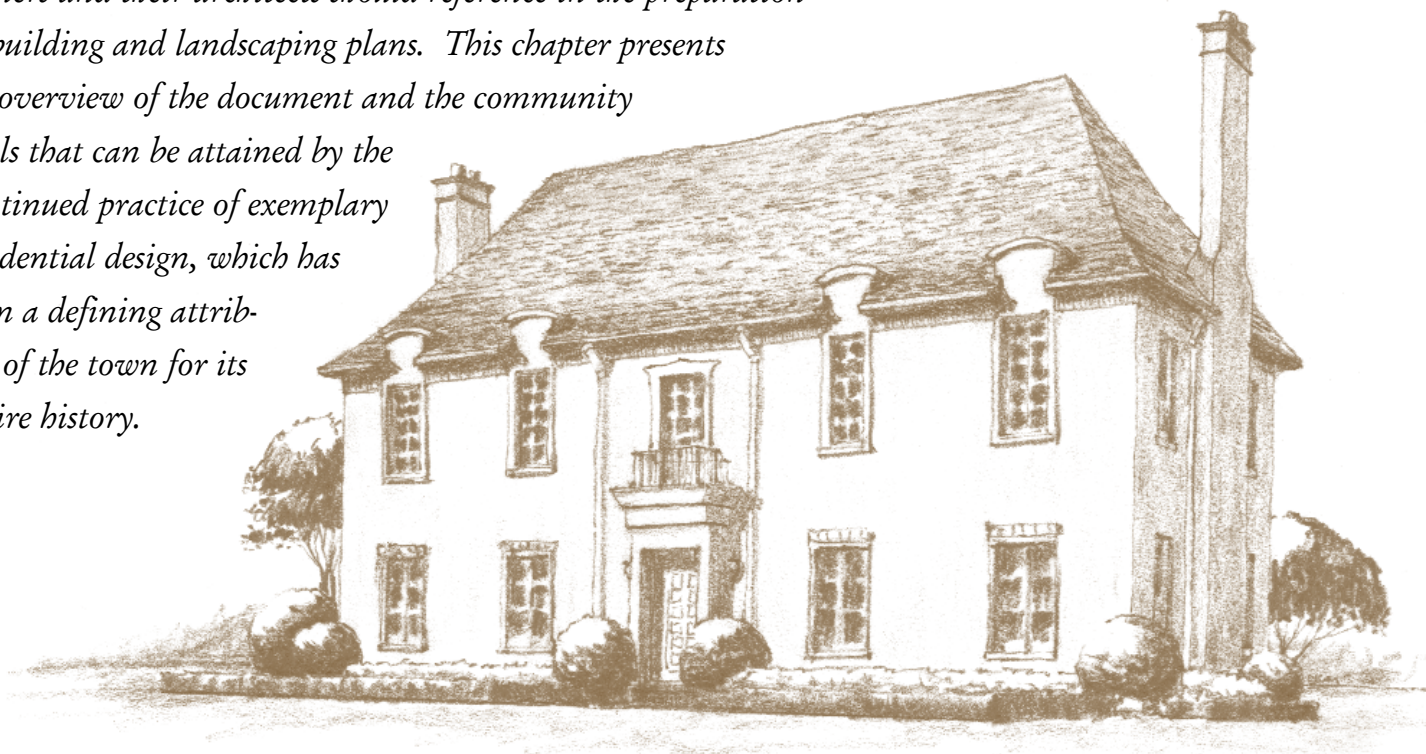


*The Town of Hillsborough is a unique community situated in the hills overlooking San Francisco Bay and the flatlands toward El Camino Real. The town has a rich tradition of quality and tasteful residential design. This document provides guidelines and design direction that homeowners and their architects should reference in the preparation of building and landscaping plans. This chapter presents an overview of the document and the community goals that can be attained by the continued practice of exemplary residential design, which has been a defining attribute of the town for its entire history.*



## A. Town Character

The development of the community began in the late nineteenth century and centered on the activities taking place at the Burlingame Club, which remains in existence today as the Burlingame Country Club. Following the 1906 San Francisco earthquake, there was a marked increase in Hillsborough development and population as a number of San Francisco residents, many of whom maintained summer homes in Hillsborough, began to build grand homes and take up permanent residence in the town. Most of these early homes and estates were designed to accommodate staffs of domestic servants.

From the beginning, the town developed with a number of finely crafted homes set on large estates. Over the years, many of these parcels have been divided into smaller lots but individuality, craftsmanship and quality design have remained the hallmarks of Hillsborough homes. Over the years, architects ranging from Willis Polk and Julia Morgan to Richard Neutra and William Wurster, originating a wide array of authentic styles and backgrounds, have designed

homes in Hillsborough. This eclectic development scenario, combined with the place-specific topographic attributes and native tree and plant species have contributed to the rustic character, genteel charm and loosely defined neighborhoods that make up the town.

Today, buildings in Hillsborough are limited to single-family residential and community services such as schools, police and fire buildings. In recent years, demographic changes have broadened the cultural make-up of Hillsborough residents. The town has continued to be an affluent community whose citizenry maintain leadership roles in the surrounding region, including cultural and historical ties to San Francisco as well as newer relationships with Silicon Valley companies and the wider global community. The continually evolving nature of residential development, in both new home construction and the retrofitting of older residences, reflects the values and vision of the town's residents. The guidelines contained in this document are intended to assist in the manifestation of those community values.

### **B. A Precedent for Quality**

The specifics of Hillsborough's development history have established an expectation for a standard of quality that is unique to the town. Building design, construction techniques, site furnishings, building materials and the spatial relationships of proximate properties are components of residential development in Hillsborough that have typically been executed with a commitment to superior quality. New development should respond to the precedent for quality inherent in previous development and establish a threshold that future homebuilding in Hillsborough will be expected to meet.

### **C. Design Review Process**

New residential construction and significant remodeling projects need to conform with General Plan policies as well as Design Review. The Design Review process is conducted by the Architecture and Design Review Board (ADRB). The ADRB is comprised of volunteer citizens whose professional backgrounds are typically in the fields of design, architecture or real estate development. The Design Review process is outlined in Chapter 12 of this document and complete

information on application requirements is available from the Planning Department.

### **D. Purpose of the Design Guidelines**

The purpose of this document is to provide design guidance for private residential development undertaken in the town. There are existing residences in Hillsborough that do not conform to some of the guidance provided in this document. However, the guidelines are for new construction and renovations to existing structures. This document has been prepared to provide guidance to prospective homeowners and their architects and designers before they initiate the design process. It is assumed that all buildings have been designed to meet building code regulations and the Town's requirements for floor area ratios. This publication is not a zoning document but is intended to provide guidance toward potential design solutions for the goals, policies and directives contained in the General Plan. As such, the guidelines provide flexibility for building designers while assuring conformance to the community's vision and goals for development. Four goals that have been considered in the development of these guidelines are described on the next two pages.



### ***1. Reinforce Hillsborough's Image***

Hillsborough's building pedigree includes an ample number of homes that convey a sophisticated design sensibility as well as the values and tastes of their owners. Homes contribute to a somewhat rural but stately sense of community. Opulence and design flourishes, where successful, are usually executed with a measured subtlety.



### ***2. Facilitate Contemporary Life***

The eclectic building stock that has been preserved and maintained over the decades contributes greatly to the image of Hillsborough. As lifestyles evolve, new home improvement technologies and building materials will appear that allow for a greater range of lifestyle activities but can potentially impact the character of development. New homes and retrofits to existing residences must maintain Hillsborough's image and standards for quality while providing for the circumstances of modern life.



### **3. Encourage Town-Wide Diversity**

An enviable attribute of Hillsborough is the feeling that no two homes seem to have ever been erected by the same developer. This characteristic of one-by-one homebuilding and craftsmanship should be embraced and emulated. A multitude of styles have been executed successfully in the building of the town's fabric. A key component in the success of this development pattern of adjacent homes of differing styles is the rigor and discipline the architect applies to the selected style.



### **4. Foster Creativity**

The guidelines in this document are intended to offer inspiration and potential solutions for important components of residential architecture; they are not intended to be a checklist. Creative design solutions that build on the opportunities inherent in the site and the neighboring properties, and that faithfully adhere to fundamental design principles in the execution of an overall vision and style, will most likely produce results that are characteristic of Hillsborough.



## E. Successful Design

A number of factors will contribute to a successful Design Review process. These include:

- ◆ **Looking Around.** A focused tour of existing homes in Hillsborough can be instructive prior to starting the design process. The abundance of successful designs in differing settings can offer ideas about new buildings as well as provide a roster of potential architects. Touring the neighborhoods and taking note of exemplary architecture, speaking with other homeowners and observing ADRB meetings can provide a reliable list of architects and home designers adept at getting their projects built.
- ◆ **Familiarity with the Guidelines.** By becoming acquainted with this document, applicants in the Design Review process will be conversant in the same range of topics as Town staff and the ADRB.
- ◆ **Selecting an Architect.** An early step in the process of designing and building a new house should be the selection of an architect or designer. It will be extremely beneficial to the project if the designer or architect is familiar with development conditions on the Peninsula in general and Hillsborough specifically. Applicants should develop a list of potential designers with the assistance of other residents and observation of ADRB hearings. Applicants should meet potential designers, get a feeling for the designer's approach to residential design and visit built examples of their work. There is a wide range of talent among architects and designers. The ADRB response is frequently a direct reflection of the designer's ability and experience.
- ◆ **Neighborhood Involvement.** Early discussions with neighbors can inform the design process by alerting the applicant and designer to potential neighborhood concerns. The early development of a dialogue that communicates design issues can mediate neighborhood concerns and lead to less delays as the project goes through the review process.
- ◆ **Complicated Projects and Modern Designs.** Projects that are potentially controversial because of their size or complicated site constraints, which can include buildings that approach the maximum floor area ratio and designs for two-story buildings in predominantly one-story

neighborhoods, will elicit a more extensive consideration by the ADRB and will require that the applicant engages an experienced architect. Similarly, buildings designed in a modern architecture style or renovations that deviate significantly from a building's established style require a well-experienced architect and will receive greater scrutiny by the ADRB.

- ◆ **Staff Consultation.** Town staff can advise applicants on the review process and what architects and design styles have met with success. Staff can also assist in keeping a project on track. Minor projects are able to be referred for approval by staff.
- ◆ **ADRB Process.** The ADRB process allows for a series of check-ins with the Board during the preliminary design of new construction. The Preliminary Review provides for early ADRB feedback regarding the initial design direction and can save time in the design process by assuring that the applicant and the ADRB are viewing the project with similar goals. Later in the process, formal hearings are held at which the ADRB will review a project and either approve it, deny it or specify conditions under which it can be approved in the future.

- ◆ **Communicating the Design.** There are a number of ways that applicants and their architects can communicate the implications that new construction will have for the street and neighborhood in which it is proposed. Projects can sometimes be delayed by inadequate communication of the design. Methods for communicating the design include perspective renderings, computer simulations of before and after conditions, or three-dimensional models. The goal is to communicate to the Board and the public to the greatest degree possible the design intent of new construction.

*“When this part of the Peninsula was first settled, residents found Hillsborough more a frame of mind than a specific geographic area. Only later did it become an organized community. Through the years, although the town has changed dramatically, much of its original uniqueness has been maintained.”*

No Sidewalks Here: A Pictorial History of Hillsborough

*“A good house is a created thing made of many parts economically and meaningfully assembled. It speaks not just of the materials from which it is made, but of the intangible rhythms, spirits, and dreams of people's lives. Its site is only a tiny piece of the real world, yet this place is made to seem like an entire world. In its parts it accommodates important human activities, yet in sum it expresses an attitude toward life.”*

The Place of Houses

## F. Document Overview

The Residential Design Guidelines document contains twelve chapters. Following this introductory chapter are two chapters that discuss guiding design principles and architectural styles. Following those chapters are the guidelines, which are divided into eight chapters according to their relationship to the development of a home. The last chapter briefly describes the Design Review process.

## G. Definition of "Should" and "Shall"

The design guidelines contain language that reflects the following principles:

"Should" or "Highly Encouraged" means that conformance will be strongly encouraged by the Town through the Design Review process. These guidelines express the community's values and the Town's expectations for new development. Project plans that demonstrate compliance with these guidelines are more likely to be successful.

"Shall" or "Must" indicates a building standard and means that conformance is mandatory. Standards are consistent with the Municipal Code.