

CHAPTER 22

DESIGN GUIDELINES FOR THE HILLTOP CHARACTER AREA



The Hilltop Character Area contains buildings along Hilltop Road that were historically associated with a recreational ski area known as Hill Top. The area is at the southern edge of the Downtown Truckee study area and reflects the boundary as defined in the Downtown Specific Plan. A significant portion of the land is undeveloped; however, there is some high density housing, a restaurant and the historic ski hill.

Historic Significance

The hill that makes up part of this Character Area was the site of a ski jump that was used during

Truckee's Winter Carnivals. At the base of the ski jump was the Hill Top Lodge, dating to 1928. The lodge, constructed from railroad ties, was part of the ski area begun by railroad developer Charles Crocker. Hill Top was a center for winter activities and was home to one of the nation's first mechanical ski lifts. Features associated with the South River Character Area, such as the toboggan lift from the Ice Palace, also occur within the boundaries of this Character Area. Hilltop is associated with the significant recreational development that occurred in this particular portion of the community during 1910-1950.



Further up the ridge Hill Top Lodge, dating to 1928, is associated with the significant recreational development that occurred in this particular portion of the community.

☞ Please see page 91 (Chapter 13: General Guidelines for New Buildings) for a map that shows this Character Area in its Truckee context.

Historic Character Description

Historically this area was made up of isolated buildings that evolved into clusters of development centered around open space. Generally there was one larger element, such as a lodge, and a series of subordinate outbuildings. The configuration of these buildings was informal and responded to the natural landscape and topography.

Current Character

Much of the Hilltop Character Area is perceived as open space. Undeveloped land here is in a relatively natural state, which contrasts with the South River Character Area below. Since this area is quite visible from viewpoints lower on the river basin floor and from across the valley, concern should be given to the visual impact of any project upon the overall perception of open space. In some locations, steep slopes may also present technical construction problems and visual impacts may be especially significant. In addition, remnants from the ski industry, including lifts and cleared paths representing former ski runs, are present in the area.

Some key design characteristics of this Character Area include:

- Trees and open space
- Views to and from much of Truckee
- Steep slopes
- Single-family residences from the 1940s
- Gabled or hipped roof forms
- Horizontal wood siding
- Simple detailing

Design Goals & Policies

The Hilltop Character Area should develop with buildings that minimize their visual impacts on the hillside.

The design goals for the Hilltop Character Area are:

- To maintain the open space character
- To locate buildings around open spaces, rather than align along streets
- To cluster new buildings around historic ski spaces
- To preserve the buildings that date from the 1940s
- To avoid the cut-and-fill technique for building on steep slopes
- To avoid the removal of existing landscaping and to provide adequate, new landscaping that may help reduce a building's perceived size
- To reduce the visual impacts of new developments, including additions
- To relate to the character of buildings located below these slopes through building form, material, size and informal clustering arrangements
- To continue the use of traditional building materials

Design Guidelines for New Construction

1. Street Layout

The Hilltop Character Area establishes the outermost edge of development in the town. The platting and placement of buildings should result in projects that blend with the natural hillside and which are minimally visible from within the core of the town. The location of the Hilltop Character Area above the core of the town, along with the steep terrain, increase the visibility of streets and driveways in the area. The area should establish a gradual change from the core to the hillside. Of special concern are any areas where the topography requires substantial cuts and retaining structures. Any new street should be curvilinear and informal in design.

A. Locate buildings in line with existing contours.

B. Minimize the visual appearance of all new roads, as seen from lower viewpoints in town.

- 1) Although some road layouts are established in this area, consider ways to minimize disturbance of natural topography wherever new roads or drives are contemplated.
- 2) Keep cut-and-fill to a minimum.
- 3) Consider schemes that provide for compact streets and shared drives to minimize the area of paved (impervious) surfaces.



Consider schemes that provide for compact streets and shared drives to minimize the area of paved (impervious) surfaces.

References:

☞ See also Chapter 10: Design Guidelines for Site Features and Chapter 13: General Guidelines for New Buildings.

2. Positive Open Space

The hillside areas are presently perceived as open space. This perception should be continued as much as possible even as the area develops. Projects should be planned to maximize the perception of this open space.

A. Arrange buildings in groups that will maximize shared open space.

- 1) Clustered housing, zero lot lines and other creative planning concepts may be appropriate to create large areas of shared open space.
- 2) Include open spaces with special amenities that encourage use, such as benches and sitting areas.
- 3) Consider clustering parking areas to reduce paved surface areas and allow increased areas of shared open space.
- 4) Plans that include some lots without street frontage may be considered.

B. If several buildings are proposed for the site, the spaces between the buildings should contribute to the overall positive open space of the project and the area.

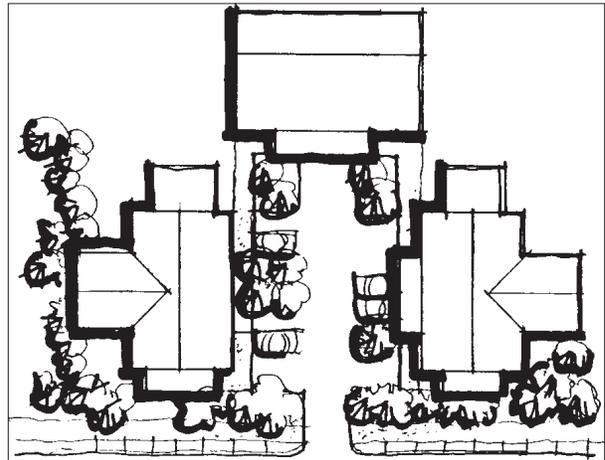
- 1) Buildings should be positioned on the site in a manner that minimizes the apparent mass and scale and maximizes open space.

C. Connect open spaces among large projects.

- 1) Where many projects abut one another, open spaces should be organized in a manner which maximizes their areas.
- 2) Open spaces also should connect with any trails or other open spaces in the vicinity, especially to Ponderosa Palisades and the Truckee River.



Arrange buildings in groups that will maximize shared open space.



Consider clustering parking areas to reduce paved surface areas and allow increased areas of shared open space.



Views from the Hilltop Character Area into the core of town are very important and should be preserved.

3. Views

Views from the area into the core of town and from the town to the Hilltop Character Area are very important and should be preserved. The impact that structures and site elements could have on these view corridors is great and should be avoided. Careful planning of any proposed projects is a must. In particular, the preservation of key view corridors along historic lines of lifts, ski runs, and tows should be considered. These areas could be utilized as pedestrian routes or links to open space.

A. Preserve views to scenic features.

- 1) Consider positioning buildings on the site to maintain significant view corridors.
- 2) Balancing view opportunities with traditional setbacks found in older residential neighborhoods is encouraged.
- 3) Alternative positioning of buildings on the site may be considered when doing so would maintain significant view corridors.
- 4) Site plans for new construction should include consideration of retaining view opportunities for future projects.
- 5) Landscaping is encouraged, and in some situations, may be required in order to mitigate other visual impacts. Such landscaping, when mature, should maintain existing views and solar access corridors.



The preservation of key view corridors along historic lines of lifts, ski runs, and tows should be considered.

4. Building Orientation

New projects in the Hilltop Character Area should respect the historic natural setting which may be seen from lower viewpoints, and therefore any project has the potential for significant visual impact on the overall character of the town. Visual impacts of any hillside development should be minimized.

A. Cluster buildings around open space similar to the traditional orientation in the area.

B. Orient buildings on the site to complement the natural topography.



Orient buildings on the site to complement the natural topography.

5. Landscaping

Although most projects are encouraged to provide landscaping and screening on site, the use of typical ornamental materials may not be appropriate in the Hilltop Character Area. Typical hillside planting materials are natural and very modest in character. Simple grasses and trees should be considered for landscaping materials.

A. Use plant materials that blend with the hillside.

- 1) Landscape schemes that are rough, natural and/or subdued in character are encouraged.
- 2) Extensive areas of exotic plants and sod are discouraged where they would be visible from the public right-of-way.
- 3) Preserve existing plant materials of significant size (e.g., including trees, shrubs and other natural landscape features) in place or relocate them within the site.

B. Preserve existing tree canopy as much as feasible.



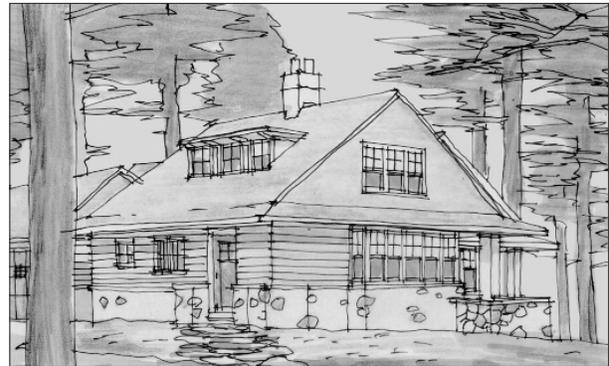
Landscape schemes that are rough, natural and/or subdued in character are encouraged.

6. Mass and Size

The mass and size of buildings in Truckee are among the greatest concerns for compatible construction in the community. The natural, hillside character of the Hilltop Character Area is important and should also be maintained. Buildings in this Character Area will have significant impacts on the historic structures below and the perception of natural open space surrounding the town. These impacts should be minimized. Visually overpowering building forms should be avoided.

A. Use building masses that reinforce the perception of the natural topography.

- 1) Buildings that cut into slopes are encouraged where they can help minimize the perceived mass and size.
- 2) Step buildings down at hillside edges, to minimize visual impacts and reduce the apparent height.
- 3) Avoid placing tall buildings at high points on the site or in other highly visible areas.



The natural, hillside character of the Hilltop Character Area is important and should also be maintained.

7. Building and Roof Form

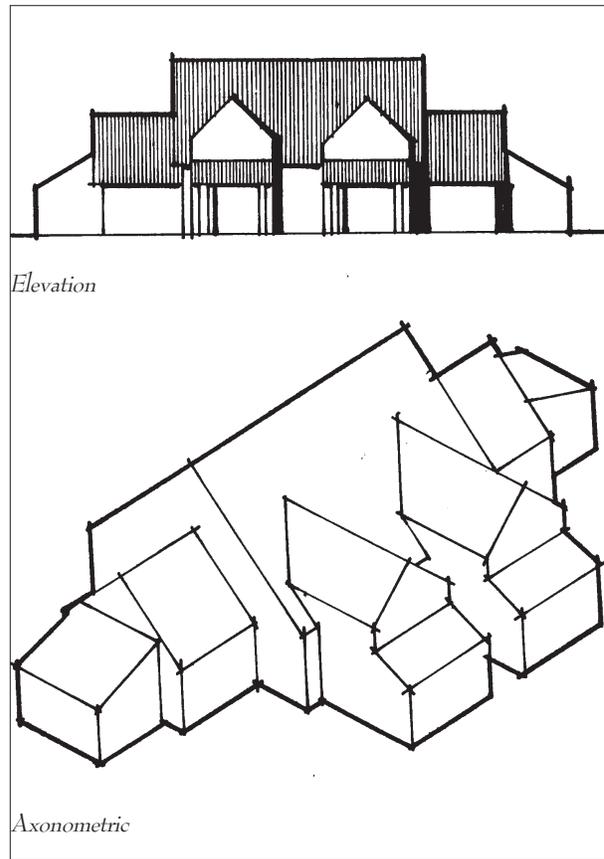
Traditionally, simple building forms appeared in Truckee. Most were modest rectangular shapes. In some cases, larger masses were achieved by combining two or more simple masses, in which case one of the masses typically appeared to be the "dominant" element, while others appeared to be attached to it. The "integrity" of the dominant form was a distinctive feature. Contemporary design approaches are encouraged; however, buildings should appear to be similar in scale to those found traditionally and visual continuity should be reinforced through the use of similar materials, proportions and shapes to those found throughout the town. It is especially important that buildings create a gentle transition in scale along boundaries with other Character Areas.

A. Use building sizes that will appear to be similar in scale to those found traditionally in town and convey a sense of human scale.

- 1) As seen from the town center, buildings should also appear similar in scale with the town core.
- 2) In order to break up the perceived mass of larger structures, divide them into modules that are similar in size to buildings seen traditionally.

B. Buildings which are near the South River and River Character Areas should be similar in mass and scale to the adjacent residential structures to create a gentle transition to the Character Areas.

- 1) Maintain the proportions of buildings found traditionally in Truckee, to protect the scale and character of the Character Areas.
- 2) On lots that abut residential structures, building forms should step down.
- 3) Provide one- and two-story elements at property edges.



In order to break up the perceived mass of larger structures, divide them into modules that are similar in size to buildings seen traditionally.

C. Building heights on larger projects should be a variety, including some one- and two-story elements at the edges.

D. Large lots should be developed with several buildings, rather than a single structure to help reduce the perceived scale of the project.

- 1) The area between the buildings should contribute to the overall positive open space of the site.

8. Lighting

Those in the other parts of Truckee can easily see all of the Hilltop Character Area. Light emanating from within a building can have an effect upon the character of the town at night. Large areas of glass can become sources of glare and can affect perception of the night sky. Lighting should be shielded or otherwise minimized.

A. Reduce the amount of light emanating from a development in the hillside.

- 1) Lighting from buildings located higher on hillsides are more visible at night and may affect the night character of the community.
- 2) Large areas of glass in exterior walls that may allow "spill-over" of interior light sources, resulting in nighttime glare, should be used with caution.