



# Los Angeles County Department of Regional Planning

*Planning for the Challenges Ahead*



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Director

April 10, 2014

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Laura Shell, Vice Chair  
David W. Louie, Commissioner  
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Pat Modugno, Commissioner

FROM: Brianna Menke, Regional Planning Assistant II   
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**SUBJECT: LOS ANGELES COUNTY GENERAL PLAN UPDATE  
"HILLSIDE MANAGEMENT AREA" ORDINANCE  
PROJECT NO. 02-305 (1-5)  
APRIL 23, 2014 – AGENDA ITEM #6c**

## **BACKGROUND**

On February 26, 2014 and March 26, 2014, the Regional Planning Commission ("RPC") conducted public hearings on the Los Angeles County General Plan ("General Plan") Update. This Update provides the policy framework to guide development in the unincorporated areas through the year 2035, and includes a number of policies regarding compatible development in hillside areas (please see Attachment 1).

As part of this Update, the Hillside Management Ordinance ("Current Ordinance") is also being updated. This proposed Hillside Management Area ("HMA") Ordinance ("Proposed Ordinance") will act as an implementation tool for the General Plan.

The public hearing was continued to April 23, 2014 for the RPC to focus on implementation efforts for the HMAs and the Significant Ecological Areas Program. Since the public hearings were initiated on February 26, 2014, staff has received public comments pertaining to various aspects of the General Plan Update. This correspondence is being cataloged into a comment matrix that is regularly updated and available on the General Plan website ([http://planning.lacounty.gov/assets/upl/project/gp\\_comments-matrix-20140320.pdf](http://planning.lacounty.gov/assets/upl/project/gp_comments-matrix-20140320.pdf)).

## **OVERVIEW**

The Proposed Ordinance is intended to:

- Encourage compatible, sensitively-designed development;
- Address all types of development that may impact hillside resources; and
- Provide more certainty through the HMA CUP process.

### **Encourages Compatible and Sensitive Design**

The Current Ordinance focuses on residential development that exceeds certain threshold densities within HMAs. Residential projects of all sizes as well as commercial, industrial, and

agricultural development may also have an impact to hillside resources. Therefore, the Proposed Ordinance focuses on project design that is sensitive to surrounding hillside resources, regardless of the nature of the development which is occurring. This is intended to more closely link HMA requirements to a project's specific impacts rather than a specific density calculation.

### **Addresses All Types of Development**

The Current Ordinance applies to residential projects that exceed a calculated density threshold. Projects that exceed this threshold are required to obtain a Hillside Management Conditional Use Permit ("CUP"), and their allowable number of units is determined on a case by case basis. Rather than the uncertainty associated with project density, the Proposed Ordinance will address all development that impacts an HMA and will allow the CUP to focus on project design. The Proposed Ordinance will apply to residential development as well as commercial, industrial, and agricultural development, all of which have the potential to greatly impact hillside resources. There are certain projects that are exempted from a CUP, and are further discussed under the Permit Required section below.

### **Provides More Certainty**

The Proposed Ordinance provides more certainty in the following ways:

- Density: The Proposed Ordinance does not determine allowable residential densities on a case by case basis, as is the case in the Current Ordinance. Instead, it defers to the underlying land use designation and zoning, which together determine the maximum density for all parcels, thereby providing information and certainty to applicants up front.
- Required Open Space: The Proposed Ordinance outlines standards for a project's required open space in greater detail. This provides upfront information to applicants about open space requirements that may be applicable to their project.
- Design Measures: The Proposed Ordinance is also accompanied by the Hillside Design Guidelines ("HDG"), which is a document that contains various design measures intended to assist applicants in achieving project designs sensitive to surrounding hillside resources. These guidelines are described in more detail later in this report. The HDG can be consulted early on in the design process to assist projects in implementing superior hillside design.
- One-Stop Meetings: Applicants are encouraged to set up One-Stop meetings with Department of Regional Planning ("Department") staff in order to obtain early consultation on all aspects of a project's design. This process allows applicants early access to Department resources and facilitates open communication throughout the application process.

## **PROPOSED ORDINANCE HIGHLIGHTS**

The Proposed Ordinance contains notable updates to the following sections:

- Purpose
- Definitions
- Applicability
- Permit Required
- Open Space Conditions

- Findings

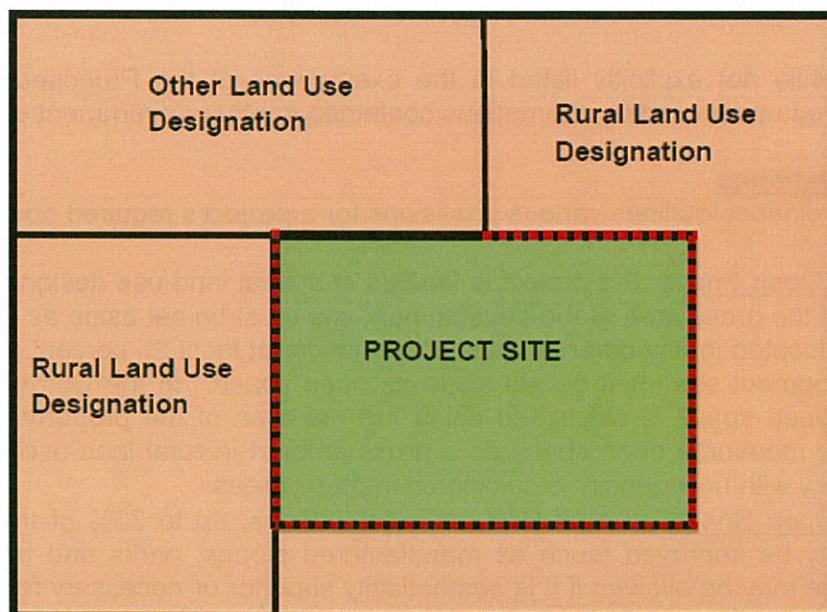
### **Purpose**

As discussed, the Current Ordinance focuses mainly on the regulation of residential densities in HMAs. In addition, because the Current Ordinance is combined with the Significant Ecological Areas Ordinance, the purpose also deals with the preservation of biological resources as well as ensuring public safety and access to community amenities. The purpose of the Proposed Ordinance focuses more specifically on hillside resources by ensuring that all types of development preserve the physical integrity and scenic value of HMAs. More specifically, the purpose of the Proposed Ordinance is to link HMA requirements to a project's specific impacts and minimize those impacts to hillside resources.

### **Definitions**

The Proposed Ordinance contains ordinance-specific definitions that apply in HMAs only. These include the following definitions:

- Development: The Proposed Ordinance defines development as construction (residential, commercial, industrial, etc.), grading, vegetation removal, subdivisions, and lot line adjustments.
- Improved Open Space: This definition includes recreational facilities (parks, playgrounds, golf courses, etc.), trails (riding, hiking, and mountain biking), community gardens, manufactured slopes, water quality and debris basins, and open space subject to fuel modification.
- Natural Open Space: The Proposed Ordinance defines this as remaining in an undisturbed natural state or as being restored to a natural state to the satisfaction of the Department.
- Rural Transition Site: This is not a new land use designation, but rather describes a project site where at least 51 percent of a project boundary adjoins land with a rural land use designation (see figure below).



### **Applicability**

The applicability section of the Proposed Ordinance outlines provisions for pending applications. Pending applications that were filed and had all necessary materials submitted before to the effective date of the Proposed Ordinance can continue processing under the Current Ordinance. However, projects revised to include more dwelling units, larger areas impacted by development, or higher use intensities, will need to be resubmitted and processed under the Proposed Ordinance. Applicants with pending applications may also choose to be processed under the Proposed Ordinance once it is in effect.

In addition, staff intends to address how the Proposed Ordinance relates to and interacts with other Department ordinances. More specifically, it is the intention that the regulations in the Proposed Ordinance supersede regulations in other ordinances where the Proposed Ordinance is more stringent. This change will be reflected in a future draft of the Proposed Ordinance that will be presented to the RPC for consideration at a future meeting.

### **Permit Required**

Under the Proposed Ordinance, any development as defined in the Proposed Ordinance within an HMA requires a CUP. Exceptions include:

- Development on a single lot or parcel of land, provided that grading associated with the development does not exceed a total 15,000 cubic yards. This exemption is expected to cover most single-family homes as well as agricultural projects most common in HMAs, namely vineyards.
- Development occurring on an isolated HMA that is one half acre or less in size in a rural land use designation, or one quarter acre or less in size in any other land use designation ("mole hill"). Please see Attachment 2.
- Development undertaken by or for the County. These types of projects will not require a CUP; however the lead County department will need to prepare a written report documenting the project's substantial compliance with the HDG.
- Certain emergency and hazard management activities.

Public utilities, while not explicitly listed in the exemptions of the Proposed Ordinance, are considered covered under existing exemptions contained in other government codes.

### **Open Space Conditions**

The Proposed Ordinance outlines various provisions for a project's required open space. These provisions cover:

- **Required Open Space**: If a project is located in a rural land use designation, at least 70 percent of the gross area of the development site must be set aside as open space. If a project is located in any other land use designation, at least 25 percent of the net area of the development site must be set aside as open space. In the Current Ordinance, all required open space is calculated using the net area of the property. The Proposed Ordinance measures open space as a gross amount in rural land use designations for consistency with how density is calculated in these areas.
- **Type of Open Space**: In rural land use designations, up to 33% of the required open space may be improved (such as manufactured slopes, parks and trails). A greater percentage may be allowed if it is aesthetically superior or necessary for public safety to

do so. In all other land use designations, up to 100% of the required open space may be improved, unless in a Rural Transition Site (please see further explanation above under Definitions). In this case, up to 50% of the required open space may be improved. Staff also intends for a greater amount of improved open space to be allowed in Rural Transition Sites if it is aesthetically superior or necessary for public safety to do so. This will be reflected in a future revised draft of the Proposed Ordinance. Unlike the Current Ordinance, the Proposed Ordinance limits the amount of improved open space that is permitted in certain scenarios. This is in keeping with the purpose of preserving hillside resources, which include natural open space, ridgelines, and scenic views.

- Open Space Configuration: The Proposed Ordinance states that the majority of required natural open space be contiguous and contiguous with adjacent open space where possible. This is aimed at preserving the continuity and scenic value of hillsides and ridgelines.
- Open Space Recordation and Management: The Proposed Ordinance sets forth standards for maintaining required open space in perpetuity, thereby ensuring the preservation of hillside resources.

### **Findings**

As discussed, the purpose of the Proposed Ordinance focuses on the preservation of hillside resources. As such, the findings of the Proposed Ordinance address a project's impacts to the various aspects of these hillside resources, thereby ensuring development that is compatible with and sensitive to surrounding hillside areas. More specifically, the findings require that any proposed development:

- Preserves the physical integrity of HMAs;
- Preserves the scenic value of HMAs;
- Provides open space and is compatible with community character; and
- Substantially complies with the HDG (further discussed below).

### **HILLSIDE DESIGN GUIDELINES ("HDG")**

The HDG are a collection of design techniques intended to implement the General Plan policies referenced in Attachment 1, thereby ensuring that projects occurring in HMAs use sensitive and creative engineering techniques. The HDG contain five design categories:

- Site Planning
- Grading and Facilities
- Road Circulation
- Building Design
- Landscaping

Each design category contains specific and measureable design techniques that can be applied to all types of HMA development to ensure a project is compatible with surrounding hillside resources. One of the findings in the Proposed Ordinance requires that any proposed development be in substantial compliance with the HDG. In order to demonstrate substantial compliance, a project should utilize the design measures that can be reasonably implemented and are most appropriate for that project site. Through the One Stop process, applicants can

work with Department staff early on to identify which design measures are most applicable and meaningful for their projects.

The HDG are a separate document provided to the RPC as reference. As they are not an adopted document, the HDG can be updated in the future to reflect the most current hillside design standards, thereby ensuring superior projects that are sensitive to hillside resources. The Department released a public hearing draft of the HDG on March 24, 2014. The HDG have since been updated, and are attached for reference (please see Attachment 4). This updated document includes a formal process whereby these guidelines can be updated on a biannual basis (every two years).

### **COLLABORATION AND OUTREACH**

Department staff has conducted extensive outreach concerning the Proposed Ordinance. Three previous drafts of this ordinance have been released (November 10, 2011, December 6, 2012, and October 17, 2013, respectively). Comment periods were provided for each draft, and staff received over 50 comment letters in total from various stakeholders including local residents, Town Councils, environmental groups, and the development community.

Based on feedback, specifically those comments received on the December 6, 2012 draft, the Department convened an Engineering Panel made up of internal staff, members of County Department of Public Works ("DPW"), and engineers from the private sector. The Engineering Panel met a number of times in order to discuss the technical aspects of the ordinance and the HDG, and collaborate on many of the revisions reflected in the Proposed Ordinance. The Panel also used actual projects as test cases to ensure that the Proposed Ordinance and HDG could be feasibly implemented and applied.

Staff has also met with various stakeholders including the Leona Valley Town Council and Kagel Canyon Town Council to present information as well as obtain feedback. Staff has also closely collaborated with other affected County Departments, specifically DPW, to rely on their expertise in technical matters such as grading as well as ensure consistency with other County policies.

In addition, Department Staff has worked closely with the Building Industry Association ("BIA") in order to ensure that the Proposed Ordinance does not preclude development, but rather encourages compatible, sensitive hillside design for projects. As of time of writing, Staff has met with the BIA on three separate occasions as well as maintained an open and ongoing dialogue in order to discuss concerns and obtain feedback.

During the development of the Proposed Ordinance, Staff has also presented to the RPC on two occasions in order to provide updates and discuss the Proposed Ordinance.

### **CORRESPONDENCE**

No correspondence has been received on the public hearing draft of the Proposed Ordinance or the HDG at the time of this report.

## STAFF ANALYSIS/RECOMMENDATIONS

The General Plan policies outlined in Attachment 1 set out a mandate for the sustainable management and preservation of hillside resources. Through a collaborative process involving extensive outreach to numerous stakeholders, including Town Councils, environmental groups, the development community, and other County departments, staff has developed the Proposed Ordinance and the HDG.

The Proposed Ordinance recognizes that all types of development have a potential to impact hillside resources and as such, focuses on ensuring superior project design that is sensitive to these resources. In addition, open space requirements in the Proposed Ordinance are designed to prioritize natural, contiguous open space, resulting in greater preservation of the scenic value of hillside areas. The Proposed Ordinance also provides more certainty for projects going through the CUP process by allowing underlying land use designations and zoning to dictate density, clearly outlining open space requirements, and facilitating early and ongoing communication between project applicants and staff. In addition, the HDG provide a flexible and comprehensive list of design measures that will aid projects in achieving designs that are compatible with surrounding hillsides and serve to enhance community character and hillside resources.

The following recommendation is made prior to the public hearing and is subject to change based upon testimony and/or documentary evidence presented at the public hearing:

Staff recommends that the public hearing on the General Plan Update, referred to as Project Number 02-305(1-5), be continued to May 28, 2014 and that the focus of that hearing be zoning consistency for the General Plan Update.

Staff also recommends that this matter return to the RPC to be considered on June 25, 2014, to allow for public consideration of the additional updated documents to be provided by staff for the RPC's consideration.

**I MOVE THAT THE REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION CONTINUE THIS MATTER, THE LOS ANGELES COUNTY GENERAL PLAN UPDATE, TO MAY 28, 2014 AND THAT THE FOCUS OF THAT HEARING BE ON GENERAL PLAN ZONING CONSISTENCY.**

**I FUTHER MOVE THAT THIS MATTER AS IT RELATES TO HILLSIDE MANAGEMENT AREAS ORDINANCE, BE FURTHER CONSIDERED DURING OUR JUNE 25, 2014 MEETING.**

- Attachment 1: General Plan Policies
- Attachment 2: Mole Hill HMAs
- Attachment 3: Proposed HMA Ordinance
- Attachment 4: Proposed Hillside Design Guidelines



# **Attachment 1**



## General Plan Policies

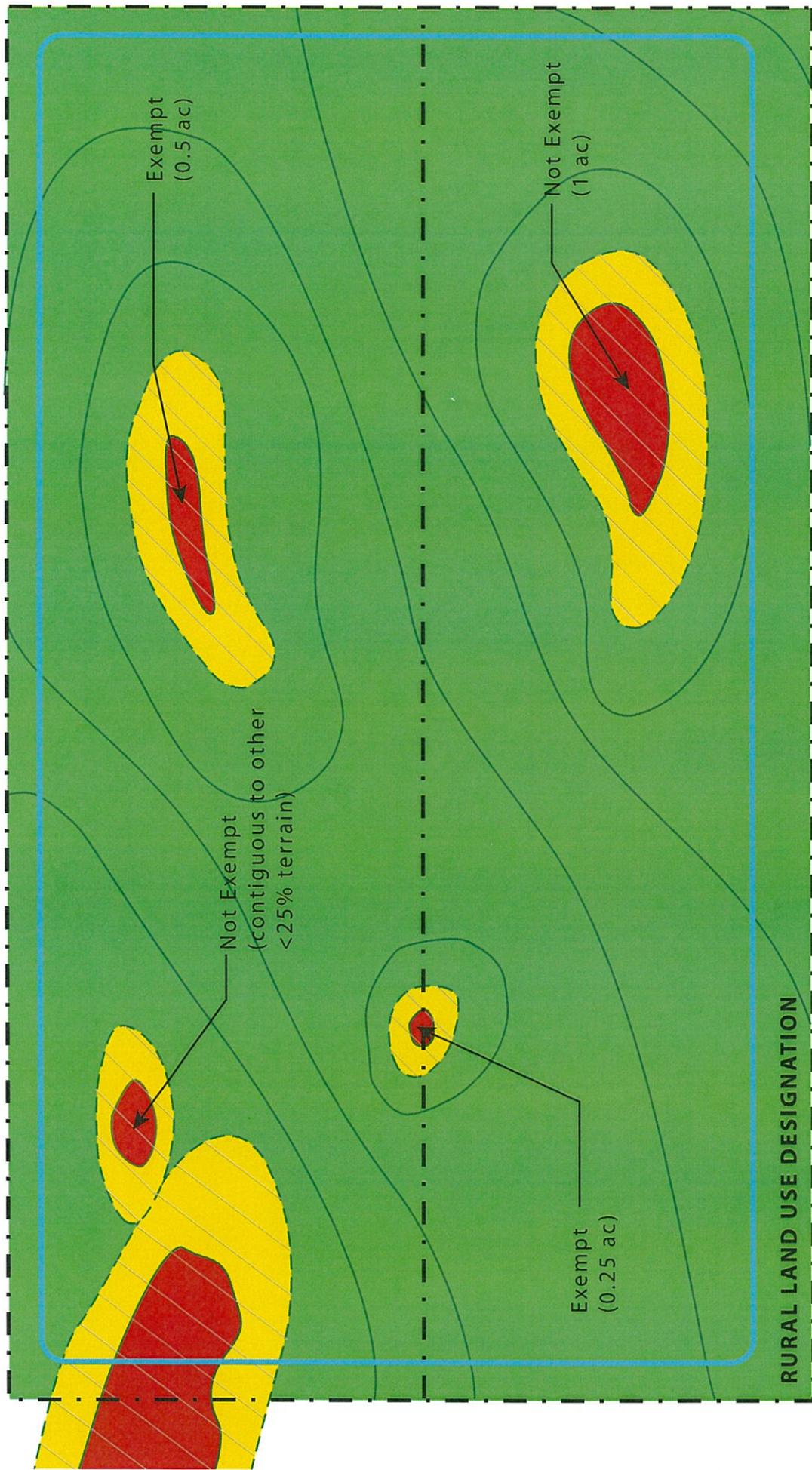
The Plan identifies HMAs as a scenic resource, and encourages their protection through several policies, including the following:

- Policy C/NR 13.1: Protect scenic resources through land use regulations that mitigate development impacts.
- Policy C/NR 13.2: Protect ridgelines from incompatible development that diminishes their scenic value.
- Policy C/NR 13.4: Encourage developments to be designed to create a consistent visual relationship with the natural terrain and vegetation.
- Policy C/NR 13.5: Encourage required grading to be compatible with the existing terrain.
- Policy C/NR 13.8: Manage development in HMAs to protect their natural and scenic character and minimize risks from natural hazards, such as fire, flood, erosion, and landslides.
- Policy C/NR 13.9: Consider the following in the design of a project that is located within an HMA, to the greatest extent feasible:
  - Public safety and the protection of hillside resources through the application of safety and conservation design standards;
  - Maintenance of large contiguous open areas that limit exposure to landslide, liquefaction and fire hazards and protect natural features, such as significant ridgelines, watercourses and SEAs.



# **Attachment 2**





**RURAL LAND USE DESIGNATION**

*For Illustrative Purposes Only*

**LEGEND**

- = <25% Slope
- = 25% - 49% Slope
- = >50% Slope
- = "Molehill" HMA
- = Contour Lines
- = Base of "Molehill"  
(where 25% slope begins)
- = Property Line
- = Project Site







# **Attachment 3**



**ORDINANCE NO. \_\_\_\_\_**

An ordinance amending Title 22 – Planning and Zoning – of the Los Angeles County Code related to the update of additional regulations for Hillside Management Areas.

**SECTION 1.** Section 22.08.080 is hereby amended to read as follows:

...

~~Hillside Management Area, Nonurban. "Nonurban hillside management area (HMA)" means these areas any portion of a lot or parcel of land which contains terrain having with a natural slope of 25 percent or more greater included within the nonurban classification of the general development policy map of the General Plan.~~

~~Hillside Management Area, Urban. "Urban hillside management area" means those areas having a natural slope of 25 percent or more included within the urban classification of the general development policy map of the General Plan.~~

...

**SECTION 2.** Section 22.56.215 is hereby repealed in its entirety.

**SECTION 3.** Section 22.56.215 is hereby added to read as follows:

**22.56.215 Hillside Management Areas -- Additional Regulations.**

A. Purpose.

1. This Section is established to ensure that development preserves the physical integrity and scenic value of Hillside Management Areas ("HMA"s), provides open space, and is compatible with community character. These goals are to be accomplished by:

- a. Locating development outside of HMAs to the extent feasible;
- b. Locating development in the portions of HMAs with the fewest hillside constraints; and
- c. Using sensitive hillside design techniques.

2. This Section does not determine maximum allowable density or intensity for a proposed development. Maximum allowable density or intensity for a proposed development shall be determined by the adopted Area, Community, Neighborhood, or Specific Plan. Where there is no adopted Area, Community, Neighborhood, or Specific Plan, the maximum density or intensity for a proposed development shall be determined by the Land Use Element of the General Plan.

B. Definitions. For purposes of this Section the following definitions apply:

1. "Development" means on-site or off-site activity as follows:
  - a. Construction or expansion of any structure or impervious surface, such as hardscape;
  - b. Construction or expansion of any street, highway, or other access road;
  - c. Construction or expansion of any infrastructure, such as water and sewerage lines, drainage facilities, telephone lines, and electrical power transmission and distribution lines;
  - d. Grading, such as cut, fill, or combination thereof, including off-site grading;
  - e. Removal of any vegetation, including fuel modification;

- f. Subdivisions; or
  - g. Lot line adjustments.
2. "Hillside Constraints" mean topographic features such as slopes, hilltops, and ridgelines that may contain hazards and, when developed, cause visible alteration of the topographic feature and its views.
3. "Hillside Design Guidelines" means the document maintained by the Department, as approved by the Director, that provides guidance on best practices and recommended approaches for development in HMAs;
4. "Improved Open Space" means:
- a. Parks, playgrounds, golf courses, and other recreational facilities;
  - b. Riding, hiking, and mountain biking trails;
  - c. Community gardens;
  - d. Manufactured slopes;
  - e. Vegetated swales;
  - f. Water quality basins and debris basins, provided that such basins are not concrete; or
  - g. Any open space that is subject to fuel modification.
5. "Natural Open Space" means any open space that will remain in an undisturbed natural state or any area that will be restored to a natural state to the satisfaction of the Director.
6. "Rural Land Use Designation" means any designation in the General Plan or in any adopted Area, Community, Neighborhood, or Specific Plan, such

as Open Space and National Forest land use designations, that allows residential development at a maximum density of one dwelling unit per acre or less or rural commercial and industrial development.

7. "Rural Transition Site" means a project site where at least 51 percent of the project boundary adjoins land within a rural land use designation.

8. "Sensitive Hillside Design Techniques" means any site planning, engineering, landscaping, and/or architectural design technique(s) that, individually or combined, minimize horizontal and vertical cut or fill hillside disturbance; minimize the total volume of grading; minimize impact to scenic hillside views; and are compatible with community character. Such techniques may be found in the Hillside Design Guidelines.

C. Applicability.

1. Pending Applications. The following provisions shall apply to complete applications filed prior to the effective date of the ordinance updating this Section:

a. The applicant may choose whether the application will be reviewed for compliance with this updated Section or with Section 22.56.215 as it existed prior to the effective date of the ordinance updating this Section. In either case, approval of the application is not guaranteed.

b. If an application is reviewed for compliance with Section 22.56.215 as it existed prior to the effective date of the ordinance updating this Section, the applicant may modify the application prior to consideration by the Hearing Officer. The modification may necessitate the submittal of revised, updated, or additional

materials and reports. The modification may be reviewed for compliance with Section 22.56.215 as it existed prior to the effective date of the ordinance updating this Section if it does not change the housing type (e.g. from single-family to two-family or multi-family) nor increase:

- i. The residential density;
- ii. The floor area or lot coverage of non-residential space;
- iii. The amount of grading; or
- iv. The area of ground disturbance.

c. A modification to an approved valid application, including modifications pursuant to Part 11 of Chapter 22.56, may be reviewed for compliance with Section 22.56.215 as it existed prior to the effective date of the ordinance updating this Section, unless the development footprint is being expanded or the modified project is considered a new application. In such cases, a modification shall be reviewed for compliance with this Section.

D. Permit Required. A Conditional Use Permit shall be required for any development located wholly or partially in an HMA, except for:

- 1. Development on a single lot or parcel of land, provided that grading in connection with the development does not exceed 15,000 cubic yards of total cut plus total fill material. This exception shall not apply when two or more lots or parcels of land are developed in a coordinated effort, regardless of the ownership of the involved lots or parcels of land and regardless of whether the developments are applied for concurrently or through multiple successive applications.

2. Lot line adjustment(s) of property line(s) between two lots or parcels of land. This exception shall not apply to the adjustment of two or more property lines between three or more contiguous lots or parcels of land in a coordinated effort, regardless of the ownership of the involved lots or parcels of land and regardless of whether the adjustments are applied for concurrently or through multiple successive applications.

3. Development in one contiguous HMA, provided that the HMA is:

a. Within a rural land use designation, one half acre or less in size (as measured from base of slopes to slopes 25 percent or greater) and not contiguous with any other terrain with a natural slope of 25 percent or greater; or

b. Within a land use designation other than rural, one quarter acre or less in size (as measured from base of slopes to slopes of 25 percent or greater) and not contiguous with any other terrain with a natural slope of 25 percent or greater.

4. Development designed such that all HMAs on the development site remain in a natural state or are restored to a natural state to the satisfaction of the Director, and are designated as Open Space - Restricted Use Areas on a recorded final map or parcel map waiver, or on a recorded covenant if not associated with a land division.

5. Development to be undertaken by or for the County or a special district, provided that such development complies with subsection H.

6. Development located within any adopted Specific Plan, provided that such development complies with the provisions of that Specific Plan.

7. Development related to drilling for and production of oil and gas within the Baldwin Hills Community Standards District ("CSD"), provided that such development complies with the provisions of that CSD.

8. Any of the following activities required, requested, authorized, or performed by a governmental agency:

a. Removal or thinning of vegetation, including trees for fire/public/roadway/bridge safety (including under bridge hydraulic vegetation reduction) in response to an emergency;

b. Operations and maintenance of flood, water supply, water conservation, and roadway infrastructure that includes the removal or thinning of vegetation, including trees; or

c. Hazard management activities in response to an emergency or other public safety concerns including maintenance, preservation, or restoration of existing roadways, bridges, or flood protection facilities involving adjacent slopes, shoulders, drains, and appurtenant structures (e.g. guardrail, rail and timber walls, head walls, etc.) located near or within dedicated public right of way or associated easements.

E. Application Materials. If a Conditional Use Permit is required by this Section, the applicant shall submit the following:

1. All materials and information required by Section 22.56.030 and a Burden of Proof statement that substantiates the findings required by subsection G.

2. Site Photographs. Six panoramic or composite color photographs taken from each corner of the development site and from the highest elevated points

within the development site, taken no more than 90 days prior to application submission, along with a photograph key. Additional photographs may be required if the Director determines such materials are necessary for adequate evaluation.

3. Proposed Development Exhibits. The following exhibits, each of the same size and scale, showing the natural topography of the site in accordance with the Hillside Design Guidelines:

- a. A slope map that includes the following:
  - i. The land use designation(s) and all existing and proposed development as defined in subsection B.1;
  - ii. The following slope categories as determined by a licensed civil engineer, licensed land surveyor, or a registered geologist; and associated color for: Zero to 24.99 percent natural slope (green), 25 to 49.99 percent natural slope (yellow), and 50 percent or greater natural slope (red); and
  - iii. A table listing the number of gross and net acres, land use designation(s), proposed non-residential square footage and/or proposed number of units, and proposed grading amounts within each slope category and within the overall project boundary.
- b. An open space exhibit that includes the following:
  - i. A site plan depicting proposed lot configuration, proposed streets, proposed grading design, and proposed open space areas. The site plan shall number and label each proposed open space area. The site plan shall also indicate natural open space or improved open space, and within an open space lot or

within an Open Space - Restricted Use Area. The site plan shall also depict and describe the type of improved open space within each improved open space area, and

ii. A table listing the acreage and percentage of natural open space areas and improved open space areas on each proposed lot, the total acreage and percentage of natural open space areas, and the total acreage and percentage of improved open space areas.

c. A map showing hillside constraints as defined in subsection B.2.

d. A vegetation exhibit showing existing groundcover, shrubs, and trees;

4. Information on Proposed Structures. If a new structure is proposed, exterior elevation cross sections at a scale satisfactory to the Director, indicating proposed building, retaining wall heights and proposed retaining wall construction materials; and

5. Additional Materials. The Director may request additional materials at the time of application submission or during review by the Department if the Director determines such materials are necessary for adequate evaluation. These materials may include the exhibits listed in the Hillside Design Guidelines, such as a site profile exhibit, a block elevation exhibit, a proposed landscape plan, a fuel modification plan, a viewshed analysis, or a line of sight exhibit.

F. Conditions of Approval. Every Conditional Use Permit required by this Section shall be subject to the following conditions. Each condition shall specify whether it applies to the entire development, to the portion of the development within

HMA(s), or to an individual lot or parcel of land. The Hearing Officer, in granting the HMA Conditional Use Permit may impose additional conditions. Other than as provided herein, any other modification to conditions required by this Section may be granted pursuant to Part 2 of Chapter 22.56:

1. Open Space Requirement.

a. Rural Land Use Designation.

i. Required Open Space. At least 70 percent of the gross area of the development site shall be provided as required open space.

ii. Type of Open Space. Up to 33 percent of total required open space may be provided as improved open space. The Hearing Officer may approve a greater percentage of improved open space if the Hearing Officer finds that improvement of open space is necessary for public safety or is aesthetically superior.

b. Other Land Use Designations.

i. Required Open Space. At least 25 percent of the net area of the development site shall be provided as required open space. Development in a Residential Planned Development Zone shall also comply with open space requirements in accordance with Section 22.20.460.B.4.

ii. Type of Open Space. The Hearing Officer may approve up to 100 percent of total required open space as improved open space. In a Rural Transition site, up to 50 percent of the required open space may be improved open space. In determining the required amount of improved open space, the Hearing

Officer shall consider the characteristics of the development site and the surrounding area.

2. Open Space Use and Configuration.

a. Required open space areas shall not be used for residential, commercial, industrial or agricultural activities, except community gardens and golf courses.

b. At least 51 percent of required natural open space shall be configured into one contiguous area. Land with hillside constraints shall be prioritized for inclusion as required open space.

c. A street may be placed within the contiguous natural open space area if Hearing Officer finds such street is necessary to ensure adequate circulation or access. Such a street shall not be counted as a portion of the total required open space provided.

d. The contiguous natural open space area shall be contiguous with dedicated natural open space area(s) on adjoining lots or parcels of land as feasible.

e. If the development is located on a Rural Transition Site, the contiguous natural space area shall also be contiguous with the portions of the site perimeter that adjoin land within a rural land use designation as feasible.

f. For a land division:

i. The following types of improved open space shall be configured into, or contained within open space lots, unless owned in common and maintained by a home owner's or property owner's association:

(a) Parks, playgrounds, golf courses, and other recreational facilities;

(b) Riding, hiking, and mountain biking trails; and

(c) Community gardens.

ii. Natural open space shall be configured into separate open space lots if the land division is a density-controlled development as defined by Section 22.08.040, or if the land division is in a rural land use designation with 20 or more dwelling units and residential lots of 15,000 square feet or smaller.

4. Open Space Recordation.

a. If the development is a land division, required open space areas shall be shown on the tentative map and the final map or parcel map waiver, and shall be subsequently recorded on the final map or parcel map waiver as a fee lot or as an Open Space – Restricted Use Area in the office of the County Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk.

b. If the development is not a land division, required open space areas shall be shown on the site plan or lot line adjustment exhibit. All required open space shall be labeled as Open Space – Restricted Use Area in a covenant recorded in the office of the County Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk.

5. Open Space Ownership and Management. If the development is a land division and open space lots are provided or required by subsection F.2.f, a condition of approval shall be provided for ownership and management of the open space lots. This may be established through one or more of the following:

a. Dedication to a government entity, such as a county, city, state, federal, or joint powers authority;

b. Dedication to a non-profit land conservation organization that meets the Statement of Qualifications of Non-Profits Requesting to Hold Mitigation Land according to Government Code Section 65965;

c. A conservation easement that requires the open space to remain in perpetuity and extinguishes all future development rights; or

d. A maintenance agreement with a Home Owners' Association or Property Owner's Association where demonstrated that dedication to the entities above or a conservation easement is infeasible.

6. Design. The Hearing Officer may impose additional conditions pertaining to sensitive hillside design techniques.

7. Land Division. For a land division, the conditions may specify that any subsequent applications to modify the Conditional Use Permit pursuant to Part 11 of Chapter 22.56 need only relate to the lots or parcels of land affected by such modification.

G. Findings. The Hearing Officer shall approve an application for a Conditional Use Permit if the Hearing Officer finds that the application substantiates, in addition to those required by Section 22.56.090, the following findings:

1. That the proposed development preserves the physical integrity of HMAs to the greatest extent feasible, resulting in the least amount of impact to hillside resources, by:

a. Locating development outside of HMAs to the extent feasible,

b. Locating development in the portions of HMAs with the fewest hillside constraints, and

c. Using sensitive hillside design techniques;

2. That the proposed development preserves the scenic value of HMAs to the greatest extent feasible, resulting in the least amount of impact to on-site and off-site scenic views of slopes and ridgelines as well as views of other unique, site-specific aesthetic features of the hillside, by:

a. Locating development outside of HMAs to the extent feasible,

b. Locating development in the portions of HMAs with the fewest hillside constraints, and

c. Using sensitive hillside design techniques;

3. That the proposed development is compatible with community character, and provides required open space compatible with the characteristics of the development site and the surrounding area. Where modified:

a. For development in a rural land use designation, a greater percentage of improved open space is necessary for public safety or is aesthetically superior,

b. For streets within a natural open space area, such street is necessary to ensure adequate circulation or access, or

c. For ownership and maintenance by a home owner's or property owner's association, dedication or a conservation easement as provided herein is infeasible; and

4. That the proposed development is in substantial compliance with the Hillside Design Guidelines.

H. Development by the County or special district. The lead County department or the district shall prepare a written report that documents substantial compliance with the Hillside Design Guidelines. This report shall be included as part of the development's publicly available documents and included as part of any subsequent project reports to the Board of Supervisors and its attendant commissions. A report shall not be required for maintenance or operations activities or any activities listed in subsection D.8 above.



# **Attachment 4**



# HILLSIDE DESIGN GUIDELINES



2014

A Manual of Sensitive Design Measures for Hillside  
Management Areas



APRIL 2014 DRAFT FOR PUBLIC REVIEW

LOS ANGELES COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF REGIONAL PLANNING  
320 WEST TEMPLE STREET  
LOS ANGELES, CA 90012

# HILLSIDE DESIGN GUIDELINES

A MANUAL OF SENSITIVE DESIGN MEASURES FOR HILLSIDE MANAGEMENT AREAS

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## OVERVIEW

### 1. Countywide Policy and Hillside Development

The policies of the Los Angeles Countywide General Plan (General Plan) seek to preserve significant natural features such as hillside lands and promote a character of land development that is compatible with these lands. The Hillside Management Areas Ordinance (Ordinance) has been adopted to implement the County's policies that call for more sensitive and compatible hillside development. As part of the Ordinance, the Hillside Design Guidelines (Guidelines) have been created as a tool for achieving the County's goals for new land development proposals in hillside areas.

### 2. Purpose, Methodology and Emphasis

#### **Purpose**

The purpose of the Ordinance is to:

- *Preserve the physical integrity and scenic value of Hillside Management Areas;*
- *Provide open space; and*
- *Enhance community character.*

#### **Methodology**

Achieving a sensitive hillside development is a rational and integrated process of utilizing *preservation* and *creativity* in a project design. The "sensitive design techniques" or Design Measures (DMs) contained in the Guidelines were created according to this basic methodology.

The first step is to preserve all hillside areas by locating development on flat, non-hillside terrain. When development on the hillside cannot be avoided, the next step is to creatively locate development on the lowest and flattest portions of the hillside, preserving the most significant portions of the hillside. Last, when developing anywhere on the hillside, sensitive design techniques should be used in a creative manner that continues to preserve the integrity and value of the hillside. These three steps, when combined, provide the most effective process towards using the DMs to achieve sensitive design goals. Successfully employed, the DMs ensure that hillside development projects preserve hillsides, provide open space, and enhance community character through the use of specific planning, engineering, architecture, and landscaping design techniques.

#### **"Design" Emphasis**

The primary emphasis of the Ordinance is on *design* rather than a particular type of *land use*, since nearly any type of land use can potentially damage the hillside. Thus, the Ordinance broadly applies to the full range of land uses (i.e., commercial, residential, industrial, mixed, public facilities and others) and does not exempt any particular project solely based on land use. With the new emphasis on design, the Guidelines become a main component in determining the sensitivity of a hillside project design.

### 3. Ordinance Compliance and Applicability

The Guidelines will be used to determine if new development projects that are subject to the Ordinance substantially comply with the required findings of the Ordinance (refer to Appendix C). The Ordinance

applies to projects<sup>1</sup> that propose development within a Hillside Management Area (HMA), which the County defines as “land having natural slopes of 25% or greater.” It is important to note that when a project is subject to the Ordinance, *all areas of the project site* are subject to the Ordinance and not just those portions located on 25% or greater natural slopes. Thus, portions of development within the lower and flatter hillside areas (less than 25% slope) or located on already-graded slopes will also be required to substantially comply with the Ordinance and use sensitive design techniques.

#### 4. How to Use the Guidelines

##### **Mandatory Use: For Development Subject to the Ordinance**

County staff will use the Guidelines to determine substantial compliance, by reviewing the development project and evaluating it against the DMs contained in the Guidelines. (A design review checklist, which may be used to help determine substantial compliance, is found in Appendix D.) Projects should use those DMs that can be sensibly implemented in the project design. Due to the variety, size and complexity of development projects, there is no set number of DMs that a project must utilize. Instead, the project applicant should work with County staff to select the most appropriate DMs for the site. Some DMs may be more appropriate or feasible than others, depending on the type of project, location, size, complexity, and site constraints. County staff will also work with applicants to determine which DMs can be partially implemented or otherwise implemented as project conditions of approval. The Los Angeles County Hearing Officer or Regional Planning Commission is the final authority in determining which DMs are most appropriate and ultimately whether a project meets the findings of the Ordinance.

##### **Optional Use: For Other Development and Community Reference**

The Guidelines are optional but encouraged for all other hillside projects not subject to the Ordinance. For example, projects on less than 25% (“lesser”) slopes can have negative impacts on hillside terrain that could be minimized by following these Guidelines. Community members and others are also encouraged to use the Guidelines as a reference aid to study their own neighborhoods and identify areas that could benefit from the use of sensitive hillside design techniques.

#### 5. Other Policies and Standards

Other State and County policies and standards affect hillside development proposals. Like all discretionary projects reviewed by the County, hillside projects are evaluated for consistency with the broader range of General Plan policies, which include plan “elements” for air quality, conservation, land use, housing, mobility (transportation), parks and recreation, public services and facilities, economic development, noise, and safety. The County’s Healthy Design framework and standards could also affect a hillside development, due to the emphasis of Healthy Design on creating environments that promote more physical activity and are better for pedestrians and bicyclists. Another major influencing factor is the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) criteria, which, similar to the General Plan, uses a comprehensive approach in evaluating development while requiring mitigation measures be used for certain environmental impacts. Lastly, hillside projects are not only reviewed by Regional Planning but by all affected County departments, including Public Works, Fire, Parks and Recreation, and Public Health. Their respective requirements often affect the design of a hillside project.

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<sup>1</sup> Some types of projects are exempt from the Ordinance. To determine if a project is subject to the Ordinance, please consult the text of the Ordinance online at <http://planning.lacounty.gov/ord/adopted/>.

## 6. Factors Affecting Density and Buildout

Besides HMAs, other factors influence the design of a project and ultimately its desired density<sup>2</sup> or intensity of buildout:

- Land division standards (minimum lot size, lot width, street frontage and access)
- Zoning designation (minimum lot size/lot area per dwelling unit)
- Zoning standards (building setbacks, maximum lot coverage)
- Other site constraints (high fire hazard zones, drainage courses, wildlife habitat areas)
- Open space and parking requirements
- Public easements and dedications (such as for access or utilities)
- Community compatibility and neighbor concerns

By using the DMs contained in these Guidelines, a hillside project can balance many of these factors while achieving a more sensitive design that maintains a desired number of dwelling units or quantity of building floor area. As stated earlier, the emphasis of the Ordinance and Guidelines is on *design*, which, by itself, does not preclude higher intensities of development as long as the appropriate DMs are employed to offset the intensity<sup>3</sup>.

## 7. Land Divisions

Past development patterns within the unincorporated County suggest that the largest hillside projects involve land divisions (i.e., subdivisions of land). Land divisions often have large amounts of grading along with the creation of new lots, infrastructure and landscaping that could seriously impact hillside lands. Some of the DMs contained in the Guidelines will only apply to land divisions, while other DMs will likely be used for land divisions more frequently than for other types of projects. Lastly, land divisions, typically being the largest forms of land development, have the greatest opportunity to implement as many DMs as would be feasible on any type of project. Therefore, land divisions should stand out as the best examples of preserving hillside lands, providing open space, and enhancing community character through the implementation of sensitive hillside design techniques.

## 8. Updating the Guidelines

On a bi-annual basis (every two years), these Guidelines will be reviewed in order to assess if updates are needed. If any updates are proposed, Regional Planning will present the proposed changes to various County departments and stakeholders (such as the Land Development Advisory Committee and Development Advisory Group), and make publicly available online all proposed changes for a 30-day comment period. The changes will then be presented to the Regional Planning Commission as a discussion item at a public meeting. Any updates necessary prior to the next scheduled bi-annual review period will also follow the same procedure.

## SENSITIVE HILLSIDE DESIGN MEASURES

<sup>2</sup> The General Plan or Community/Area Plan land use designation ("plan category") establishes the appropriate residential density range for a project, including the maximum density.

<sup>3</sup> The final decision on the appropriate density or intensity of development rests with the hearing body after a careful consideration of staff's recommendation, public testimony, the applicant's request, and the particular aspects of each project.  
4.4.14

## 1. Site Planning

**Conserve natural land and hillside form, link open spaces, and promote an attractive pattern of development that complements the hillside terrain.**

- 1.1. Locate 50% or more of the project's buildings and developable lots within 500 feet (ft.) of existing sewer, water and roadway infrastructure.
- 1.2. Locate at least 50% of the development footprint on the flattest portions of the site<sup>4</sup> (i.e., those areas having slopes of less than 25%).
- 1.3. Utilize all previously graded areas on the site for new development to the greatest extent possible, before developing new areas, such that new development within natural areas is reduced.
- 1.4. For new land divisions, contain at least 75% of developable lots within small blocks.<sup>5</sup> *(Note: The purpose of this design measure is to avoid unattractive "superblocks" of development on the hillside and instead use smaller block sizes that are more distinguishable from each other and can better fit in with the natural topography.)*
- 1.5. For new land divisions, use lot clustering techniques<sup>6</sup> to reduce all single-family lot sizes to 15,000 square feet (sf.) or less.
- 1.6. For new land divisions, utilize a variety of smaller single-family lot sizes<sup>7</sup> (such as 5,000, 10,000 and 15,000 sf.) to allow different building layouts and sizes.
- 1.7. Differentiate pad elevations by 2 to 6 ft. throughout the site by street (or common driveway), by block and/or by lot.
- 1.8. Place the narrow side of the lot (or building pad) such that it allows the building façade to face the roadway.
- 1.9. Utilize terraced building pads on slopes that exceed 25%.
- 1.10. Preserve the most prominent and unique slopes, hilltops and ridgelines<sup>8</sup> on the site for recreational uses within dedicated (or common) open space areas.
- 1.11. Exceed the minimum Ordinance open space acreage requirement by 10% or more.
- 1.12. Preserve contiguous natural open space throughout the site, utilizing segments of land that are at least 150 ft. wide.
- 1.13. Utilize at least 25% of the overall project's improved open space for recreational purposes.
- 1.14. Locate and design improved open space as a buffer<sup>9</sup> between natural open space and development.

<sup>4</sup> "Site" referred to in the Design Measures means the "project site" or "subject property."

<sup>5</sup> Blocks should have a perimeter of ¼ mile (1,320 ft.) or less, measured from the roadway centerline.

<sup>6</sup> In those areas where lot clustering is allowed and compatible with community character.

<sup>7</sup> For the purposes of these Guidelines, "small" lot sizes are considered to be 15,000 square feet or less.

<sup>8</sup> When ridgelines are mapped "significant ridgelines" by the County, the stricter regulations applicable to those ridgelines shall apply and staff shall determine whether it is appropriate to give credit for this Design Measure.

4.4.14

- 1.15. Designate scenic vista points at prominent locations on the site, such as hilltops and ridgelines, providing amenities<sup>10</sup> at the points and making them accessible to the public.
- 1.16. Provide private (connector) trails that link together all of the project's open space areas<sup>11</sup> and connect to any onsite or offsite public trails.
- 1.17. For new land division blocks of development that exceed 800 ft. between intersections, design mid-block pedestrian thru-paths that connect to intervening streets, trails or open space areas, and make the paths accessible to the public.
- 1.18. Use other innovative site planning techniques not listed in this section that promote the overall design objective of the section.

## 2. Grading and Facilities

**Avoid mass landform alteration, preserve the physical shape of the hillside, and maintain pleasant views.**

- 2.1. For projects with more than 100,000 cubic yards of onsite earthwork, avoid any mass cut and fill grading that would result in a 25 ft. or greater elevation change from the existing natural grade to the finished manufactured grade anywhere on the site.
- 2.2. Use contoured grading lines that are consistent with the existing topography, generally avoiding lines that trace 45 to 90 degrees against the natural contour.
- 2.3. Utilize undulating banks for graded slopes in order to maintain the natural pattern of the topography to the greatest extent feasible.
- 2.4. Design the project's longer graded horizontal slope surfaces and slope increments (typically 300 or more ft. in length) to be variable in terms of height and spacing, in order to reproduce natural topographical patterns.
- 2.5. Locate water tanks and other similar types of structures that are 20 or more ft. tall so that their highest point is at least 50 ft. below the crest of the highest hilltop or ridgeline located within a 500 ft. radius distance of the structure.
- 2.6. Locate visually intrusive structures (such as water tanks) so that they are hidden from public views, placing them behind hills, buildings, landscaping, existing trees or other more appropriate and attractive screening objects.

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<sup>9</sup> Buffer should be at least 50 ft. wide.

<sup>10</sup> Such as decks, seating arrangements, overhead cover (trellis or gazebo), landscaping and shade trees, and information signs for landmarks or points of interest. (Note: Once installed, amenities should not result in any visible change to the land form, involve little or no grading, and should not have any visible grading. In addition, the placement of vista point amenities should not conflict with any adopted significant ridgeline ordinance unless supported by the local community or town council.)

<sup>11</sup> Typically, each individual open space area should be at least ½ acre or larger, and link open spaces in a manner that allows people to follow a trail from a more urban to a more rural setting, or vice-versa.

4.4.14

- 2.7. Avoid enclosing or surrounding new buildings with berms and block walls. Instead, enhance the attractiveness of the buildings in accordance with the other site planning, grading, road circulation, building and landscaping design measures contained in these Guidelines.
- 2.8. Design drainage facilities as multi-purpose site features<sup>12</sup> that are attractively landscaped, conserve water, improve water quality, and provide opportunity for recreational activity. *(Note: These features may be counted towards required open space acreage if designed to the County's satisfaction. However, they should not encourage additional grading impacts but rather should be located in areas already designated for improvement such as park sites, roadsides, or previously-graded flat areas.)*
- 2.9. Build retaining walls to be less than six ft. in exposed height, and terrace the walls where appropriate and in a manner that does not substantially increase visual impacts.
- 2.10. Use earth-tone colors and materials<sup>13</sup> for exposed hardscape surfaces such as block walls, retaining walls, drainage terraces and storm gutters.
- 2.11. Use more attractive designs and materials for any walls or fencing used to enclose public facilities (such as debris and retention basins), especially when such facilities are in highly-visible locations and/or are designed as "multi-purpose" site features. *(Note: Safety and security shall be maintained for the facilities when using a more attractive wall or fence design.)*
- 2.12. Use other innovative grading and public facility design techniques not mentioned in this section that promote the overall design objective of the section.

### 3. Road Circulation

**Preserve the physical shape of the hillside, maintain good connectivity, and provide scenic roadway views.**

- 3.1. Provide at least 2 points of paved roadway access<sup>14</sup> to a County highway (major or secondary) for any project (or portion of development) greater than 50 dwelling units and 10 acres in size. *(Note: This practice should only be considered when the second road connection will not require a substantial amount of additional grading; special consideration may be given when connecting to an adjacent community or providing access to community services such as schools and parks.)*
- 3.2. Locate and design new roadways to follow the existing natural slope contours, avoiding mass landform alteration and excessive grading.<sup>15</sup>
- 3.3. Utilize private drives instead of public roadways on 50% or more of the project road circulation system to allow slightly higher gradients (up to 15%) that result in less grading and better conformance to natural slope contours. *(Note: Private drives should conform to the Los Angeles County Private Drives and Traffic Calming Manual, and should not eliminate sidewalks or reduce sidewalk connections throughout the development.)*

<sup>12</sup> Subject to the approval of Los Angeles County Public Works.

<sup>13</sup> Subject to the approval of Los Angeles County Regional Planning.

<sup>14</sup> May be a private roadway or fire lane but shall be un-gated, accessible by the public, and of sufficient width to meet Los Angeles County Fire Department requirements.

<sup>15</sup> Subject to the sight distance, signing, striping and marking requirements of Los Angeles County Public Works.

4.4.14

- 3.4. Use undulating patterns and varying grades<sup>16</sup> for roadway segments exceeding 1,000 ft. in length.
- 3.5. Connect roadways to form blocks wherever feasible (2,000 sf. or less block perimeter), such that at least 75% of the development footprint (to include public facilities) is contained within blocks. *(Note: The purpose of this is to provide good access and connectivity for safety reasons, and to use roadways to buffer development from natural vegetated areas.)*
- 3.6. Use cul-de-sacs in limited instances<sup>17</sup>, such as where road connections would require grading into 50% or greater slopes or grading into 25% or greater slopes for a linear distance of more than 500 ft.
- 3.7. Provide unpaved trail or paved pedestrian path thru-connections for all cul-de-sacs. *(Note: Fee-dedicated strips are recommended instead of easements on private lots.)*
- 3.8. Utilize “edge” (single-loaded) roads along at least 50% of the development perimeter, in areas with steep hillside terrain, and to buffer development from natural open space.
- 3.9. Place all new roadways and paved driveways at least 100 ft. below the crest of the tallest hilltop or ridgeline located onsite, or located offsite within 500 ft. of the project boundary.
- 3.10. Design “split” roadways or use landscaped medians to preserve unique or important natural features (such as oak trees or rock outcroppings).
- 3.11. Use bridge design techniques that are distinctive and attractive, maximize the preservation of natural watercourses, and allow easy wildlife migration beneath the bridge (minimum 6 ft. of vertical and horizontal clearance recommended).
- 3.12. Use a system of common driveways for vehicle circulation within the project that has narrower vehicle pavement widths, and results in less grading and less visual hardscape impact<sup>18</sup>.
- 3.13. Use other innovative roadway circulation design techniques not mentioned in this section that promote the overall design Objective.

#### 4. Building Design

**Promote attractive views through building siting and orientation, and use of building materials and colors that complement natural hillside features.**

- 4.1. Place structures and/or limit their height so that their rooflines are equal to or below the elevation of the roadway grade of the development above.
- 4.2. Utilize terraced (split-level) or “cantilevered” building designs wherever feasible on 25% or greater slopes. *(Note: Split-level homes should have a second floor exterior that is visibly set-back from the first floor exterior so that a terraced profile can be seen from the public view.)*

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<sup>16</sup> Subject to the maximum allowed street grade requirements of Los Angeles County Public Works.

<sup>17</sup> To preserve hillside terrain. The use of cul-de-sacs on flatter (or non-hillside) land should be avoided, as it creates unnecessary impediments to road connectivity.

<sup>18</sup> Subject to the approval of the Los Angeles County Fire Department. Must be used for 50% or more of the project's internal vehicle circulation system and not exceed a vehicle pavement width of 26 ft.

- 4.3. Use a variety of house, garage and other building placements that better responds to the hillside terrain and created a more interesting and attractive streetscape.
- 4.4. Limit building heights to 2 stories (or 25 ft.) when sited on 25% or greater slopes or when the building pad elevation is located less than 50 ft. below the crest of the nearest hilltop or ridgeline located within a linear radius distance of 500 ft.
- 4.5. Use a wide variety of architectural treatments and materials<sup>19</sup> for the facades and exteriors of buildings that are located in highly-visible areas on the site (such as main entryways, higher elevations, and isolated lots or building pads surrounded by open space).
- 4.6. Use pitched roofs (at least 1.5:1) and shingles for new residences.<sup>20</sup>
- 4.7. Utilize architectural design techniques to screen rooftop mechanical equipment from public view.
- 4.8. Design building exteriors with stonework and/or woodwork that matches rock and tree varieties found in visible locations on the site or in the surrounding community within a distance of 1 mile.
- 4.9. For business signs<sup>21</sup>, do the following: a) construct the sign to be no larger than 3 ft. by 8 ft. oriented vertical or horizontal (for façade signs placed above the first story entrance) and no larger than 2 ft. by 5 ft. oriented vertical or horizontal (for blade signs placed to hang over a sidewalk); and b) use materials that have an attractive finish, avoiding plastic. *(Note: The purpose of this DM is to minimize the visual clutter of commercial development in hillsides, and promote attractive design features that complement the natural character of the hillside.)*
- 4.10. Design monument signs to be constructed with an attractive finish of wood, stone, brick and/or decorative concrete, and to be no more than 6 ft. in height. *(Note: The placement of all monument signs shall accommodate an adequate line of sight to the adjacent roadway.)*
- 4.11. Locate and design all building and freestanding signs so that they project upward no higher than the roofline of the building (or nearest adjacent building), and do not disrupt sightlines to the horizon.
- 4.12. Illuminate signs from the exterior, with downward-projecting, hooded light fixtures that minimize light trespass.
- 4.13. Use other innovative building design techniques not mentioned in this section that promote the overall design objective of the section.

## 5. Landscaping

**Preserve existing vegetation, conserve water and provide attractive settings within the developed areas of the hillside project.**

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<sup>19</sup> Such as metal, stone, wood, brick, plaster, and colored concrete.

<sup>20</sup> Subject to approval by the Los Angeles County Fire Department.

<sup>21</sup> Applies to business signs that are attached to the building façade or building wall.

4.4.14

- 5.1. Retain and incorporate 50% or more of existing onsite trees and woodlands (particularly native and drought-tolerant species, and oak woodlands) into the overall project landscaping plan<sup>22</sup>.
- 5.2. Avoid all healthy<sup>23</sup> oak tree encroachments and removals through the sensitive location and design of development.
- 5.3. Landscape at least 50% of all improved open space areas in a manner that, collectively, accomplishes at least 3 or more of the following: a) restores habitat pursuant to a mitigation plan; b) conserves water 10% beyond the State requirement; c) improves water quality beyond a State or County requirementd) provides shade for pedestrians and bicyclists; e) enhances slope stability<sup>24</sup>; f) increases fire protection; g) provides active recreation (exercise) space..
- 5.4. Utilize native and drought-tolerant trees, shrubs and ground cover over all exposed graded areas.
- 5.5. Landscape all graded slopes and improved open spaces<sup>25</sup> at a minimum ratio of 1 new shrub per 50 sf. and 1 new tree per 625 sf.
- 5.6. Vary the height, shape, placement and color of appropriate landscaping materials throughout the site.
- 5.7. Use a wide variety of native and non-invasive plant species within the project's improved open space areas, matching or exceeding the variety found onsite (pre-development) and listed in the project's plant surveys and biota reports, if required.
- 5.8. Plant new native and drought-tolerant trees and shrubs of a sufficient interval, size, shape and height to screen hardscape surfaces and unadorned features that create "dead space" such as garage doors and blank walls.
- 5.9. Use plant materials and irrigation systems that, combined, conserve water 20% or more beyond State and County requirements.
- 5.10. Reapply the graded topsoil to manufactured slopes and improved open space areas.
- 5.11. Use other innovative landscaping design techniques not mentioned in this section that promote the overall design Objective.

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<sup>22</sup> May require consultation with the County biologist prior to conceptual landscaping plan approval.

<sup>23</sup> As determined by a qualified arborist. Only applies to oaks that are the minimum Oak Tree Ordinance size or larger.

<sup>24</sup> Must landscape all slopes  $\geq$  5 ft. high.

<sup>25</sup> Excludes hardscape areas, trails and playing fields.

4.4.14

## APPENDICES

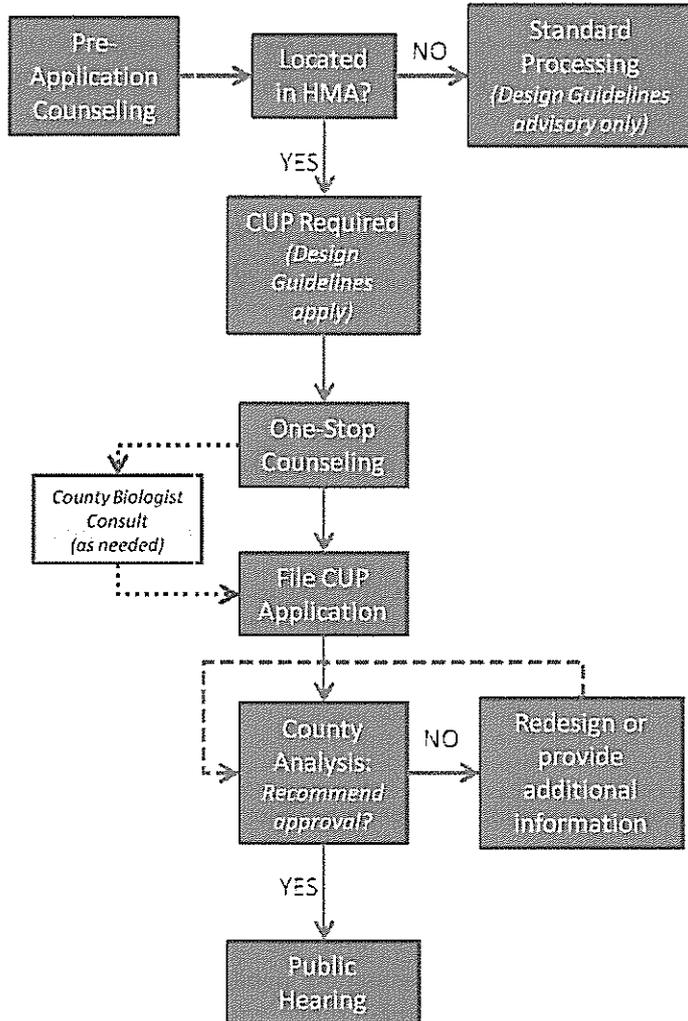
### A. List of Design Exhibits

**Design exhibits are necessary to evaluate the proposed development in accordance with County policies, code requirements and case processing procedures. Some projects may not need to provide all exhibits listed below, but rather on an as-needed basis at the discretion of County staff when applicable.**

- Site Plan (Exhibit "A") – A plan that shows existing contour intervals (10 ft. or less), existing development and proposed development, to include lots, structures, roadways, driveways, grading and building pads. Should also depict roadway and retaining wall cross sections.
- Site Profile – A scaled drawing that shows a cross-section view of the site from one edge to the other, showing the location of all development in the hillside and the overall extent of hillside encroachment and landform alteration. *(Note: More than one cross section may be required in order to accurately assess hillside impacts.)*
- Block Elevation – (For land divisions or larger multi-unit developments as applicable) A drawing that shows a row of multiple house (or other building) elevations as they would appear to the public from a lower vantage point on or adjacent to the site. May also include depictions of landscape screening.
- Landscape Plan – A color plan that shows all proposed landscaped areas, to include plant materials and any pedestrian and aesthetic features such as walkways, recreation equipment, fountains, gardens, etc. Should also depict existing vegetation that will be preserved, as well as oak or other mitigation trees (if known).
- Fuel Modification Plan – A specific type of landscape plan that shows all fuel modification zone boundaries, distances between boundaries, and types of vegetation, as required by the Los Angeles County Fire Department. (Please refer to the Fire Department's separate guidelines when creating this plan.)
- Open Space Exhibit – A simplified site plan showing all proposed lots, roadways and grading only; also depicts, numbers and labels the restricted-use areas and separate lots to be preserved as OS; distinguishes between different types of OS and provides a legend that describes each type of OS; and provides a table listing the approximate acreage of the individual OS types and the quantity and percentage of improved (disturbed) and undisturbed OS within each lot, and for the overall project.
- Slope Map – A complete site plan (road and retaining wall cross sections excluded) that depicts the three different slope ranges (<25%, 25-49%, and ≥50%) according to a color scheme of green – yellow – red, respectively.
- Buildout Simulation – A color exhibit that shows how new development would impact existing hillside views. It typically depicts a "before" and "after" perspective view of the hillside(s), and includes realistic or semi-realistic photos or renderings of the actual buildings and landscaping that will be used in the development, showing how they will affect the hillside views.
- Viewshed Analysis – A site plan or cross section showing the specific degree angle of view from one or more vantage points on the site. The "sight-line" is drawn from the point of view (POV) to some object of observation (such as a road intersection or ridge-top) depicted at some distance from the POV on or off-site. The sight line will show any intervening features that may block the line of sight.

**B. HMA Ordinance Process**

This process flowchart is for **basic information only**. Please consult with Regional Planning staff for a more detailed explanation of the entire process.



C. HMA Ordinance Findings

<p><b>HMA CUP BURDEN OF PROOF</b>  <b>(Section 22.56.215 of the Los Angeles County Zoning Code)</b>  <i>For each item, on a separate sheet, please describe in detail how the project satisfies the specific Finding. Provide an explanation of how the project meets each hillside CUP Finding. (Note: The project must also satisfy the standard CUP Findings contained in Section 22.56.090.)</i></p>
<p><b>Finding 1:</b> That the proposed development preserves the physical integrity of HMAs to the best extent feasible, resulting in the least amount of impact to hillside resources, by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. Locating development outside of HMAs to the extent feasible;</li> <li>B. Locating development in the portions of HMAs with the fewest hillside constraints; and</li> <li>C. Using sensitive hillside design techniques.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Finding 2:</b> That the proposed development preserves the scenic value of HMAs to the greatest extent feasible, resulting in the least amount of impact to on-site and offsite scenic views of slopes and ridgelines as well as views of other unique, site-specific aesthetic features of the hillside, by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. Locating development outside of HMAs to the extent feasible;</li> <li>B. Locating development in the portions of HMAs with the fewest hillside constraints; and</li> <li>C. Using sensitive hillside design techniques.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Finding 3:</b> That the proposed development is compatible with community character, and provides required open space compatible with the characteristics of the development site and the surrounding area. Where modified:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. For development in a rural land use designation, a greater percentage of improved open space is necessary for public safety or is aesthetically superior;</li> <li>B. For streets within natural open space area, such street is necessary to ensure adequate circulation or access; or</li> <li>C. For ownership and maintenance by a home owner's or property owner's association, dedication or a conservation easement as provided in the Ordinance is infeasible.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Finding 4:</b> That the proposed development is in substantial compliance with the Hillside Design Guidelines.</p>

**D. Hillside Project Design Checklist**

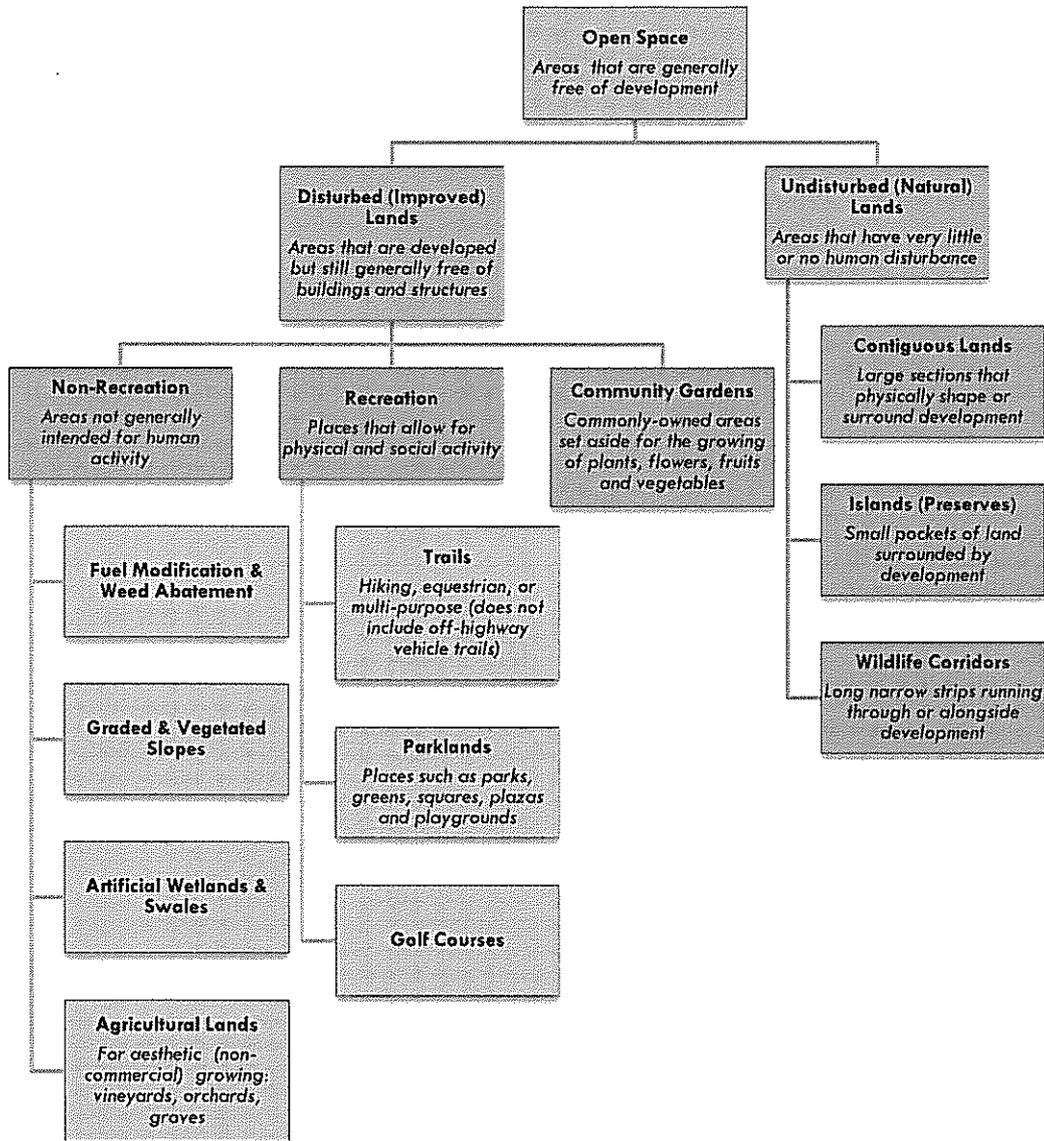
Use this checklist to inventory all Design Measures incorporated within a hillside development project. This checklist is only a summary and does not replace the full text contained in the Hillside Design Guidelines. Please carefully read the full text of the Guidelines before completing.

HILLSIDE PROJECT DESIGN CHECKLIST			Date:		
			Project Number:		
	Design Measure	Description	Shown on plans	Does not apply	Notes (Provide information such as: which design measures are key to the project; which are only partially satisfied; and which will be satisfied through conditions of approval.)
SITE PLANNING	1.1	Locate development near existing infrastructure	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	1.2	Locate development in flattest areas	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	1.3	Utilize previously graded or disturbed areas	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	1.4	Create smaller development blocks	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	1.5	Reduce lot sizes to <15,000 sf.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	1.6	Vary lot sizes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	1.7	Vary pad elevations	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	1.8	Place the narrow side of the lot or building facing the street	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	1.9	Utilize terraced building pads	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	1.10	Preserve hillside features for recreation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	1.11	Exceed minimum OS requirements by ≥10%	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	1.12	Preserve contiguous undisturbed OS	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	1.13	Utilize ≥25% of improved OS for recreation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	1.14	Provide OS buffers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	1.15	Create scenic vista points	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	1.16	Provide private (connector) trails	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	1.17	Design mid-block thru-paths	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	1.18	Use other innovative site planning techniques	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
GRADING AND FACILITIES	2.1	Avoid mass cut/fill grading with great elevation change	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	2.2	Use contoured cut/fill grading lines	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	2.3	Utilize undulating banks for graded slopes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	2.4	Design variable horizontal slopes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

	2.5	Locate public facilities (lower height)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	2.6	Locate public facilities (screening)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	2.7	Avoid berms and block walls	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	2.8	Design multi-purpose drainage facilities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	2.9	Build retaining walls <6 ft./terrace	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	2.10	Use earth-tone colors and materials	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	2.11	Use attractive fence design & materials	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	2.12	Use other innovative grading/facility techniques	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
ROAD CIRCULATION	3.1	Provide at least 2 points of paved access	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	3.2	Locate/design roadways to follow natural contours	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	3.3	Use private drives for hillside preservation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	3.4	Use undulating patterns and varying grades	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	3.5	Connect roadways to form blocks	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	3.6	Use cul-de-sacs in limited instances	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	3.7	Provide trail/path connections for all cul-de-sacs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	3.8	Utilize "edge" (single-loaded) roads	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	3.9	Locate roadways >100 ft. below hilltops/ridges	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	3.10	Design split roadways/landscaped medians	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	3.11	Use bridge design techniques for preservation/migration	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	3.12	Use private drives instead of public roadways for less grading	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	3.13	Use other innovative road circulation techniques	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
BUILDING DESIGN	4.1	Place/limit structures so that rooflines don't protrude	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	4.2	Utilize terraced (split-level) building designs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	4.3	Vary building setbacks and orientation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	4.4	Limit building height to two stories (25 ft.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	4.5	Vary façade treatments and materials	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	4.6	Use pitched roofs and shingles	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	4.7	Utilize architectural screening techniques	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

	4.8	Design with stonework/woodwork	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	4.9	Use smaller business signs with natural materials	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	4.10	Use smaller monument signs with natural materials	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	4.11	Limit sign height/view projection	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	4.12	Illuminate signs from exterior/reduce light trespass	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	4.13	Use other innovative building design techniques	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
LANDSCAPING	5.1	Retain and use ≥50% onsite trees	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	5.2	Avoid all oak tree encroachments and removals	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	5.3	Landscape all graded slopes/improved OS beyond requirements	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	5.4	Completely hide all exposed graded surfaces	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	5.5	Landscape ≥50% at listed shrub/tree ratios	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	5.6	Vary the height/placement/color of landscaping	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	5.7	Use native/non-invasive species	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	5.8	Plant trees/shrubs to screen hardscape	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	5.9	Use water-efficient plants/irrigation ≥20% beyond requirements	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	5.10	Reapply graded topsoil to manufactured slopes/improved OS	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	5.11	Use other innovative landscape design techniques	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
		<b>TOTAL (67)</b>	—	—	

F. Open Space Types



F. List of Countywide Hillside Management Policies

[TO BE ADDED]

### G. Screening Plant Materials Table

**[TO BE ADDED]** *A table that lists and describes various species of plants suitable for canopy shape (screening ability). All species listed on the table are examples only and to be selected on a site-specific basis.*

#### H. Earth Tone Color Palette

**[TO BE ADDED]** *Visual examples of materials with earth-tone colors to be selected on a site-specific basis.*

## REFERENCES

- 1980 Los Angeles Countywide General Plan
- 1980 Los Angeles County Hillside Design Guidelines
- Title 21, Los Angeles County Code (Subdivision Ordinance)
- Title 22, Los Angeles County Code (Zoning Ordinance)
- 2009 LA County Private Drives and Traffic Calming Manual
- 2011 Invasive and Flammable Plant List (<http://planning.lacounty.gov/green/>)
- Drought Tolerant Plant List (<http://planning.lacounty.gov/green/>)

## GLOSSARY

**Berm** – A graded, “rounded” slope at the top of a hill that helps to screen a development feature from view. Development features that are “bermed” are typically screened or partially screened from public views.

**Building Pad** – A portion of a site graded flat and level to contain a new building (such as a home) and in some cases accessory structures (such as a garage, guest house or horse stable).

**Constraints, Hillside** – Topographic features such as slopes, hilltops, and ridgelines that may contain hazards and, when developed, cause noticeable alteration of the topographic feature and its views.

**Cut** – See “Excavation” below.

**Design Measure (DM)** - Any of the individual numbered items (such as “1.1” or “3.8”) contained in these Guidelines that provide a specific standard for implementing a sensitive hillside design.

**Developable Lot** – A lot in which it is permissible to construct a commercial, residential, industrial, public facility, or mixed-use structure, or a structure accessory to these primary uses. Conversely, “non-developable” lots are typically restricted from development in order to preserve open space, provide access, or restrict building for safety reasons.

**Development** – The construction or expansion of any structure or impervious surface, such as hardscape; construction or expansion of any street, or highway, or other access road; construction or expansion of any infrastructure, such as pipes, water and sewerage lines, drainage facilities, telephone lines, and electrical power transmission and distribution lines; grading, such as cut, fill, or combination thereof, including off-site grading; removal of any native vegetation, including fuel modification; subdivisions; and lot line adjustments.

**Development Footprint** – The total surface area of the project site in which “Development” (defined above) is contained.

**Earth Tone Color** – A color that draws from a palette of browns, tans, grays, greens, and reds, and which is muted and flat in emulation of the natural colors found in dirt, rocks, and vegetation.

**Edge Road** – A roadway located on the outer boundaries of a development that acts as a buffer between development and natural open space areas of the site or between development and adjacent undeveloped or improved open space areas off the site.

**Excavation** – The removal of earth materials by artificial means, resulting in a lowering of the existing grade.

**Fill** – The deposition of earth materials by artificial means, resulting in a rise in the existing grade.

**Grade** – The vertical location of the ground surface. Also see “Grade, Finished” and “Grade, Natural” below.

**Grade, Finished** – The grade of the site at the conclusion of all grading efforts.

**Grade, Natural** – The grade prior to all grading efforts.

**Hillside** – A portion of sloping terrain that is visually distinguished by a vertical rise or climb from a flat base of land (the “toe” of the slope), and generally ends in a crest or apex that forms a hilltop or ridgeline.

**Hillside Management Area (HMA)** – As defined in the Ordinance, any hillside with a 25% or greater natural slope.

**Infrastructure** – See Public Facilities.

**Landscaping** – Plants (i.e., trees, shrubs and organic ground cover material such as grass or bark mulch) and associated decorative/hardscape elements such as walkways, fountains, ponds, gravel and rocks.

**Open Space (OS)** – Site areas generally free of buildings and pavement, and preserved in a natural state or otherwise improved for recreation, small-scale community agriculture/gardens, safety or aesthetic purposes.

**Ordinance** – The Hillside Management Areas Ordinance as adopted in Title 22 of the Los Angeles County Code.

**Parkland(s)** – A type of improved recreation open space available for public or common use, such as parks, greens, squares, plazas and playgrounds.

**Plant Materials Table** – The LA County Plant Materials Table, located in the Appendix.

**Preserve** – In the context of these Guidelines, a preserve is a natural open space area that is completely surrounded by development. Preserves typically contain sensitive plant and/or animal species.

**Public Facilities** – Infrastructure (except for “Roadways,” which are defined separately below) such as water tanks, drainage basins, debris basins, and water treatment plants that serve the project and/or surrounding community and that may be maintained by the County or a separate entity (such as a homeowners association).

**Public Use** – A portion of the site, which may be maintained by the County or a separate entity (such as a homeowners association), that allows access to the general public in accordance with posted rules and procedures.

**Roadway** – A type of infrastructure that may be any of the following: Public highways, streets and alleys; private and future streets; private streets; private drives; private driveway and fire lanes (when serving 5 or more lots or dwelling units); and common driveways 20 ft. or more in paved width (when serving 5 or more lots or dwelling units).

**Slope** – An inclined ground surface, the inclination of which is expressed as a ratio of horizontal distance to vertical distance.

**Structure** – Anything built or erected which requires a fixed location on the ground, or is attached to something having a fixed location on the ground, such as a wall, building, porch, deck, swimming pool or carport.

**Terraced Pad/Building** – A single contiguous pad or building that has two or more distinct grades, one higher than the other, and is designed to fit “into” the hillside such that less vertical (cut) grading and landform alteration results.

**Wildlife Corridor** – A narrow stretch of contiguous natural open space that is typically 50 to 250 feet wide, and predominantly for wildlife travel adjacent to or through the project site from one end to another. Smaller portions within the corridor may be improved, such as for utility pads or trails.

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