Standards for Waiver of Design Review Requirements in Scenic Landscape Units

REBUILDING TOGETHER

A. Purpose
The standards of this division are intended to:

1. **Facilitate expedited repair, replacement or redesign of residential structures** in the Scenic Landscape Units that were damaged or destroyed in the October 2017 Sonoma Complex Fire;

2. **Ensure that rebuilt structures will preserve scenic resources and public views** of hill-sides, ridgelines, and natural vegetation; and

3. Provide for compatibility of land uses, maintain privacy for property owners where feasible, and **mitigate future fire hazards**.

B. Applicability
This section applies to properties designated as a Scenic Landscape Unit (SLU) in the General Plan Open Space Maps with a Scenic Resources (SR) combining district in areas burned or otherwise physically damaged as a result of the October 2017 Sonoma Complex Fire.

Additional information regarding the Sonoma County rebuilding effort available online: SonomaCounty.CA.Gov/Rebuild SonomaCountyRecovers.org
C: Exempt Structures

The requirements of this section shall not apply to:

1. Accessory structure(s) that do not require a Building Permit;
2. Replacement barns and similar agricultural support structures that do not require a use permit in agricultural zones;
3. Farm family, agricultural employee, and seasonal or year round farmworker housing; and
4. Structure(s) that are not or would not be visible at the time of construction from public views.

D: Definitions

Unless otherwise defined here, all terms used in this Ordinance shall be defined in the Sonoma County Development Code.

1. “Reconstructed Structures” shall mean a replacement structure which is substantially similar to the structure which was destroyed by the Sonoma Complex Fire.
2. “Redesigned Structures” shall mean a replacement structure which is not substantially similar to a structure that was destroyed by the Sonoma Complex Fire.
3. Ridgelines shall mean a line connecting the highest points along a ridge and separating drainage basins or small scale drainage systems from one another.
4. “Substantially similar” shall mean a replacement structure that is similar to the pre-fire structure in location, overall dimensions, height, lot coverage, and square footage. Taking into account changes and modifications which are required by applicable building codes and standards that would allow for the installation of solar infrastructure. Note: Reorientation of a structure and a ground floor addition of up to 640 square feet will be considered “substantially similar”.
5. “Visible” shall mean what is visible to a person of normal eyesight from public views.

E: Standards for Reconstructed or Redesigned Structures

All structures, including fences, shall comply with the following standards, except as may be exempted above.

1. Building Materials and Exterior Colors

a. Building colors used for roofing, siding, and glazing shall be local earth tones blending with the natural environment of the site. Darker, flat tones, with low reflectivity such as beige, browns, and greens shall be used. Exceptions for lighter colors may be made for historic character, passive solar or green building designs.
b. Building materials and colors shall not have a Light Reflective Value (LRV) greater than 30%.
c. All new windows facing the public street shall have low reflectivity or anti-glare coatings designed to minimize reflectivity.

2. Lighting, Exterior

a. Exterior lighting shall be downward facing, fully shielded, Dark Sky Compliant, and located at the lowest possible point to the ground to prevent glare, light pollution, and unnecessary glow in the rural night sky. Fully shielded lights have shades or covers that screen the bulb from view while casting light
to the ground or building surface.

b. Light fixtures shall not be located at the periphery of the property, shall not wash out structures or any portions of the project site, and shall not spill over onto adjacent properties or into the night sky.

c. Exterior luminaires shall have a maximum output of 1000 lumens per fixture.

d. Total illuminance beyond the property line created by simultaneous operation of all exterior lighting shall not exceed 1.0 lux.

e. All roadway, parking, and driveway lights shall be low profile utilizing full cut-off fixtures.

f. Flood lights are prohibited.

g. If security lighting is necessary, it shall be motion-sensor activated only.

3. Landscaping

a. Landscaping plans in conformance with Chapter 7D of the Sonoma County Code are required for the following:

1. New and rehabilitated landscapes in multi-family residential, commercial, industrial, agricultural processing, and public agency projects requiring a building or grading permit.

2. New and rehabilitated landscapes that are developer-installed in single-family residential projects requiring a building or grading permit.

3. New and rehabilitated landscapes that are homeowner-provided and/or homeowner-hired in single-family residential projects involving new buildings or additions over four hundred (400) square feet and requiring a building or grading permit, except where the landscape area is less than five thousand (5,000) square feet, and conforms with the prescriptive compliance measure in Section 7D3-9 of County Code.

b. The applicant shall provide the Department with a site plan indicating if any vegetation or other topographic features is proposed to be removed as well as vegetation to be retained and used to substantially screen the site development.

c. Existing vegetation or existing topographic features shall be used, where feasible, to substantially screen site development as viewed from public roads.

d. If the existing topography and vegetation would not screen structures from view from public roads, landscaping shall be installed consisting of native vegetation in natural groupings that fit with the character of the area in order to substantially screen structures as viewed from public roads.

e. Landscaping necessary to accomplish substantial screening shall be of sufficient size and density at maturity to screen the structure within ten (10) years following installation.

f. Disturbed soils shall be revegetated with fire resistant and drought plants tolerant per the Vegetation Management Guidelines, with massing and coverage characteristics suitable to minimize soil erosion.

g. Building and Landscaping shall be designed and maintained in conformance with the guidelines for Creating Wildfire Adapted Homes (http://www.firesafesonoma.org/main/node/950). Plant species used for any screening and revegetation required by these standards shall be drought tolerant and consistent with the fire-safe plant list (http://www.firesafesonoma.org/main/sites/default/files/living_with_fire.pdf)

h. Waiver or Modification of Landscaping Requirements:

Where the Director determines that because of soil, climatic conditions, or topographic conditions, the landscaping otherwise required by this Subsection would not be feasible, the Director may waive the landscaping requirements, provided that the dwelling and/or appurtenant structure(s) is constructed in the least visible location on the building site. The director shall not waive the landscaping requirements
unless the Director has first determined that the applicant has:

i. Explored all reasonable alternative measures to screen or otherwise reduce the visibility of the structures, and associated site development, to the same degree as the landscaping requirements that would be waived; and

ii. Proposed an alternative or demonstrated that landscaping is not necessary and/or feasible for the particular structure and/or site development at issue.

F: Standards for Redesigned Structures

All redesigned structures shall comply with the following additional standards.

1. Siting

a. On hills and ridges, no portion of a redesigned single-family dwelling, or any portion of an accessory structure shall project above the ridgeline, hillside, or silhouette against the sky when viewed from public roads.

b. All new features of site development that are subject to these standards shall, to the extent feasible, be located to be substantially screened when viewed from public roads.

c. Placement of new or redesigned structures shall be clustered to the extent feasible.

d. The location of redesigned structures in compliance with this Section shall comply with all applicable codes regarding fire, safety, on-site sewage disposal, drainage, geologic, and other constraints. Where these constraints make it infeasible to substantially screen the structures and related site development, they shall be located in the least visible location on the parcel.

2. Grading

a. Grading shall be minimized to the extent necessary to site new structures.

b. All exposed slopes and disturbed soil resulting from new site development shall be graded so as to be gently sloping and blend with the natural topography.

c. The grade and alignment of new access roads, including any driveway, related to the construction of any new or redesigned structure shall be located and designed to minimize the visibility of each road and road cut.

d. Alteration of natural landforms as a result of grading, cutting, or filling shall be minimized. New development which requires grading, cutting, or filling of more than 50 cubic yards shall require design review.

3. Architectural Design

a. Building facades shall have varying vertical planes and overhangs shall be used as a means to create changing shadow lines to reduce the visual mass of forms. Building architectural elevations shall be stepped to follow the natural contour of the slope and to minimize building heights.

b. Structural underpinnings for decks, additions or foundation structures that exceed six feet in height shall be integrated into the design aesthetic of the building.

c. Parking areas shall be screened from view through siting, design, and landscaping.

d. Dark and non-reflective driveway materials shall be used.

e. Impervious surfaces should be minimized to reduce runoff.

For more Rebuilding information, go to http://SonomaCounty.ca.gov/Rebuilding/