to, and the visual relationship with, the water.
4. Site designs should respect the character and quality of the surrounding built and natural environment.
5. Vehicular access, circulation and parking should be direct and unobtrusive to the site and its surroundings.
6. Views, climate and the nature of outside activities should be considered in the design of exterior spaces.
7. All exterior lighting should be functional, subtle and architecturally integrated with the building style, material and colors.

8. Exterior trash and storage areas and utility boxes should be screened from the view of neighbors and the street, in a manner compatible with building and site design.
9. All onsite drainage should be appropriately channeled and not affect adjacent properties.
10. Consideration must be given to protecting the privacy, quiet, sunlight and views of neighboring homes.
11. Existing and proposed landscaping should be used that will provide privacy, buffer off-site noise, screen unattractive architectural features, provide a windscreen in winter and shade in summer, and that will be compatible with the existing landscaping.

B. Architectural Design

1. The height, width, and general proportions of a building should conform generally with other buildings in the vicinity. Ratio of wall surface to openings, and the ratio of the width and height of the windows and doors, should also be consistent with other buildings in the vicinity. The scale and massing of a structure will be primary consideration.
2. Buildings should be well designed, in and of themselves, and in relation to surrounding properties, including that the bulk, mass, height, facade length, roof form, colors, materials and architectural style and details of a proposed building should be compatible with those elements of buildings in the immediate vicinity.
3. Consideration shall be given to the sequence of roof levels, angles, materials and exposures in order to emphasize attractive roof surfaces and provide an interesting field of vision.
4. All components of a design should exhibit integrity and usefulness. "False" or "decorative" treatments should generally be avoided, and should not be used to camouflage poor design.
5. Building materials, colors and designs should be continuous and compatible on all facade elevations. Elimination of design components on less visible sides of the structure should be avoided.
6. The use of natural construction textures and colors is strongly encouraged. The use of metals, plastics and/or similar synthetics to simulate natural materials should be limited.
7. Materials and finishes shall be selected for their durability and wear, as well as for their beauty. Proper measures and devices shall be incorporated for protection against the elements, neglect, damage or abuse.
8. Rooftop mechanical equipment, including solar devices, must be incorporated into the roof slope design

9. All vents, gutters and downspouts, louvers, exposed flashing, pipes, vents, tanks, overhead doors, and doors must be painted to match the color scheme of the building.
10. Windows/Doors - frames must be painted or anodized, shutters must match size of the window, metal doors must be painted.
11. Roofs – domed, free-formed, geometric, are inappropriate.
12. Balconies, decks, covered porches, decorative shingles, bracketed eaves, columns, balustrades, towers, turrets, skylights, and arches are among the details to be considered. All features and details should be in proportion with the building. The use of historic details on contemporary structures would only be included where they are appropriate to the building design. Use of metal, canvas, fiberglass or plastic awnings are not appropriate.

1. Decks and Patios

1. Maintain a minimum setback of 24" from perimeter fencing to allow a landscaped area for a privacy screen. Railings may require a 5' setback.
2. Complement the architectural style of the existing home.
3. Duplicate colors and materials of the existing home.
4. Utilize high quality, natural materials, except that synthetic materials may be used for decks in fully enclosed, non-waterfront yards.
5. Be conveniently located to enhance circulation between interior and exterior of the existing home.
6. Be designed with the proposed function in mind.
7. Take advantage of opportunities for sun and shade.
8. Comply with any and all prototypical guidelines which may be in effect for the subdivision in which the home is located.
9. Decks taller than 12" shall provide skirting (screening) of underside of the deck.
10. Foundations and posts shall be setback 3-feet from a bulkhead or riprap.
11. Decks may not be taller than 18" from grade within 3-feet of the water.
12. Decks may not cantilever over the bulkhead, riprap, or high water line.

13. Decks may not have a vertical rise of more than 18" within any horizontal distance of 6-feet.

14. Decks on waterfront properties shall not significantly impair neighbors' views of the water.

2. Fences and Windscreens

1. Maximum of 6-feet in height for side and rear yards. Maximum height of 40" in front yards, or up to 6-feet in height if constructed of 50% open-air materials and set back 20-feet from the front property line.

2. Fences located on the waterfront should not unduly interfere with the view of the lagoon from adjacent properties.

3. Must comply with associated HOA prototypes.

4. Must utilize redwood, cedar, brick, slumpstone, stucco, plaster, cement, or wrought iron, **clean** glass, plexiglass, on waterfront properties.

5. The fence and elements of the fence should exhibit good proportions and should accentuate horizontality (the spacing between posts should be greater than the height of the posts).

3. Front Yard Paving

1. Front yard paving shall maintain a minimum setback of 2-feet from side property lines.

2. Sites where garage entries face the street, front yard paving shall not exceed 65%.

3. Sites where garage entries face the street, front yard paving in front of the primary structure (non-garage) shall not be large enough to accommodate vehicle parking.

4. Sites where garage entries face the side of the property, paving may be permitted if the following buffers are provided:

- a. A 2-foot landscape buffer maintained between the driveway and the primary structure.
- b. A landscape buffer between the side of the garage and the street.
- c. A landscape buffer in the area between the driveway opening, the side of the garage closest to the street, and the street.

1. Gazebos

1. Complement the architectural style and character of the existing home.

2. Duplicate the colors, materials and detailing of the existing home.

3. Avoid being so large and ornate as to overwhelm the existing home and site.

4. Respect the privacy of adjacent homes.

5. Comply with any and all prototypical guidelines which may be in effect for the subdivision in which the home is located.

6. Maximum of 9' in height, measured from grade (with an additional 12" permitted for trim pieces).

7. Utilize high quality, natural materials.

8. Maintain minimum 5' side and rear yard setbacks and a 10' setback from any portion of the house.

9. Be sized appropriately for the yard such that it covers no more than 5% of the rear yard and no more than 1% of the entire lot.

10. Comply with coverage limits in Title 17, Zoning, for accessory buildings and for total building coverage.

2. Greenhouses

1. Complement the architectural style and character of the existing home.

2. Avoid being so large or ornate as to overwhelm the existing home.

3. Do not destroy the visual or solar access of surrounding structures.

4. Respect the privacy of adjacent homes.

5. Take advantage of solar access in building and window orientation.

6. Enhance pedestrian circulation between interior and exterior of home.

7. Include new landscaping designed to screen unattractive architectural features and enhance focal points.

8. Comply with any and all prototypical guidelines which may be in effect for the subdivision in which the home is located.

9. If attached, be a transparent appendage to the house; the finish of the exterior of the house which is inside greenhouse will be visible from the outside.
10. Comply with required setbacks as specified in Title 17, Zoning, for attached or detached accessory buildings.

3. Patio Covers

1. Complement the architectural style of the existing home.
2. Duplicate colors and materials of the existing home.
3. Utilize high quality, natural materials. (No exposed fiberglass, plastic, metal members, beams or covers).
4. Comply with any and all prototypical guidelines which may be in effect for the subdivision in which the home is located.
5. Look as if it were part of the original house.

4. Patio Room Additions

1. Duplicate and/or complement the architectural style, proportions, scale, form, colors, and materials of the existing home, except that window frame colors may be different than the existing house and muntins may be used if used consistently on the entire patio room.
2. Duplicate and/or complement window and door shapes, sizes and trim of the existing home.
3. Duplicate roof pitch and overhang of the existing home.
4. Do not be so large or ornate as to overwhelm the existing home.
5. Be sympathetic to the original style and character of the home.
6. Do not destroy the visual or solar access of surrounding structures.
7. Respect the privacy of adjacent homes.
8. Take advantage of solar access in building and window orientation.
9. Improve or maintain vehicular and pedestrian access.
10. Include new landscaping designed to screen unattractive architectural features and enhance focal points.

11. Comply with any and all prototypical guidelines which may be in effect for the subdivision in which the home is located.

12. Maintain efficient pedestrian circulation (i.e., unobstructed access between interior of home and yard area).

13. Maximize outdoor orientation through increased window area.

5. Residential Secondary Units (ADUs)

1. Duplicate and/or complement the architectural style, proportions, scale, form, colors, and materials of the existing home.

2. Duplicate and/or complement window and door shapes, sizes and trim of the existing home.

3. Duplicate roof pitch and overhang of the existing home.

4. Do not be so large or ornate as to overwhelm the existing home.

5. Be sympathetic to the original style and character of the home.

6. Not destroy the visual or solar access of surrounding structures.

7. Respect the privacy of adjacent homes.

8. Take advantage of solar access in building and window orientation.

9. Improve or maintain vehicular and pedestrian access.

10. Include new landscaping designed to screen unattractive architectural features and enhance focal points.

11. Comply with any and all prototypical guidelines which may be in effect for the subdivision in which the home is located.

6. Room Additions

1. Duplicate and/or complement the architectural style, proportions, scale, form, colors, and materials of the existing home.

2. Duplicate and/or complement window and door shapes, sizes and trim of the existing home.

3. Duplicate roof pitch and overhang of the existing home.
4. Do not be so large or ornate as to overwhelm the existing home.
5. Be sympathetic to the original style and character of the home.
6. Do not destroy the visual or solar access of surrounding structures.
7. Respect the privacy of adjacent homes.
8. Take advantage of solar access in building and window orientation.
9. Improve or maintain vehicular and pedestrian access.
10. Include new landscaping designed to screen unattractive architectural features and enhance focal points.
11. Comply with any and all prototypical guidelines which may be in effect for the subdivision in which the home is located.

7. Skylights

1. Be flush-mounted to the roof.
2. Be a "low-profile", flat design, extending no more than 8-10 inches above the surface of the roof.
3. Exterior materials or a color matching the existing roof color.

8. Trellises and Arbors

1. Comply with any and all prototypical guidelines which may be in effect for the subdivision in which the home is located.
2. Maintain support-post side and rear yard setbacks of 5' and overhang setbacks of 24".
3. Complement the architectural style and character of the existing home.
4. Duplicate colors and materials of the existing home.
5. Do not be so large or ornate as to overwhelm the existing home.

6. Do not destroy the visual or solar access of surrounding structures.

7. Respect the privacy of adjacent homes.

8. Utilize high-quality, natural materials.

9. Be a maximum of 9' in height.

10. Be designed to shade those portions of the house most affected by heat from direct sunlight.

9. Windows, Doors, and Trim

1. Complement the architectural style, character, and proportions of the home.

2. Complement the window and door shapes, sizes, and trim of the existing home, except that:

- (1) Bay and bow windows may be added even if they do not duplicate existing windows if they are compatible with the architectural style, character, and proportions of the existing home, and
- (2) Curved windows may be added even if they are not present on the existing home, provided that they are acceptable proportions and shape relative to the subject elevation.

3. Consider energy-conserving solar orientation of windows.

4. Comply with any and all prototypical guidelines which may be in effect for the subdivision in which the home is located.

10. Spas

1. Maintain a minimum 5' side and rear yard setback from property lines and a 10' setback from the house.

2. Include decking which maintains a minimum 24" setback from perimeter fencing to allow a landscape area for privacy screening, or to be determined by the Planning Division.

3. Respect the privacy of adjacent homes.

4. Locate any mechanical equipment a minimum of 5' from any property line.

5. Comply with any and all prototypical guidelines which may be in effect for the subdivision in which the home is located.

6. On waterfront properties, use materials and colors that are compatible with the house.

7. On waterfront properties, locate the spa so that it will not block views from adjacent properties.

11. Swimming Pools

1. Maintain minimum 5' side and rear yard setbacks for pool.
2. Include decking or paving which maintains a minimum 24" setback from perimeter fencing to allow a landscape area for privacy screening.
3. Respect the privacy of adjacent homes.
4. Locate any mechanical equipment a minimum of 5' from any property line.
5. Design any proposed fences a maximum of 6' in height.
6. Comply with any and all prototypical which may be in effect for the subdivision in which the home is located.
7. Shall be totally enclosed with a 6' fence as required for security considerations, except that on waterfront properties, fencing along the lagoon is optional.
8. Swimming pools shall not be located in front yards or visible from a public street.

SECTION III. SOLAR (PANEL) GUIDELINES

B. General Solar Design Statements

1. The City encourages energy conservation and the use of solar energy collectors as alternative energy sources, but also recognizes the necessity for good design to protect and enhance the property values and appearance of the community.
2. The City requires that solar collector installations provide the best possible integration with the design of the building and the least possible negative visual impact upon the neighborhood.
3. In new residential planned developments, the City requires that:
 - 1) solar collectors be provided for common swimming pools, and
 - 2) the developer submit guidelines to the City for coordinated (prototype) design of individual solar collector installation.
4. Upon reviewing applications, the City will be more flexible in design requirements for water and space heating systems designed to serve a dwelling than it will for systems

designed to serve a swimming pool or jacuzzi/spa. This is because systems used for water and space heating are considered necessities and pools/spas are considered luxuries.

C. Specific Guidelines

1. Solar Collectors

a. Solar collectors and related solar hardware shall integrate proportionately, harmoniously and logically with the building/residence and its roof structure:

i. Collectors located with high public exposure (e.g., the front-facing roof slope, on waterfront-facing properties or along public rights-of-way) will be subject to a higher degree of scrutiny and design integration with the building/residence than collectors on other less visible areas.

ii. In order to achieve a unified appearance, collectors shall be installed to form a cohesive (grouped) design unit with framing

iii. Collectors shall appear as an integral part of the building's design.

iv. In order to provide balance and integrity to the roof form, collectors shall be centered on or proportionately placed on the roof.

v. Unless blocked from public view by a screening device (e.g., parapet wall), collectors shall be placed perpendicular or parallel to the roof ridge line.

b. Solar collectors shall be flush-mounted and shall not extend above any (roof) ridge line nor be visible beyond such ridge line from a reasonable vantage point on the ground.

c. Arrays of solar collectors with large gaps between the collectors or with inconsistent spacing between the collectors are strongly discouraged.

i. Placement of trim material between panels (e.g., plastic strips between the gaps of plastic panels or matching metal plates between metal-framed collectors, or wood framing around the panels) is encouraged to achieve a uniform, cohesive installation, particularly on publicly visible roofs.

d. Two or more rows of panels shall be closely grouped to each other.

e. Solar collectors shall not straddle two or more roof pitches.

f. Racked Solar Collectors.

i. Solar collectors on racks (with a height above the ridge of a pitched roof) are discouraged and will require Planning Commission approval.

ii. Racked solar collectors on flat roofs will require: 1) the frame rack mounts to be enclosed with a suitable roof or siding material that is compatible with and matches the exterior finish and color of the residence/ building, 2) the solar structure(s) to be centrally located on the roof, away from the edges of the roof, and public visibility shall be alleviated to the maximum degree possible.

iii. The collectors to be proportionately placed in relation to the building.

g. Glazed solar collectors shall be designed to reduce reflective glare to nearby residences and streets. Proper orientation, height, screening, angle of glazing or non-glare (e.g., river glass) glazing shall be provided to avoid reflective glare.

h. All support stringers below the collectors shall be cut flush with the ends of the collector array. Angle braces shall also be installed flush with the collector ends.

i. All visible support stringers, braces, and tie downs shall be painted to match the color of the solar collector or the roof surface.

2. Solar Piping

a. Visibility of the piping of the roof shall be minimized to the maximum degree possible by consolidating the pipes, placing them within the structure or screening them in a manner consistent with the design of the solar collector and the structure.

i. Feed and return pipes located on the roof and along the walls of a residence shall be closely consolidated.

ii. Pipe stubs to and from solar collectors shall be placed as close as possible to groupings of collectors (usually 3" or less).

iii. It is encouraged that feed and return pipes be placed under the collectors, stubbed under the roof eave or located within the building rather than exposed above or below the collector grouping.

b. All exterior piping shall be colored to match the adjacent surface.

i. Muriatic acid and/or a bonding primer shall be used on PVC/plastic pipes in order to provide a secure bond for the painted pipes.

ii. Pipes may be painted, provided that the paint coat is maintained throughout the life of the system.

c. All exposed piping shall be mounted flat against the roof.

d. Tall roof flashings shall be avoided where solar pipes are stubbed through the roof.

e. All exterior pipes shall run either perpendicular or parallel to the roof lines.

f. Pipes shall be placed through, not over, the roof eaves.

g. Pipes shall not be placed over the ridge of the roof.

3. Special/Unusual Solar Collector Designs

a. Thermosyphon collectors (18" or taller).

i. Design of the solar collector installation will be carefully scrutinized by the City and the solar collector ends shall be boxed/framed where necessary.

ii. If possible, solar collectors shall be located away from view of public rights-of-way.

iii. Tube-shaped collectors shall be enclosed in a wood frame or with wood-shake siding designed to complement the residence.

iv. Thermosyphon collectors will require a minimum setback from the ridge line of the roof equal to the height of the collectors.

v. All exposed piping and plumbing fixtures on the storage tank and/or solar collectors shall be minimized and, where necessary, visually screened.

b. Unique designs, such as dishes, plastic bags, concave mirrors, and circular panels will require Planning Commission approval.

i. Plastic bag collectors and variously shaped plastic tubing are normally unattractive and discouraged.