

# Hillsides and Ridgelines

*A Survey and Analysis of Hillside and Ridgeline  
Subdivisions in Santa Rosa*

Fall 2001



Prepared for

**Council of the  
City of Santa Rosa**

by

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# Section I

## Introduction

The City of Santa Rosa has placed great value in preserving and protecting the overall character and visual amenity of its hillsides and ridgelines, as exhibited by the following General Plan 2020 policy:

UD-5d           “Protect Santa Rosa’s scenic character, including its hillsides. New developments should be skillfully designed to incorporate these natural assets to enhance Santa Rosa’s image and character.”

Hillside subdivisions such as Cobblestone, Bennett Valley Heights, Annadel Heights and Fairway View Estates exemplify the successes in upholding these values. Other subdivisions like Fountaingrove II-East and Skyhawk have not been equally successful and resulted in scarred hillsides and obtrusive residences.

This survey and analysis of hillside and ridgeline subdivisions were prepared by the Department of Community Development at the request of the City Council. The prime objective of the report was to examine the review and approval processes that were used on twenty-two hillside subdivisions for the purpose of determining which reviews were successful or unsuccessful; what components of the review are important to ensure success.

The document is divided into four sections. Section one introduces the purpose of the study, section two provides an executive summary, section three analyzes and compares three hillside subdivisions and the final section provides findings and recommendations.

## Section II

### Executive Summary

Past hillside and ridgeline subdivisions constructed in the city have produced aesthetically pleasing and non obtrusive developments. The success of subdivisions such as Cobblestone, Fairway View Estates, Bennett Valley Heights and others can be tied to the following:

- The projects complied with the goals of the General Plan under which they were reviewed.
- The projects complied with the polices of other design manuals such as the *Subdivision Design Guide* and *Design Review Guidelines*.
- The project site was rezoned to an appropriate zoning district, i.e., Residential: Hillside (R-H).
- A complete environmental evaluation of existing hillside features was conducted that included a thorough review of the site's constraints and opportunities.
- The subdivision product was based on complete evaluation and well-implemented conditions and mitigation.
- Requests to deviate from conditions of approval were thoughtfully considered and generally denied.

Conversely, other hillside subdivisions, e.g., Fountaingrove II-East and Skyhawk, have resulted in a less successful product which might be explained by:

- Loose interpretations of the General Plan goals and policies.
- Poorly prepared environmental analyses which ignored the significance of facts and findings.
- Erroneous conclusions that generated vague conditions and requirements.
- Grading and construction that deviated from the original plans.

There are a few remaining undeveloped hillside areas in the City of Santa Rosa. Most are located east of the proposed Farmers Lane extension and are governed by the *Southeast Area Plan* text and diagram. This document contains strong

policies which ‘prohibit’ construction on ridgelines or in locations where structures would interrupt the skyline as viewed from a distance.

To ensure the visual benefits of hillside areas are preserved for future years and residents, the following recommendations are offered for consideration:

- Amend the General Plan text for the purpose of strengthening the hillside and ridgeline development policies. The following are suggested policies:
  - Maintain hillsides in the city as a scenic backdrop to urban development.
  - Prohibit construction on ridgelines or in locations where structures would significantly interrupt the skylines as viewed from a distance.
  - Reduce the mass of hillside structures by requiring structures to step with the slope of the site. Designs should feature split levels to ‘absorb’ site topography.
  - Building materials in hillside areas should have a natural appearance which blends with the building’s surroundings.
  - Prohibit development in areas where the average topographic slope is greater than 30% and establish open space preservation zones.
  - Where topographic slopes exceed 10%, require subdivision proposals to rezone to the R-H District.
  - Limit site grading to the minimum necessary to provide for driveways, parking areas, and understructure areas.
  - Cut and fill banks must be revegetated using at least 90% native and native-type drought tolerant plant species.
- Amend the General Plan definition of ‘hillside’ as land having an average slope equal to or exceeding 10%, consistent with the *Subdivision Design Guide*.
- Amend the General Plan 2020, Figure 10, ‘Environmental Hazards’ to illustrate areas in Santa Rosa where slopes are equal to or exceed 10%.

- Study the R-H District and amend where needed. Specifically, include a requirement for the submittal of a preliminary grading analysis and computer simulation upon application. The preliminary grading analysis must be based on accurate field data and the computer simulation must include final grading, streets, lighting, proposed residential architecture and proposed landscaping at an immature state.
- Modify the Hillside Development chapter of the *Subdivision Design Guide* as follows:
  - Grading in hillsides shall preserve natural curves of the land, especially at the horizon so as not to result in a terraced effect.
  - Hillside grading shall round off in a natural manner. Sharp angles at the top and toe of cut and fill slopes are prohibited.
  - Residences on sloping lots shall be designed as split level and/or divided unit houses in order to reduce the amount of grading.
  - All hillside development proposals shall include a preliminary grading plan with summary field data and analysis relative to the topography, soils and drainage aspects, vegetation, rock outcropping.
  - Hillside street design shall minimize grading by aligning streets with topography, running roads along natural ridges or valleys, and working with existing grades where possible.
  - Street lights must be shielded from off-site views.
  - Minimize grading quantities in hillsides by reducing or splitting street sections and considering parking bays.
  - All houses shall be sited below exposed ridgelines so that views to the hillside from below are maintained.
  - Hillside development shall be designed so that vegetation is used as a backdrop to the house site so that views toward the hillsides would see the houses against retained vegetation.

- Replanting and reforestation shall be required for all cut and fill areas.
- House designs for hillsides shall be designed for hillsides. To avoid visual obtrusive house designs, “Cripple walls,” (that area between the house foundation and the first floor) should be limited in height to a maximum of four feet.
- Hillside subdivision designs may not significantly alter the topography of the site. All references to “contour” grading should be removed.
- Where significant visual features have been identified in the early stages of preparing a hillside subdivision design, views of these features from city streets and future development should be preserved wherever practical. Houses may be oriented to achieve view opportunities, but unrestricted views should not be expected and the privacy of others should be duly sacrificed.
- Reestablish the Grading Engineer position in the Department for the purpose of reviewing grading plans, in the context of state and local code and supervising field construction.
- Condense all conditions of approval and mitigation measures to a single document (resolution). All conditions of approval and mitigation shall be drafted so as to identify the requirement, the responsible party and the timing for compliance.

## Section III

### Background

There are many factors to consider when reviewing a hillside subdivision proposal. Beginning with a comparison of the proposal to the adopted policies, followed by an analysis of the environmental impacts and then ending with a determination that the project design, as conditioned, will comply with the City's goals. A successful review will result in an aesthetically pleasing project that promotes the health, safety and welfare of the citizenry.

The review of any new subdivision begins with a comparison of the proposal to the General Plan text and diagram. Consistency with this document is of highest importance since a General Plan serves as the 'constitution' for development. Other policy documents that guide citywide development includes the *Subdivision Design Guide* and *Design Review Guidelines*. In combination, these adopted documents reflect a community's values by guiding land use and design. Therefore, a well-designed project will be accepted by a community because it reflects the city's vision.

The City's General Plan is a dynamic document. As conditions change the documents is updated to reflect these changes. Over the years, policies have been added, omitted, and modified to respond to changing values and directions. Such is the case with hillside policies. In the 1970's, the General Plan included design related policies which have since been relocated to other policy documents like the *Subdivision Design Guide* and *Design Review Guidelines*. Today, the dozen or so hillside objectives and policies, contained in previous General Plans, have been condensed to four policies.

The environmental analysis, which necessarily takes place with any hillside subdivision proposal, generates specific review(s) of the unknown impacts. The environmental review for hillside subdivisions more often is conducted via an Environmental Impact Report (EIR). For some projects, where it can be determined that no significant impacts will occur, an Initial Study and Mitigated Negative Declaration will suffice. In either of the review paths, for a hillside subdivision a geologic stability analysis and a visual impact report are essential. These environmental analyses are necessary in order to appropriately locate streets, lots and houses.

First and foremost, the subdivision should be designed to uphold the values held by the community, as contained in the adopted policy documents like the General Plan and design guides. Secondly, the subdivision should be designed to consider the conclusions of the environmental analyses.

Consideration of all factors during the review process will balance the community's interests with the environmental influences to create a successful development.

## Analysis

### GENERAL PLAN

City of Santa Rosa policy requires that all projects be consistent with the General Plan. Project approvals should cite the General Plan policies which support the proposal. Due to General Plan updates and modification those policies have changed over the years and between projects.

General Plan goals and policies from prior years, were more specific than those contained in today's General Plan document. In 1991, the General Plan document contained several policies, but since 1996, there have been four broad General Plan policies to govern hillside development. The policies are:

- LUR-4a which states, "Avoid development on highly visible ridgelines and minimize alteration of the topography, drainage patterns and vegetation of land characterized by slopes of 10% or more."
- UD-5c which states, "Ensure hillside development is designed to be sensitive to existing terrain and other significant natural landforms or features, and is screened by trees when exposed to views from the valley floor."
- UD-5d which states, "Protect Santa Rosa's scenic character, including its natural waterways, hillsides and distinctive districts. New developments should be skillfully designed to incorporate these natural and man-made assets to enhance Santa Rosa's image and character."
- UD-5i which states, "Maintain ridgelines and view corridors to natural landmarks such as Taylor and Bennett Mountains."

Because the General Plan goals and policies are the basis for all project review, they must be firmly stated and clear in direction. Vague policies are easy to misinterpret and can result in projects that deviate from intent.

### ZONING CODE

The purpose of the Zoning Code is to promote and protect the public's health, safety and general welfare and is used to implement the General Plan document.

Projects must be consistent with both the General Plan and the Zoning Code. Three zoning districts have been utilized over the years for hillside subdivisions. They are:

- Residential Hillside (R-H); example: Bennett Valley Heights
- Planned Community (PC); example: Fountaingrove II-East
- Planned Unit Development (PD); example: Deer Run Subdivision

Each of these districts is designed to implement the General Plan through the adoption of a policy statement and development plan. The policy statement and development plan attach special regulations and/or restrictions to address unique natural features or special site conditions.

First drafts of the policy statement and development plan are prepared and submitted by the applicant prior to the conclusion of an environmental analysis. After the analysis has been completed, the policy statement and development plan should be finalized to reflect the conclusion of the analysis.

**Based on the analyses present in this report, it appears that the most successful hillside subdivisions are the ones that were zoned R-H.** The main benefit of applying an R-H District to a project is the special requirement to produce a visual analysis of the pre- and post- development condition of the site. A secondary benefit of the R-H District is that it alerts the decision-makers that the proposal is located in an area that contains areas of particular visual amenity.

## ANALYSIS

The quality of an environmental analysis is critical. If any part of the analysis fails to accurately consider the site's conditions or makes erroneous conclusions, then the resulting subdivision could have impacts. The following example illustrates why it is important to have accurate facts (site conditions) and conclusions.

A policy statement and development plan are submitted with an application for subdivision. The policy statement directs a 35-foot maximum building height and the development plan proposes five lots at the top of a knoll. Based on the visual analysis, the top of the hill is determined to be highly visible. Because the hill is not sheltered by trees the policy statement is revised to restrict building heights on some of the lots and tree planting is required to screen future residential structures. Furthermore, the development plan is modified to eliminate some of the lots in response to their visibility. The goal of the policy statement and development plan is to ensure that any potential for significant impact is lessened.

Other examples include proper evaluation of the proposed grading plan. Currently, there is no requirement to submit a preliminary grading plan based on actual field data. The closest requirement is contained in the R-H District which requires a preliminary report indicating provisions for storm drainage, sewage disposal, grading and public utilities. Office data for hillside topography is not adequate to determine appropriate grading for a site. Since hillside subdivisions are complex to design and evaluate, the data at the beginning of a project is crucial to ensure that the final subdivision product is consistent with the proposal.

## SUPPLEMENTAL DOCUMENTS

Many policies from the earlier General Plans were extracted to create documents such as the *Subdivision Design Guide* and *Design Review Guidelines*. These supplemental documents offer suggestions and guidelines to project designers and assist in implementing the General Plan.

Subdivisions in an RH, PC or PD district always require review by the Design Review Board. The Board is responsible for comparing a proposed subdivision development to the policies contained in the *Subdivision Design Guide* and *Design Review Guidelines*. Often, because of subjectivity the policy interpretation leads to a relaxation in design. To ensure that hillside subdivisions do not encumber ridgelines objectivity must be removed from policy, i.e., grading should not occur except to construct necessary right-of-ways, tree preservation must be maximized and architectural controls must be clear.

## CONDITIONS OF APPROVAL

After a project has been approved, it is important to adhere to the requirements as established by the review process. Field inspections need to be handled by qualified grading engineers to ensure that the project complies with state and local codes. The conditions of approval and mitigation measures need to be in a single location, expressly written and quantify-able.

### **Case Study - Bennett Valley Heights**

This subdivision was reviewed and approved under the 1978 General Plan document. The following are representative policies from that General Plan:

- Retain the scale and beauty of hillsides by minimizing development in areas with steep slopes;
- Preserve the visual amenities offered by the hillsides including natural vegetation. Limit development to areas of heavy tree cover. If development occurs on hillsides, valuable natural vegetation

especially forests and open grasslands should be maintained so that the natural environment is not lost forever.

- Roads and structures should conform to the terrain as much as possible,

The 100-acre subdivision tentative map with 121 lots and rezoning to the R-H district were proposed concurrently. An environmental impact report (EIR) was required to analyze the full impacts resulting from the proposal. A key component of the EIR was a thorough visual analysis. Based on the visual analysis, areas of high, moderate and low visibility were identified. In order to comply with the General Plan policies, the EIR concluded that certain areas should be avoided. The tentative map, development plan and policy statement were modified such that three of the most visible lots were eliminated and designated as open space, tree planting was required where lots may have been obtrusive and architectural controls were established.

During Planning Commission review, a condition of approval was added that delayed development on specific lots until a shelter belt of trees was planted in order to help shield the view of new residences. Adding conditions such as this guaranteed that impacts from the new development would be minimized.

Once the subdivision was approved, the developer adhered to the strict grading requirements as directed and inspected by a City Engineer. Trees were carefully preserved per plans and use permits were reviewed and approved for each residence prior to issuance of a building permit. The final product exhibits the quality of a thorough site investigation, analysis and supporting conditions of approval.

### **Case Study - Fountaingrove II - East**

Subdivisions in the Fountaingrove II-East were reviewed and approved under the umbrella of the 1984 General Plan. Sample General Plan policies guiding the development included:

- Preservation of the natural settings and maintenance of orientation to hills through preservation of visual amenities and natural habitats.
- Retention of the scale and beauty of hillsides and location of development on parcels large enough to accommodate natural features.
- Siting of hillside development in a manner sensitive to natural conditions.

- Preservation of natural vegetation especially on hillsides; and
- Hillside development be considered from the view from the valley floor.
- Compact hillside developments be screened by heavy tree cover.

Project review began initially with the NESR 3-87 annexation and rezoning containing 670 acres, plan alignment for Fountaingrove Parkway Extension and conceptual Planned Community (PC) district development containing up to 690 residences. An EIR was required to analyze the potential impacts resulting from the entire proposal and in 1991 was certified by the City Council.

The EIR that was prepared for the project was broad in scope and at the time this was reviewed, the most controversial aspect was the extension of Fountaingrove Parkway. The subdivision component of the document did not achieve a similar level of scrutiny. For thoroughness sake, a supplemental EIR should have been conducted for the subdivision.

Within the scope of this case study, the visual analysis contained in the EIR is of particular interest. The EIR successfully identified the ridgelines that would be highly visible and the notable vista points. It also established the location of various vegetation types including areas of heavy tree cover and chaparral. Even though natural features were carefully mapped, development was proposed in areas of high to moderate visual quality, outstanding vistas and where trees cover was sparse or limited. The EIR concluded that the impacts would be less than significant if grading was limited, trees and natural vegetation were retained and a design program (including architectural controls) was adopted. Given the highly visible nature of the constructed development it is clear that the EIR document incorrectly concluded that the impacts could be mitigated. The EIR should have recommended that areas of high visibility be avoided and preserved as open space and that housing be constructed in clusters where heavy tree cover existed.

The subdivision area was not developed in a non obtrusive fashion. The conditions of approval were not followed closely. Grading policies were relaxed in order to accommodate houses that were not designed to 'fit' the topography. According to the Fountaingrove II-East Visual Mitigation proposed by the developer in response to construction, \$30,000 has been appropriated for re vegetating the open space areas and replanting scars left from contour grading. Planting tree belts in the open space areas will help soften the backdrop for the homes that have been constructed. The landscape architect, for the developer, estimates that in five years the trees will reach 30 feet in height. Another fix that has been noted by the developer is the requirement for new residences to be painted with darker stucco colors.

## Case Study - Skyhawk

Skyhawk Subdivision was a phased development that was reviewed and approved under the 1984 General Plan. The General Plan policies which guided Fountaingrove II development also apply to Skyhawk as follows:

- Preservation of the natural settings and maintenance of orientation to hills through preservation of visual amenities and natural habitats.
- Retention of the scale and beauty of hillsides and location of development on parcels large enough to accommodate natural features.
- Siting of hillside development in a manner sensitive to natural conditions.
- Preservation of natural vegetation especially on hillsides.
- Hillside development be considered from the view from the valley floor.
- Compact hillside developments be screened by heavy tree cover.

In 1972, the city rezoned 223 acres to the PC District. As required under the PC District, a conceptual site development plan was proposed consisting of 840 dwelling units. An EIR was prepared and certified, however, the project never went beyond the EIR stage.

In 1986, an application was submitted to amend the previously approved PC District policy statement and development plan. The new project renamed Skyhawk, proposed 515 dwelling units on 210 acres and a new EIR was required, prepared and certified in 1988.

The EIR suggested reducing impacts by limiting grading to avoid the appearance of flat pad (terracing effect), imposing architectural controls on residential structures and consideration of the R-H District, as opposed to the PC District, given the site's variation of slopes.

As construction was underway, some negative public comments were received mostly related to the change in land use from rural pasture to urban subdivision. Other notable changes in the public's perception of development occurred in 1998 when grading restrictions on phases 3A, 3B, 5 and 6 were relaxed. That is, the applicant requested a policy statement change to eliminate the prohibition for pad grading. While policies in the *Subdivision Design Guide* discourage such terrace

grading, the change was approved so that flat land house designs could be constructed.

This subdivision demonstrates the importance of adhering to the previously approved requirements and illustrates the effects of deviating from the original approvals and recommendations.

## Section IV

### Findings

An excellent hillside development may be distinguished from an adequate or poor hillside development by simply observing if it is visually pleasing.

From a more technical perspective, a hillside subdivision which exhibits excellence in design will have preserved the steep and visually prominent hillsides as open space and will exclude residential development from areas where tree cover is inadequate. Since hillside sites are inherently more difficult and expensive to develop oftentimes pressures, to relax standards, mount proportionately to the development costs. It is important that requests to relax the standards be cautiously examined since a corner cut will likely result in a negative impact.

### Recommendations

In conclusion, the Department of Community Development recommends that the City Council adopt a resolution directing amendments to the following documents and actions which will ensure that future hillside subdivisions are designed and constructed with strong sensitivity to the on- and off- site community views:

- Amend the General Plan text for the purpose of strengthening the hillside and ridgeline development policies. The following are suggested policies:
  - Maintain hillsides in the city as a scenic backdrop to urban development.
  - Prohibit construction on ridgelines or in locations where structures would significantly interrupt the skylines as viewed from a distance.
  - Reduce the mass of hillside structures by requiring structures to step with the slope of the site. Designs should feature split levels to ‘absorb’ site topography.
  - Building materials in hillside areas should have a natural appearance which blends with the building’s surroundings.
  - Prohibit development in areas where the average topographic slope is greater than 30% and establish open space preservation zones.
  - Where topographic slopes exceed 10%, require subdivision proposals to rezone to the R-H District.

- Limit site grading to the minimum necessary to provide for driveways, parking areas, and understructure areas.
- Cut and fill banks must be revegetated using at least 90% native and native-type drought tolerant plant species.
- Amend the General Plan definition of ‘hillside’ as land having an average slope equal to or exceeding 10%, consistent with the *Subdivision Design Guide*.
- Amend the General Plan 2020, Figure 10, ‘Environmental Hazards’ to illustrate areas in Santa Rosa where slopes are equal to or exceed 10%.
- Study the R-H District and amend where needed. Specifically, include a requirement for the submittal of a preliminary grading analysis and computer simulation upon application. The preliminary grading analysis must be based on accurate field data and the computer simulation must include final grading, streets, lighting, proposed residential architecture and proposed landscaping at an immature state.
- Modify the Hillside Development chapter of the *Subdivision Design Guide* as follows:
  - Grading in hillsides shall preserve natural curves of the land, especially at the horizon so as not to result in terrace effects.
  - Hillside grading shall round off in a natural manner. Sharp angles at the top and toe of cut and fill slopes are prohibited.
  - Residences on sloping lots shall be designed as split level and/or divided unit houses in order to reduce the amount of grading.
  - All hillside development proposals shall include a preliminary grading plan with summary field data and analysis relative to the topography, soils and drainage aspects, vegetation, rock outcropping.
  - Hillside street design shall minimize grading by aligning streets with topography, running roads along natural ridges or valleys, and working with existing grades where possible.

- Street lights must be shielded from off-site views.
- Minimize grading quantities in hillsides by reducing or splitting street sections and considering parking bays.
- All houses shall be sited below exposed ridgelines so that views to the hillside from below are maintained.
- Hillside development shall be designed so that vegetation is used as a backdrop to the house site so that views toward the hillsides would see the houses against retained vegetation.
- Replanting and reforestation shall be required for all cut and fill areas.
- House designs for hillsides shall be designed for hillsides. To avoid visual obtrusive house designs, “Cripple walls,” (that area between the house foundation and the first floor) should be limited in height to a maximum of four feet.
- Hillside subdivision designs may not significantly alter the topography of the site. All references to “contour” grading should be removed.
- Where significant visual features have been identified in the early stages of preparing a hillside subdivision design, views of these features from city streets and future development should be preserved wherever practical. Houses may be oriented to achieve view opportunities, but unrestricted views should not be expected and the privacy of others should be duly sacrificed.
- Reestablish the Grading Engineer position in the Division for the sole purpose of reviewing grading plans, in the context of state and local code, and supervising field construction.
- Condense all conditions of approval and mitigation measures to a single document (resolution). All conditions of approval and mitigation shall be drafted so as to identify the requirement, the responsible party and the timing for compliance.

## Section IV

### Appendix

#### GENERAL PLAN 2020 (ADOPTED 1996)

##### LAND USE ELEMENT

###### Residential Land Use

- LUR-1            Maintain a varied housing stock to satisfy a wide range of needs.
- LUR-1f            Require development at the midpoint of the density range with some exceptions, including where topography, parcel configuration, heritage trees, make the midpoint impossible to achieve. In no case will development at less than the minimum density prescribed by each residential land use category be allowed.
- LUR-1g            Allow clustering of development when site constraints render portions of a property undevelopable.
- LUR-1h            Require developments on sites that are 30 acres or larger to integrate both low- and medium-density units.
- LUR-4a            Avoid development on highly visible ridgelines and minimize alteration of the topography, drainage patterns and vegetation of land characterized by slopes of 10% or more.

##### URBAN DESIGN ELEMENT

In Santa Rosa, the Design Review Board is responsible for review and approval of the design of public and private development proposals. The Board, established in 1973, uses the Design Review Guidelines in its work. The guidelines provide detailed criteria for the design of commercial and residential areas in Santa Rosa and should be consulted prior to project design.

Much of Santa Rosa's character results from the tree covered hillsides around the City. Preservation of hillsides and ridgelines and revitalization of creek areas area continuing City goals.

- UD-5c            Ensure hillside development is designed to be sensitive to existing terrain and other significant natural landforms or features, and is screened by trees when exposed to views from the valley floor.

- UD-5d Protect Santa Rosa’s scenic character, including its natural waterways, hillsides and distinctive districts. New developments should be skillfully designed to incorporate these natural and man-made assets to enhance Santa Rosa’s image and character.
- UD-5i Maintain ridgelines and view corridors to natural landmarks such as Taylor and Bennett Mountains.

**GENERAL PLAN 2010 (ADOPTED 1991)**

URBAN DESIGN ELEMENT

Maintaining Varied and Attractive Streetscapes Along Streets and Highways.

- UD-2c Preserve and enhance aesthetic resources along scenic roadways. Considerations shall include:
- Retaining significant plants and landscaping with native plant material.
  - Designing roadways with the natural landscape and protecting landforms through care in grading.
  - Siting structures to preserve visual quality along the roadway.

Providing Visual Enjoyment of Santa Rosa’s Unique Natural Resources

- UD-3 To maintain views of undeveloped ridges and hillsides. To maintain a network of open space and to achieve and maintain functional linkages between major city open spaces.
- UD-3a Protect the natural landforms and vegetation of the hills as much as possible, particularly along ridgelines and in areas characterized by steep slopes. Development considerations shall include:
- Ensuring that hillside development is related to the view from the valley floor considerations and is outside view corridors.
  - Encouraging compact development screened by trees with building color blending with the surroundings.
  - Relating building design, height and placement to terrain and natural features.

- Maintaining ridgelines and view corridors to natural landmarks such as Taylor and Bennett Mountains.

## LAND USE ELEMENT

### Residential Classifications

Maximum densities are usually applied on sites with few site or slope constraints. Residential development on steep slopes would vary in density because of the special physical and environmental considerations associated with such sites.

### Maintaining a Varied Housing Stock to Satisfy a Wide Range of Needs

- LUR-1b      Require development at the midpoint of the density range with some exceptions, including where topography, parcel configuration, heritage trees, make the midpoint impossible to achieve. In no case will development at less than the minimum density prescribed by each residential land use category be allowed.
- LUR-1c      Allow clustering of development when site constraints render portions of a property undevelopable.

### Protecting Santa Rosa's Landscape and Natural Resources

- LUR-3      Conserve the visual and biotic values of the city's hillsides, ridgelines, outlying valleys and drainage courses.
- LUR-3a      Protect hillsides and ridgelines by: 1) avoiding development on highly visible ridgelines; 2) mapping ridgelines and designating them as open space to ensure their protection; 3) minimizing alteration of the topography, drainage patterns and vegetation of land characterized by slopes of 10% or more.

### Maintaining Views to and from the Core Area

- LUCA-5      Preserve scenic views of important buildings and spaces within the Core Area and of the hillside backdrop surrounding Santa Rosa.

### Conserving Santa Rosa's Open Spaces

- LUS-1      Protect open spaces and unique natural features from intrusion or degradation by inappropriate land uses.

LUS-1a        Ensure conservation of the city’s open spaces and significant natural features in those open spaces (e.g., ridges, creek corridors, habitats, etc.) when evaluating private or public development projects.

## OPEN SPACE CONSERVATION ELEMENT

### Conserving Vegetation, including Trees

OSC-3        Conserve significant trees and vegetation in Santa Rosa, including creek corridors and hillsides, in rural and agricultural area, and in urban areas.

## NOISE AND SAFETY ELEMENT

### Avoiding Hazardous Locations

S-1            Minimize the location of habitable buildings or open spaces that involve human activity where they might be impacted by natural or manmade hazards.

## GENERAL PLAN 2000 (ADOPTED 1978 & 1984)

## LAND USE ELEMENT

### Neighborhood Identity and Housing:

Objective 1:    Strengthen and enhance the present blend of rural and urban elements that characterize Santa Rosa’s distinctive environment.

Policy 3:        Preserve the life style of existing rural residential areas within the urban area. Maintain the prevailing lotting pattern (½ to 1 acre or larger parcels) which will help to perpetuate the rustic way of life.

### Environmental Safety

Objective 1:    Regulate land use in areas of significant natural hazard.

Policy 4:        Minimize development in areas with steep slopes, landslide potential, slope instability, and soils hazards.

### Environmental and Scenic Protection

Objective :     Preserve the natural setting of the city and maintain its orientation to the hills.

- Policy 1: Preserve the visual amenities offered by the hillsides<sup>1</sup>, and protect natural habitats.
- Policy 2: Retain the scale and beauty of the hillsides. Where development occurs, locate it on parcels large enough to accommodate natural features and processes.
- Policy 3: Minimize development on the lower hillsides, and where such development does occur, locate it in a manner sensitive to natural conditions and resources in terms of efficiency, visibility, and compatibility with the natural environment.
- Policy 4: Preserve natural vegetation wherever possible, especially on the hillsides and along streams.

Land Use Designation - Residential: Hillside: This category represents steep slopes with the urban area. Because of the visual importance of the hillsides and the fact that much of the land which is this steep is also subject to environmental constraints (such as slope instability) the site area should be determined by the City's hillside development standards, which relate density to steepness of slope. Clustered housing should be encouraged to allow the maximum amount of open space to be preserve in contiguous areas. The Urban Design Element states that hillside housing be limited to tree covered sites, with highly visible hillsides retained in open space. Roads and buildings on hillsides should fit the terrain as much as possible, and the extent of cut and fill slopes should be minimized. Natural vegetation and ground cover should be preserved. Locations of roads and siting of structures should take into account the high fire hazard in these areas and accordingly developments which are scattered and remote should be avoided.

## URBAN DESIGN ELEMENT

### Urban Design Objectives and Policies

- Objective 1: Retain and strengthen Santa Rosa's form and image, emphasizing the City's particular "sense of place" and the visual relationships among its major districts and open spaces.
- Policy 1: Protect the natural setting of Santa Rosa. Hillside development should be related to the "view from the valley floor" considerations.
- Policy 2: Reinforce the image of Santa Rosa as a city which is shaped largely by and integrated with its natural surroundings, particularly in areas where natural features help to define the urban edge.

- Policy 4: Encourage compact development, screened by trees where possible, in hillside areas where development is allowed to occur.
- Policy 5: Protect important views to and from Santa Rosa, and to natural landmarks such as Taylor Mountain and Bennett Mountain. (84)
- Policy 6: Relate building design, height, and placement to terrain and other natural features. (84)
- Policy 7: Encourage the design of buildings that are in scale with adjacent development and which harmonize with the character of the district. (84)

### Urban Design Guideline for Hillsides and Natural Vegetation

Much of the Planning Area's character results from the tree covered open hillsides in and around the eastern portion and the open agricultural lands surrounding the urbanized area on the south and west. In some cases, these features form the edges of the city. The extent to which this scenic setting is preserved may well determine the extent to which Santa Rosa's visual character is maintained and strengthened. Therefore, development of hillsides should be limited to areas of heavy tree cover. Highly visible hillsides, such as Taylor Mountain and Annadel Heights, should be retained as open space.

Roads and structures on hillsides should conform with the terrain as much as possible, and the extent of cut and fill banks should be minimized. Natural vegetation and ground cover should be preserved as much as possible.

Architecture in hillside residential areas should fit local conditions, particularly topography, rather than relying on standard plans. Design of residences on hillsides should not be the same as those built in the valley. Building styles and materials should blend with the natural environment and be compatible with the site.

### OPEN SPACE CONSERVATION ELEMENT

#### The Hillsides Environment

- Objective 1: Preserve those lands subject to severe environmental hazards: geologic or hydraulic constraints, poor soils, or fire-prone areas.

- Objective 2: Preserve the visual amenities of the hillsides including elements of scale, form and color derived from topography and vegetation, for the benefit of the community.
- Objective 3: Preserve the hillsides as ecological units even where public access is not possible.
- Objective 4: Where development is permitted to occur on hillsides, then land uses, from parks to high density housing, should be located in a manner sensitive to available natural resources and constraints.
- Objective 5: The scale and beauty of hillsides and mountains should be retained. If development on hillsides occurs, land should be preserved in parcels large enough to accommodate natural features and processes.
- Objective 6: If development on hillsides is to occur, valuable natural vegetation, especially forests and open grasslands, should be maintained so that the natural hillsides environment is not lost forever.
- Objective 7: Achieve excellence of design in all hillside construction and site development.
- Policies: Establish a permanent open space system linking hillside areas to waterways and urban greens. Criteria by which open space properties are to be evaluated prior to acquisition include the following:
- Scenic or visual attraction from the valleys and plains.
  - Scenic or visual attraction from the immediate vicinity.
  - Recreation potential.
  - Effects on adjacent land.
  - Maintenance cost and fire hazard.
  - Slippage, erosion, geologic hazards, and other hazards to development.
  - Encourage involvement of public interest groups in identifying, acquiring, and maintaining those hillside areas of unique visual quality, especially the exposed outer slopes and ridges.

- Require use permits and design review of all hillside development proposals.

Open Space Zoning Classifications

Four open space zoning classifications were adopted to help implement the Open Space Plan. The purpose of one of the zoning classifications RH Hillside Residential District, to provide for the development of hillside areas in a manner which will preserve the environmental and scenic benefits of these areas and protect development of the hillsides and in surrounding areas from geologic and hydraulic hazards for the health, safety, and welfare of the general public.

**SOUTHEAST AREA PLAN**

COMMUNITY DESIGN ELEMENT

**Minimize Visual Impacts of Hillside Development**

- UD-4 Maintain hillsides in the study area as a scenic backdrop to urban development.
- UD-4.1 Prohibit construction on ridgelines or in locations where structures would significantly interrupt the skylines as viewed from a distance.
- UD-4.2 Reduce the mass of hillside structures by stepping structures with the slope of the site. Designs should feature split levels to ‘absorb’ site topography.
- UD-4.3 Building materials in hillside areas should have a natural appearance which blend with the building’s surroundings.
- UD-4.4 Generally avoid development of areas having an average topographic slope of 30% of greater.
- UD-4.5 Where topographic slopes exceed 10%, generally limit site grading to the minimum necessary to provide for driveways, parking areas, and understructure areas. Grading for development in areas with a slope greater than 10% may be approved where such grading involves an area of no more than approximately 5 acres and where such grading would not result in the loss of a highly visible visual amenity.
- UD-4.6 Where grading produces cut or fill banks with a vertical dimension greater than 10 feet, utilize ‘contour’ grading techniques with variable slope gradients to create a natural appearance.

- UD-4.7 Terrace grading, where permitted, should be carried out in small increments which minimize the height of retaining walls and cut/fill banks.
- UD-4.8 Cut and fill banks must be revegetated. The use of native plant species is encouraged.

## ZONING CODE

### Article 30. -PD Planned Unit Development Combining District

#### Purpose.

The purpose of the -PD planned unit development combining district is to provide locations for well-planned developments that conform with the general plan, although the developments deviate in certain aspects from the regulations of the zoning district with which it is combined. The planned unit development provisions are intended to allow freedom of design in order to obtain developments which will be an asset to the City by equalling or surpassing the quality required by the regulations of the district with which the planned unit development district is combined. Property may be rezoned to a -PD combining district, provided that the proposed development complies with the regulations prescribed in this article. The objectives of the planned unit development combining district are to achieve one or more of the following purposes:

- (1) To permit the development or enlargement of commercial districts in close proximity to residential areas, while protecting the character and quality of the adjacent residential uses, and to permit appropriate and limited commercial uses within planned residential projects;
- (2) To permit clusters of multiple-unit residential developments in appropriate locations within single-family residential zones, with appropriate conditions imposed to protect surrounding areas;
- (3) To protect the appearance and character of areas of public interest or high visibility such as civic centers, public buildings and grounds, parks, monument areas, and features, natural or manmade, of local or historical significance;
- (4) To permit flexibility in the design and use of an individually owned property or a group of separately owned properties to allow for economy, convenience, and amenity in development, provided conditions are met which are required by the Planning Commission, Council and this article;

(5) To permit the development of infill sites of three acres or less in the low density residential category at densities up to 15 dwelling units/acre as long as infrastructure is sufficient to support that density and the project is compatible (but not necessarily identical) with the surrounding residential neighborhood in terms of building mass, setbacks, and landscaping. (Ord. 3013 §§ 2, 1992; Ord. 2974 §§ 1 Attachment A, 1992; Ord. 2488 §§ 1 (part),

**Establishment of district.**

A -PD combining district may be combined with an R, L-O, P-B, C, M, MC or M-1 district. A planned unit development district shall be designated by the letters -PD following the full designation of the underlying district. (Ord. 2974 §§ 1 Attachment A, 1992; Ord. 2488 §§ 1 (part), 1985)

**Principal permitted uses.**

The uses set forth in the approved development plan and policy statement in accordance with the provisions and requirements of such plan and statement. (Ord.

**Accessory uses.**

Accessory uses and structures are permitted, provided that no accessory use, building, or structure may be initiated or constructed prior to the principal use or building, nor on a separate lot from the principal use or building. Interpretation of this section shall be determined by the Director of Community Development or his designee. (Ord. 2974 §§ 1 Attachment A, 1992; Ord. 2768 §§ 20(part), 1989; Ord. 2488 §§

**Uses permitted by conditional use permit.**

In addition to those uses permitted by the approved development plan or policy statement, principal uses which are allowed in the zoning district with which the -PD district is combined may be permitted by conditional use permit unless they are in conflict with or prohibited by the approved development plan or policy statement. (Ord. 2974 §§ 1 Attachment A, 1992; Ord. 2488 §§ 1 (part), 1985) 1 (part), 1985)2974 §§ 1

**District regulations.**

(A) The regulations and requirements of the zoning district with which the -PD district is combined shall apply, except as they may be modified or changed by the approved development plan or policy statement.

(B) Exception: The following setback regulations shall apply to the R-1-PD districts which do not contain specific setback requirements within the approved policy statements or preliminary development plans and which were adopted and in effect on October 4, 1985:

Setbacks for main buildings and accessory buildings:

- (1) Front yard: 15 feet, except that garages and carports opening onto a street shall have a minimum distance of 20 feet between such opening and the rear of a public sidewalk or 20 feet from property line or adopted plan line, whichever is greater, except that detached accessory buildings shall have a 50-foot front yard.
- (2) Side yard: five feet, except that when the street side lot line of a corner lot is the continuation of the front lot line of an adjacent lot, the rear 20 feet of such corner lot shall observe a 15-foot setback from the street side lot line.
- (3) Rear yard: five feet. (Ord. 2974 §§ 1 Attachment A, 1992; Ord. 2515 §§ 1, 1986:

**Additional requirements.**

- (1) Variation of Standards. In considering a proposed development plan and policy statement, the Planning Commission and City Council, in accordance with the purposes of this article may require higher standards or allow different standards for the -PD district than are required for the district with which it is combined with respect to density, uses, heights, parking, traffic circulation, landscaping, lot sizes and other standards and requirements with which the underlying zoning district's regulations are concerned, provided such modified standards, requirements and regulations are adopted as part of the development plan and policy statement and are in conformity with the general plan, and, provided further, that any such modifications shall be limited as follows:
  - (a) If the -PD district is smaller in size than 15 acres and is combined with an R district, uses shall be limited to residential uses and density shall not exceed the density permitted in the underlying district by more than 10 percent.
  - (b) If the -PD district is at least 15 acres in size, but smaller than 50 acres and is combined with an R district, uses shall be limited to residential uses and the density allowed shall not exceed that permitted in the underlying district by more than 20 percent.
- (2) Design Review Approval. All structures, buildings, or other improvements with the exception of single-family residences, in a -PD district shall obtain design review approval before building permits are issued.
- (3) Development Plan and Policy Statement Approval. At the time of filing a -PD change of zone application, the applicant shall submit a proposed development plan and policy statement for approval.
  - (a) The proposed policy statement shall describe the location, size and existing character of the property; and other physical features within 100 feet of the boundaries of the property; the proposed uses, density of development, open space, circulation, landscaping, and other design, construction or control features

of the proposed development; a statement of the assurances to be provided that common open space, common building space and common driveways or other circulation features will be permanently preserved and maintained; and a schedule of timing of development of the property.

(b) The proposed development plan shall include drawings showing the topography of the land; the proposed buildings, streets, open spaces, lot design, areas to be dedicated or preserved for public use; and uses to be established in the various buildings and areas of the property. Preliminary sketch elevations of all buildings other than single-family dwellings may be required when appropriate to more fully explain or describe site drainage.

(4) Action by Planning Commission. The Planning Commission shall hold a public hearing on the -PD zone change application, including the proposed development plan and policy statement. The development plan and policy statement shall be reviewed by the Design Review Board and the Community Development Advisory Committee, and their comments and recommendations shall be forwarded to the Planning Commission prior to its consideration of the application and development plan and policy statement. The Planning Commission may deny the change of zone or recommend that the City Council approve the requested change to the -PD combining district and approve the development plan and policy statement, subject to specific amendments and/or conditions.

(5) Action by City Council. Upon a recommendation of approval by the Planning Commission, the City Council shall hold a public hearing on the -PD change of zone application including the development plan and policy statement. In adopting an ordinance establishing a -PD combining district, the City Council shall approve the development plan and policy statement and shall by reference incorporate the same so that they are a part of the planned unit development combining district.

Any planned unit development combining district shall be subject to all conditions imposed by the ordinance establishing the district and shall be exempted from other provisions of this title only to the extent specified in such ordinance or approved development plan and policy statement.

(6) Modification. Requests to modify, change or revise any approved development plan or policy statement shall be processed in the same manner as any other change of zone application and shall be considered against the original development plan and policy statement and the conditions obtaining at the time the modification is requested, except that minor modifications which do not increase the approved density or change the approved uses may be allowed by design review approval.

(7) Status of Approved Plan for Planned Unit Development. The approved development plan and policy statement for a -PD combining district shall govern

all development of the property within the district. If approval is granted for subsequent division of property within a planned development district, the approved development plan and policy statement shall govern the development on each parcel created by the division.

(8) Subdivision of Planned Unit Development. The Planning Commission and City Council may approve the division of a planned unit development into lots or as a condominium, if the Commission finds that adequate provisions are provided to ensure the perpetual maintenance of all areas and improvements proposed to be owned in common, or to be maintained in common, and to ensure that additional development will conform with the approved development plan and policy statement. (Ord. 3013 §§ 4, 1993; Ord. 2974 §§ 1 Attachment A, 1992; Ord. 2877 §§ 1, 1991; Ord. 2768 §§ 20(part), 1989; Ord. 2576 §§ 40, 1986; Ord. 2488 §§ 1 (part), 1985)Ord. 2488 §§ 1 (part),

#### **Initiation by City Council or Planning Commission.**

A zone change to the -PD combining district may be initiated by the City Council or Planning Commission in the manner provided by this title and may be accompanied only by a proposed policy statement describing the uses to be allowed and the conditions, general or specific, that are to apply to any development. In the event that a -PD district, so initiated, is established with an approval of a policy statement only, all uses within the district shall require a conditional use permit, approved by the Planning Commission after a public hearing. Applications for such conditional use permits shall contain a proposed development plan and policy statement and shall be reviewed by the Community Development Advisory Committee (or its successor) and the Design Review Board and their comments and recommendation shall be forwarded to the Planning Commission prior to its consideration of the application. (Ord. 2974 §§ 1 Attachment A, 1992; Ord. 2488 §§ 1 (part), 1985)1985)Attachment A, 1992; Ord. 2488 §§

#### **PC Planned Community District**

##### **Purpose.**

The purpose of the planned community district is to recognize the advantage that integrated community offers over conventional zoning techniques in implementing general plan goals through specific site developments. Planned community districts in Santa Rosa are specifically envisioned as a mechanism to preserve and/or create distinctive, high quality, single or mixed use developments which meet or exceed the goals of the general plan. The provisions of this district are intended to encourage preservation of existing amenities and creation of new amenities; provide for a variety of housing types and densities; and achieve superior relationships among uses, both within and surrounding the district.

Planned community districts are to be used where traditional zoning districts do not accommodate these goals. (Ord. 3123 §§ 1, 1994:

**Principal permitted uses.**

Principal permitted uses shall include only those uses identified in the adopted policy statement or development plan. All principal permitted uses shall require a conditional use permit, except:

(A) Single-family residential uses identified in the policy statement or development plan as permissible without a conditional use permit.

(B) Reoccupancy of a building with a use permitted in the policy statement or development plan which is similar or less intense than a previously approved use of the building. The determination shall be made by the Director of Community Development, or his designee, and shall be based on criteria including, but not limited to, the following:

(1) Pedestrian and vehicular traffic;

(2) Parking requirements;

(3) Number of employees/clients;

(4) Nuisance factors, such as noise, odors, fumes, dust, dirt, litter, vibrations, etc.; and

(5) Consistency of the proposed use with the principally permitted uses set forth in policy statement or development plan. (Ord. 2123 §§ 2, 1994; Ord. 2974 §§ 1 Attachment A, 1992; Ord. 2768 §§ 21 (part), 1989; Ord. 2488 §§ 1 (part), 1985)Ord. 2974

**Accessory uses.**

Accessory uses and structures are permitted, provided that no accessory use or structure may be initiated or constructed prior to the principal use or structure, nor on a separate lot from the principal use or structure. Interpretation of this section shall be determined by the Director of Community Development. (Ord. 2974 §§ 1 Attachment A, 1992; Ord. 2768 §§ 21 (part), 1989)§§ 1 Attachment A, 1992; Ord. 2488 §§ 1 (part),

**District regulations.**

The following regulations shall apply in the planned community district, except as allowed or exempted by a Council approved policy statement or a development plan or as modified by conditional use permit under Section 20-03.743:

(A) Minimum district area requirement: 15 acres.

(B) Maximum and Minimum Requirements. Maximum and/or minimum requirements for building site area, lot coverage, building setbacks, building heights, off-street parking, usable open space and other similar standards shall be established for each PC district by the policy statement and development plan approved by the Council. Such policy statement and development plan shall first be reviewed by the Design Review Board.

(C) Single-Family Dwellings within PC Districts. Unless specifically stated in the adopted policy statement or development plan single-family dwellings shall observe the requirements of the City's R-1-6 (single-family residential) district. (Ord. 3123 §§ 4, 1994: Ord. 2974 §§ 1 Attachment A, 1992; Ord. 2768 §§ 21 (part), 1989: Ord. 2488 §§ 1 (part),

**District application requirements.**

An application for a PC District shall be accompanied by:

(A) A written and/or diagrammatic project description which provides sufficient information to evaluate the merits of the proposed zoning. Application requirements shall be in accordance with the provisions of Section 20-02.272. In addition, an application for a planned community district shall include the following items:

(1) A site features map depicting the existing topography, structures and natural features including areas of significant vegetation. Properties within 300 feet of the site shall be included on the site features map;

(2) The description of the infrastructure necessary for each phase of the proposed project;

(3) A statement as to how a proposed residential project will comply with the City's affordable housing and growth management requirements.

(B) A policy statement which sets forth the following items within each land use area proposed in the development plan:

(1) Principal permitted uses,

(2) Accessory uses,

(3) Uses permitted by conditional use permit,

(4) District regulations including:

(a) Minimum lot sizes,

(b) Minimum lot widths,

(c) Maximum density,

- (d) Minimum setbacks including yard setbacks and setbacks from adjacent properties and between differing uses,
- (e) Maximum building heights,
- (f) Maximum lot coverage for structures (structures include paved areas except for those on single-family detached residential lots),
- (g) Accessory building requirements including setbacks, height limits and location,
- (h) Parking requirements,
- (i) Design guidelines,
- (j) A listing of district regulations or standards to be adopted by conditional use permit at the time of final development approval;
- (C) A development plan consistent with the policy statement, which identifies the following items:
  - (1) The location of each land use area within the proposed district, including open space and common areas, if proposed,
  - (2) Major circulation features within the development, and
  - (3) Site features which influence the development of the site. (Ord. 3123 §§ 5, 1994; Ord. 2974 §§ 1 Attachment A, 1992; Ord. 2488 §§ 1 (part), 1985)1985)1985)1 (part),

**Establishment of the PC district.**

In establishing the PC district, the Planning Commission shall hold a public hearing on the proposed policy statement and development plan, following which the Commission may recommend to the City Council approval, approval subject to conditions and/or modifications, or the Commission may deny the zoning application. A denial of the application by the Commission shall be final unless its decision is appealed to the Council. A recommendation for approval or conditional approval may be made if the Planning Commission finds that the proposed planned community district will promote development of a distinctive project of the highest quality as evidenced by specific findings which may include the following:

- (A) Preservation of natural amenities such as creeks, hillsides and significant vegetation;
- (B) Creation of new amenities such as recreational and/or community facilities;
- (C) Provision of diversity in the mix of housing densities;

(D) Incorporation of district regulations which provide for a superior relationship among uses within the district as well as those surrounding the district;

(E) Preservation and protection of the quality of living for areas surrounding the proposed planned community;

(F) Accommodation of non-auto oriented modes of transportation including pedestrian walkways, bicycle paths and transit routes/stops. (Ord. 3123 §§ 6, 1994; Ord.

#### **Council action.**

Upon receipt of a Planning Commission recommendation of approval, or approval subject to conditions and/or modifications, the City Council shall hold a public hearing on the zoning application, including the proposed policy statement and development plan. Following the public hearing, the Council shall either adopt an ordinance changing the zoning on the subject property to the PC district and approve the policy statement and development plan, such approval being subject to such conditions and/or modifications as the Council deems appropriate or the Council may deny the zoning application. (Ord. 3123 §§ 7, 1994; Ord. 2974 §§ 1 Attachment A, 1992; Ord. 2488 §§ 1

#### **Status of approved policy statement and development plans.**

All development of property within a PC district shall be in conformity with the approved policy statement and development plan. In the event an inconsistency is found between the policy statement and development plan, the regulations established in the policy statement shall govern development of the site. Requests to modify, change or revise any approved development plan or policy statement shall be processed in the same manner as any other zone change application except minor modifications defined as those which do not increase the approved density, change the approved uses, or substantially change the approved policy statement or development plan may be allowed by conditional use permit. (Ord. 3123 §§ 8, 1994; Ord. 2974 §§ 1 Attachment A, 1992; Ord. 2488 §§ 1 (part), 1985)(part), 1985)2974 §§ 1 Attachment A,

#### **Article 11. R-H Hillside Residential District**

##### **Purpose--Where applied--How established.**

(A) Purpose. The purpose of the R-H hillside residential district is to provide for the development of hillside areas in a manner that will preserve the environmental and scenic benefits of these areas and protect development on the hillsides and in surrounding areas from geologic, hydraulic and other natural hazards. It is intended that this zoning district will promote the hillside environment objectives and policies of the open space and conservation and urban design elements of the Santa Rosa General Plan. It is the further intent of this district to establish densities

and open space areas consistent with the City's General Plan and any applicable specific plan and to provide density increase incentives to create open space.

(B) Where Applied. The R-H district may be applied to properties or portions of properties that are situated on a hillside, or in hilly or mountainous areas, on ridgetops or plateaus. The R-H district may also be applied to properties or portions of properties which have an average cross-slope of 10 percent or greater.

(C) How Established. The R-H district may be established upon application of the property owner or upon the initiative of the City Council or Planning Commission in accordance with the procedures set forth in Chapter 20-02, Article 7. The R-H district may be established without consideration of a development plan, but any development will be subject to the approvals required by this article before building permits will be issued.

#### **R-H uses and restrictions.**

The use of land, buildings and structures on any property classified R-H is subject to this article as well as to the general regulations and requirements of this code. No uses are allowed in the district except those specifically listed in this article and then only as permitted by an approved development plan, or when required, a conditional use permit and the other restrictions listed in the following sections.

Allowable residential density in the R-H district shall be determined by specific slope density tables adopted at the time and as part of the zoning. Densities in the slope density table shall be based on the average cross-slope (S) of the parcel to be zoned. Average cross-slope shall be determined by the formula

$$S = \frac{I \times L}{A} \times .00229$$

in which S equals the average cross slope, I equals the contour interval in feet, L equals the combined length in feet of all contours on the parcel, and A equals the parcel area in acres. Open space areas used in the calculation of density bonuses (as provided in the adopted tables) shall be consistent with the City's general plan and any applicable specific plan. At least 30 percent of such open space shall be corridor open space as defined in subsection (A) and the remainder may be either open space as defined in subsection (B) or additional corridor open space.

(A) Corridor Open Space. Corridor open space is privately owned area, located along waterways, major roads, through open fields, or which include significant vegetation, prominent topographic or other natural features. Such open space shall be so located as to physically and visually unite the various natural elements and provide a framework of flowing open space exclusive of the more structured or formal open space located within actual developed areas. Lands accepted by the City Council as open

dedicated park and recreation areas may receive full credit as corridor open space. Corridors of open space may be fenced to restrict public access providing such fencing does not restrict the continuity of or visual access to the corridors. Corridor open space shall be maintained in a natural or landscaped state, shall contain no structures, and shall not be used for storage of any kind.

(B) Open Space. Open space is that area suitable for common recreational use or which provides visual relief to developed areas, exclusive of typical trapezoidal-type flood-control-channel rights-of-way, area devoted to parking, vehicular traffic or private use, and any other area which does not significantly lend itself to the overall benefit of either the particular development or surrounding environment. Open space may include area in private lot ownership, provided that such area is not fenced. The boundaries of open space area shall be treated as property lines in determining required rear and side yard setbacks. At least 50 percent of the required open space shall be contained as a single visually identifiable area exclusive of connecting corridors or pathways, and in no case be less than 50 feet in dimension nor 5,000 square feet in area.

**Uses allowed.**

No uses shall be allowed in the R-H district except those listed in this section.

(A) Uses allowed without either being set forth in an approved development plan or authorized by a conditional use permit: none.

(B) Uses requiring a conditional use permit, except as provided in Section 20-03.238: single-family dwellings, duplexes, multifamily dwellings, group dwellings, boardinghouses and lodgishouses, child nurseries, churches, public or private schools, public buildings, public utility structures, parking lots, home occupations, temporary subdivision sales offices and private recreational facilities for which a membership charge may be made but which are not open to the general public, health care facilities as provided in Article 33 of this chapter. All accessory buildings and structures, fences, or other screening shall be of manmade or natural material, provided that no accessory building shall be constructed prior to the construction of the main building, nor on a lot separate from the main building. Accessory uses which may include the accommodation of not more than two roomers or two boarders per dwelling unit for single-family dwellings and duplexes, and signs as provided in this title.

(C) Prohibited uses: any use not specified in subsection B of this section.

**Development principles, standards and requirements.**

(A) General Development Principles and Standards. The following principles and standards are intended to carry out the hillsides

environment objectives and policies of the open space and conservation element of the general plan and the stated purpose of this article. All uses in the R-H district must be found to be consistent with these principles and standards and the adopted general plan or any applicable specific plan, before any approvals required by this article may be given.

(1) The location, orientation and design of building sites, buildings, fences and other structures, and streets and other circulation elements, shall maintain and preserve natural topography, cover, significant landmarks and trees, minimize cuts and fills, and preserve and enhance views and vistas on and off the subject property. Exceptions to City street standards may be made in order to accomplish these objectives.

(2) The design of buildings, fences and other structures shall be in harmony with and enhance natural site characteristics in regard to height, use, texture, color, reflective properties, roof characteristics and setbacks.

(3) In those areas where approval is given to disturb or remove natural vegetation and ground cover, compatible ground covers and/or native shrubs shall be installed with an irrigation system designed for perpetual maintenance and care. All such planting shall be native to the site or compatible with the native vegetation of the site or vicinity.

(B) Specific Development Requirements.

(1) Height Limit of Buildings and Structures. Height limits for structures may be set forth in the development plan and, if not, shall be established by conditional use permit in accordance with the development principles and standards set forth in subsection A of this section.

(2) Lot Development and Parking Requirements. Each lot or parcel shall be required to have a building "envelope." The area and dimensions of the building envelope, building setbacks, and permissible coverage of a lot by structures may be established by showing them on the development plan, or on an approved tentative subdivision map and thereafter on the final or parcel map, otherwise they shall be established by conditional use permit in accordance with the development principles and standards of subsection (A) Off-street parking: A minimum of two off-street parking spaces per dwelling unit shall be provided, the location and design of which shall be determined in accordance with the principles and standards of Chapter 20-04. Off-street parking

requirements for all other uses within the district and standards for off-street parking facilities shall be as provided in Chapter 20-04.

(C) Site Design Review, and Design Review Approval. All structures in the R-H district shall obtain design review approval before any construction permits are issued; provided, however, that design review of single-family residences shall be limited to site plan review only.

(D) Development Plan. Prior to any development of property within an R-H district applicants shall obtain approval of a development plan from the City Council. Prior to Council consideration, the Planning Commission shall hold a public hearing on the proposed development plan. The proposed development plan shall be preliminarily reviewed by the Design Review Board and the Community Development Advisory Committee and their comments and recommendations shall be forwarded to the Planning Commission prior to its consideration of the plan. Following the public hearing, the Planning Commission may deny approval of the proposed development plan or may recommend to the City Council approval of the plan as submitted or subject to specific conditions and/or amendments. A denial by the Commission shall be final unless appealed to the Council. Planning Commission recommendations for approval shall be forwarded to the City Council which shall hold a public hearing on the development plan in accordance with procedures set forth in Chapter 20-02, Article 2. Following the public hearing, the Council, by resolution, shall approve, with or without conditions and/or amendments, or deny approval of the development plan. The development plan shall include a policy statement setting forth the development and uses which are allowed and the conditions and controls imposed on such development and uses. The development plan shall include the following:

- (1) Legal description of the subject property;
- (2) Proposed land uses showing general locations of all buildings and proposed specific uses;
- (3) Delineation of significant natural features such as trees, rock outcroppings, and bodies of water on a topographic map of the subject property and adjacent properties within a 300-foot radius of the subject property. Topographic maps shall not exceed the scale of one inch to 100 feet and shall show contour elevations at an interval not to exceed five feet;
- (4) A tabulation of the total land area and percentage thereof designated for various uses;
- (5) General circulation pattern indicating both public and private vehicular and pedestrian ways;

(6) Relationship of present and future land uses to the surrounding area and the general plan;

(7) Statement of conditions for ultimate ownership and maintenance of all parts of the development including streets, structures and open spaces;

(8) A preliminary report indicating provisions for storm drainage, sewage disposal, grading and public utilities;

(9) Delineation of development staging, if any;

(10) A preliminary evaluation of the vegetation, soils, geology and hydrology of the area including the downstream effects of development and methods for preventing on-site slippage and erosion;

(11) A visual analysis of the subject property as it relates to inhabited areas, specifically roadways, residential areas, activity centers, parks and other publicly used lands. The analysis shall include: a characterization of the significant visual elements of the land (and parts thereof) in terms of scale, form, color, visual amenity and relation to surrounding terrain, a characterization of the relative significance in terms of visibility, and a characterization of the change in the above which the proposed land use shall effect;

(12) Statements on how the natural features, including vegetation will be preserved during construction and in perpetuity;

(13) Statements on the methods that will be utilized to minimize grading of building sites and streets and for utilities and indicating where natural materials will be deposited and removed;

(14) A conceptual landscaping plan indicating methods of maintenance;

(15) Any additional information which may be required to determine if the contemplated arrangement of uses is consistent with the hillside environment objectives and policies of the open space and conservation element of the general plan and the provisions of this article.

(E) Modification of Development Plan. Requested modifications to, or revision of, approved development plans, or any part thereof, shall be processed in the same manner as the original proposed development plan, considering each request against the original development plan, as

approved, and conditions obtaining at the time of the modification or revision application.

**Status of approved development plan for R-H district.**

The approved development plan for an R-H district shall govern all development on the property. If approval is granted for subsequent division of the property in the R-H district into two or more parcels, the approved development plan shall govern the development of each of the separate parcels.

(A) Subdivisions. The City Planning Commission and Council may grant permitted exemptions to the subdivision regulations and this title in approving a subdivision of land zoned R-H into lots or as a condominium or other common ownership form of development, if the Commission finds that adequate provisions are made to ensure the perpetual maintenance of all areas and improvements proposed to be owned in common and to ensure that additional development will conform with the approved development plan.

**When conditional use permit not required.**

If an approved development plan and its included policy statement is in the form of a precise plan of development which establishes uses, lot sizes, building envelopes, lot coverage and height limitations of structures, fencing regulations and parking requirements and a final subdivision map or parcel map has been recorded under such plan, a conditional use permit is not required to develop, in accordance with such approved plan, and thereafter utilize, also in accordance with such plan, the lots shown on such recorded final or parcel map.

**SUMMARY - UNIFORM BUILDING CODE**

- 7003.9 Maximum quantity of fill without a permit is 50 cubic yards.
- 7010(d) Maximum size of rock in engineered fill is 12inches.
- 7010(e) Minimum compaction requirement for engineered fill is 90% of maximum density.
- 2403(a), Maximum slope for cut and fill slope is 2:1.
- 7009(b) & Minimum setback from top of cut or toe of fill to boundary line is 2  
7010 (f) feet.
- 7012(b) Maximum interval for required 6 foot terraces for cut and fill slopes is 30 feet vertical height.
  
- 7014(b) Grading shall be performed in accordance with an approved grading plan prepared by a Civil Engineer and shall be designated

as “engineered grading” for quantities in excess of 5,000 cubic yards.

2904(b) Special foundation design is required for soils with an expansion index greater than 20.

2907(e) Stepped level foundations are required where surface of ground slopes are more than 1 foot in 10 feet.