

MONTEREY COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION

Meeting: January 9, 2008. Time: 9:00 A.M	Agenda Item No.: 4
Project Description: Update the Staking and Flagging Criteria to add language for removal of staking and flagging after approval or during periods of inaction on projects. The changes are the result of citizen requests to reduce the length of time a flagging system is seen in the neighborhood and to improve the function and language of the Criteria.	
Project Location: Monterey County	APN: N/A
Planning File Number: PDN070742	Name: Staking and Flagging Criteria
Zoning Designation: : N/A	
CEQA Action: Exempt Section 21174	
Department: RMA - Planning Department	

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends that the Planning Commission approve the revision to the Staking and Flagging Criteria based as shown on **Exhibit B**.

PROJECT OVERVIEW:

A request was received by the Department of Planning from the Monterey County Planning Commission to revise to Staking and Flagging Criteria based on requests from citizens to clarify standards for displaying of the orange flagging in neighborhoods. Staff created a revised version of the Criteria with:

- Section 5 for removal of Staking and Flagging.
- Section on S Districts
- Discussion of defining the building and added necessary features
- Specifying details for flagging by the project planner prior to development

The Staking and Flagging Criteria guides the process of describing the building outline to: (1) assist planners and decision makers in analysis for Monterey County and (2) allow neighbors to be aware of proposed projects and how they may be affected.. Although the criteria are simple, each project is different and requires detailed analysis by staff to assure an accurate result. The planner needs assistance in visualizing the project and criticizing the placement of structures. A description of site issues and desired flagging should be part of projects that involve complex construction, extensive tree removal, large amounts of grading and supporting structures like retaining walls. Roads are also a critical site improvement that will require description in visually sensitive areas. A general approach to depicting proposed development will not work in many cases.

OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT:

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January 9, 2008

cc: Planning Commission Members (10); County Counsel; Monterey Fire Protection Districts; Public Works Department; Parks Department; Environmental Health Division; Water Resources Agency; Planning Director, Building Services Director; David Greene, Planner; Carol Allen; File PD070742.

Attachments: Exhibit A Project Overview Exhibit B Revised Criteria

This report was reviewed by Carl Holm, Assistant Planning Director

EXHIBIT A

PROJECT OVERVIEW

Monterey County has a variety of natural features that the ordinances seek to protect viewsheds and to avoid ridgeline development. The Staking and Flagging Criteria is a tool to help visualize proposed development in order to better analyze how it meets County policies and codes.

1. Building Location

A basic outline of buildings is all that is needed when staff believes the project will not have a visual impact. Most housing and construction will fall into this category outside of sensitive viewsheds so a simple outline is adequate. The description of 2X4 poles was deleted to promote functional poles made of metal or other material that allows reuse and easy reinstallation. The requirement for 2X4 poles wastes lumber and materials since the poles can't be reused and when these poles break they have to be replaced. Metal poles or other material can be easily reinstalled or reused.

- Save wood and easier to replace when poles fall
- Less structure weight with optional materials.
- Less dangerous when poles fall (weigh less)
- Alternative materials are easier to reuse than one use only 2X4 poles
- Optional poles will not be as visually obtrusive as 2X4 poles

Changes:

The changes to this section are minor adjustments to wording for Planning Department, and the elimination of 2X4 poles to add sturdy poles that withstand ongoing use and possible replacement.

2. Ridgeline and Visually Sensitive

The outline of proposed Ridgeline or sensitive districts is required but should not be limited to ridgeline areas. The sides of hills are equally open to viewing and also affect the visual qualities of a hillside. "S" Districts that have "...sensitive natural resources or unusual site constraints exist which require review of the location of development." but usually don't have the same emphasis for flagging as ridgeline areas. The hillsides or areas of protected woodlands should also have similar flagging as ridgelines. Buildings, houses, roads and structural features should be outlined so that their impacts can be seen from "public viewing areas."

- Outline proposed access roads to see how the road may be seen
- Show the outline of hillside structures
- Planners should be aware of the visual impacts of non-ridgeline development and be able to recommend flagging critical development features.

Changes:

"S" Districts where "...sensitive natural resources or unusual site constraints exist which require review of the location of development." should also be included as special visually sensitive areas.

3. Building Envelopes

The building envelope described in the diagram is very simple but most projects are a complex massing of different walls and roof heights. A building is often proposed for a vacant lot where trees block the outline staking. Although it is important to understand the building outline, a clear edge is often only vaguely described. Staff needs to understand where the outside main

walls will be to judge proximity to neighboring structures and existing trees. A definite outline is needed for each proposed structure to judge how construction equipment will access the site and avoid trees scheduled for preservation. Additional information may also be needed so the planner should describe all structures of the proposal that will be included in staking and flagging.

- Planners should describe what is important in a staking request letter so that proposed structural outlines can better define impacts and relationships.
- All structures and major driveways should be outlined to allow the planner to understand their actual site location
- The major walls of the proposed structure should be described by the staking.
- Patios, retaining walls, walks and other features that would potentially destroy or seriously affect protected trees should be outlined.
- The house outline with driveway may be needed to better define possible construction access and impacts.

Changes:

The outside corners of the proposed building must be shown so that general setback and location on the lot can clearly be seen. The location of building corners shall be indicated with stakes to show general building outline. The project planner shall determine the amount of detail that will be shown with the site flagging and will write a specific list of additional structures necessary for description beyond the envelope of the building including retaining walls, driveways, pools, accessory structures and any other part of the project necessary to analysis.

~~If the project includes a request to the maximum height of the existing zoning district, both heights must be shown as illustrated for the flagging procedures for variance requests on Page 5. (see page 5 for height variances).~~

4. Height Variance Requests

Variance requests to height are simple and can be accomplished with flags but to achieve a true understanding of the height change a comparison of roof line should be used that will include fencing. The section on variances from section 3 was removed.

- Use a strip of colored material to show the ridgeline for proposed and desired ridgeline.
- The desired ridgeline height should be a different color than the allowed ridgeline.

Changes:

The proposed and allowed roof top ridge should be shown with netting material if requested by the planner.

Section 5 for removal of Staking and Flagging.

Many projects have extended periods of review due to delays in approval or legislative actions. If a project has been reviewed for visual impacts by the planner and other committees then the need for the flagging is diminished. Temporary removal until the final hearing should be allowed to reduce the need for constant reinstallation of the flags at considerable cost. The neighborhood also may complain of flags being left for extended periods. The loss of flags during storms or other accidents should be fixed within a reasonable period.

- Remove the flags when not needed to minimize neighborhood clutter
- If flags are lowered they will not have to be replaced as often due to wind damage and other disturbances
- Lowering flags allows occupants to use property destined for additions.
- The cost to the land owner will be reduced if replacement is reduced.

Changes:

When a project has been reviewed by the appropriate hearing board the flags/stakes are no longer needed for administrative permit review. A completed permit or final hearing with no appeals eliminates the need for building definition except for building permit requirements. Stakes must remain for building inspection. The flags should be removed as soon as the property owner is notified by the county offices that their permit has been approved without appeal. The appeal period is ten days after the date the resolution is received by the owner or agent.

Flagging that has fallen over is allowed a temporary period of replacement or repair but flags should be restored within seven days or at the request of the planner or hearing board. The project site should not be disturbed to prevent accidental movement or breaking of flag supports.

Projects that have been declared incomplete or are being delayed by legislative or administrative action for more than 60 days should be allowed to remove flags until a new hearing is scheduled. The removal will be at the discretion of the owner and if requested by neighborhood representatives. A photograph of the flags should be taken to record their position and for reference by the planner.

Alternatives to the Flagging and Staking Criteria

Other counties create design guidelines for urban neighborhoods that give a more complete description of what is acceptable design. Marin County has “Single-Family Residential Design Guidelines” that promote good neighborhood infill. This ordinance includes objectives and a purpose statement along with guidelines applicable to all single-family residential development including, The Site Design Process, Building Envelopes and Relationships Between Properties and Streets, Neighborhood Compatibility, Reduction of Visual Bulk, Green and Universal Building Designs and Future Actions.

Wasco County Oregon has created rural viewsheds and sensitive scenic areas and uses a design manual to guide development. The manual is extensively illustrated with examples of good and bad development including ridgeline preservation.