



# Single-Family Residential Design Guidelines

A Design Resource for Project Applicants

City of Downey

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# Acknowledgements

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# Section 1: Introduction, Purpose, and How To Use These Guidelines

Downey's single-family residential neighborhoods, developed in the mid-20th century, are characterized by single-story Minimal Traditional and Ranch style houses built on suburban tracts that were previously agricultural. Given the decades-long development duration, many of the resulting tracts and blocks have dissimilar lot sizes, and remnant larger interior parcels continue to be subdivided and developed.

The purpose of these Standards and Guidelines is to provide a design tool that assists applicants in enhancing the character of Downey's residential neighborhoods on a project-by-project basis so as to ensure that the design of new homes, additions, and alterations to existing dwellings relates to the existing community context and character. These Standards and Guidelines are intended to promote high-quality design that favors craft and architectural styles related to historic precedent and neighborhood context. They further encourage creative design solutions that fit with their surroundings and enhance the overall consistent architectural character seen in Downey single-family neighborhoods.

The Guidelines in this booklet are best used as an educational and design tool by project applicants and neighbors in conversation with City Staff when designing projects.

Overall Design Goals and Principles are described in Section 2. Mandatory Development Standards noted in the *Downey Municipal Zoning Code* are provided in Section 4. Recommended Design Guidelines and associated graphics are noted in Section 6. All of these Sections should be referred to when designing an addition or new construction project.

A Summary Checklist of Guidelines and Principles is provided in Section 6. Applicants and, as appropriate, City Staff should utilize this checklist to determine consistency and compliance with the Standards and Guidelines, and as appropriate, the Design Goals and Principles. The application, appeals, and approval process is detailed on page 2.

Definitions and a short list of reference materials are found in Section 7 and Section 8.

By affirmatively utilizing these Standards and Guidelines for the design of projects, applicants will facilitate the City's review process and create designs and improvements that meet community-based best practices.



# Compliance Determination and Appeals Process

## Step 1: Application

## Step 2: Staff Review

Upon determination of compliance with Design Guidelines, skip to Step 5.

## Step 3: Appeal to Community Development Director

Upon determination of compliance with Design Guidelines and/or Residential Design Goals and Principles of Section 2, skip to Step 5.

## Step 4: Appeal to Planning Commission

Upon determination of compliance, proceed to Step 5. Upon determination of non-compliance with Design Guidelines and/or Residential Design Goals and Principles of Section 2, revise design and begin Step 1.

## Step 5: Approval

# Section 2: Residential Design Goals and Principles

The following residential design goals and principles complement, but do not supersede, the City's zoning standards. They are based upon observation of existing community design patterns. In concert with the Development Standards of Section 4 and the Design Guidelines of Section 5, they should be utilized to inform design decision-making for existing and new homes and additions. In cases where a characteristic Downey architectural style is not utilized, the following Design Goals and Principles should still be met to the maximum extent feasible.

- 1 Design additions and new construction that follow the prevailing mass, bulk, height, and modulation patterns of other buildings seen in the neighborhood and along the same block face(s).
- 2 Utilize single-story characteristics (including dormers, wings, and second-story additions behind ridgelines) in areas where one-story homes prevail.
- 3 Maintain street wall continuity, orientation of entries toward sidewalks, utilization of one-story components and roof elements, placement of garages, and use of materials seen along the same block face(s).
- 4 Retain prevailing setbacks, privacy, and open space at side and rear yards, particularly in cases involving rear yard accessory structures.
- 5 Use multi-tiered and region-appropriate landscape design that realizes privacy between adjacent and abutting lots.
- 6 Minimize the visual impacts of automobiles, parking, garages, and driveways along rights-of-way by utilizing prevailing driveway and garage placements.
- 7 Maintain street wall continuity, entry orientation, landscape and setbacks along public rights-of-way on new subdivisions and private roads.
- 8 Observe and encourage the use of Downey's characteristic architectural styles and design principles as seen in each neighborhood and along each street block when designing additions and new buildings. Realize consistency of style within a project design and, when constructing additions and accessory structures, incorporate architectural components and styles observed on the original home.
- 9 Proposed colors must be consistent with chosen architectural style. Reference material must be provided to show color is consistent with the chosen style.

# Section 3: Characteristic Residential Architectural Styles

Many of Downey's original tract homes were constructed in the Minimal Traditional, Ranch, and Styled Ranch styles; a significant portion of the City's newer single-family infill construction falls under a New Traditional or 21st Century Modern designation.

This Section describes and illustrates best practices for working within the parameters of each of these styles when constructing both new homes and additions. Page 12 provides more targeted approaches to achieve best design practices when constructing additions to original homes.

In addition to this Section, refer to the following resources for supplementary architectural design guidance, history, and description of character-defining features of single-family residential styles:

- *The Abrams Guide to American House Styles* by William Morgan
- *American House Styles: A Concise Guide* by John Milnes Baker
- *A Field Guide to American Houses* by Virginia & Lee McAlester
- *A Field Guide to American Architecture* by Carole Rifkind
- *Western Ranch Houses* by Cliff May



# Minimal Traditional: 1935-1950s

Utilized between 1935 and the early 1950s as a popular pre- and post-War housing solution, the Minimal Traditional style emerged as a response to the Great Depression and the need to increase the cost efficiency of home-building. The style simplifies and abstracts the character-defining features of a variety of period styles, such as the American Colonial and the Colonial Revival, while minimizing use of decorative treatments. Homes are typically simple and small: one or one-and-a-half stories. In the rare case in which a second story is constructed, it is an addition and typically set behind the first-floor ridgeline so as to act as a secondary mass. Entries normally orient toward the street, and garages are typically detached and placed behind the principal structure.

Structures of this style are minimally-decorated and constructed with stucco and one feature material -- such as lap siding, wood, or brick -- facing the street. Windows are often double-hung and multi-paned, and rarely exceed fifty (50) percent of the total façade area. Chimneys and decorative eave supports are also common. Roofs contain low to intermediate pitches (1:12 to 1:3 slopes) and are hipped, side-gabled, multi-gabled or cross-gabled. Shallow roof eaves are rarely deeper than two (2) feet.

- A** One story typical, minimally-decorated
- B** Stucco + one feature material facing the street
- C** 1:3 pitched hipped roof
- D** Double-hung and multi-paned windows
- E** Windows rarely exceed 50 percent of façade area
- F** Entry oriented toward the street; decorative supports common
- G** <2 foot eave depth
- H** Detached rear garage typical



FIGURE 1: Minimal Traditional Style

# Ranch: 1930s-1950s

Inspired in part by Frank Lloyd Wright's Prairie and Cliff May's Western ranch houses, the Ranch style emerged in the 1930s, but did not gain its utmost popularity until after the Second World War. Ranch homes' typical one-story construction, deep-set eaves (extending three (3) feet or more from the exterior wall perimeter) and slender wooden columns (rarely exceeding eight (8) inches in width), each accentuate the horizontality of the style's ground-hugging forms. Roofs are typically low- to moderately-pitched (1:12 to 1:3 slopes) and either hipped, multi-gabled or cross-gabled. Asymmetrical façades typically feature front entries and porches located off-center and sheltered by the eaves and roof. Entries as well as garages or porte-cocheres are typically oriented towards the street, though neither dominates the front façade.

Ranch homes are detailed simply, commonly utilizing stucco or board and batten with wood, stone, or brick accents. These feature materials are also utilized around entryways and/or at chimneys. Strip windows are also seen: some arranged horizontally and others, such as those at living rooms overlooking the street, large. No more than fifty (50) percent of the total façade area is typically dedicated toward windows.



**FIGURE 2:** Ranch Style  
(Note: Porte-cocheres are subject to setback standards per Section 9312.08 of the Downey Municipal Code)

# Styled Ranch: 1935-1985

Having gained prominence between the years 1935 and 1985, the Styled Ranch utilizes the basic form and layout of the Ranch style: a single-story structure with an attached, street-oriented garage or port-cochere, both of which enhance the horizontality of the main form. The front façade is typically asymmetrical per Ranch style convention, incorporating off-center sheltered porches, strip windows and/or large picture windows that occupy no more than fifty (50) percent of the total façade area.

Where the Styled Ranch begins to diverge from the traditional Ranch style is in its stylistic detail elements, which tend to be borrowed from other styles. In Downey, these include but are not limited to:

- American Vernacular
- Asian
- California or Western (Cliff May)
- English Colonial
- Neo-Colonial
- Regency
- Neo-Tudor
- Neo-Victorian
- Spanish
- Storybook
- Abstracted regional and vernacular styles (in later examples)

- A** Broad, ground-hugging, asymmetrical form typical of Ranch style, one story typical
- B** Stylistic details borrowed from (in this case) Regency style
- C** Attached, street-oriented garage
- D** Off-center entry under eave
- E** Large picture window
- F** Windows rarely exceed 50 percent of façade area
- G** Feature material (brick)



FIGURE 3: Styled Ranch Style



The following illustrations further describe features typical of the Styled Ranch sub-styles most commonly observed in Downey. Typically, these sub-styles tend to inform design components such as materials and color, roof form and pitch, eave depth, ornamentation and additional decorative strategies. For further information on these and other sub-styles, refer to the educational resources listed on page 4 and page 38 of this booklet.

### Spanish Revival Styled Ranch:



- A** Red clay roof tiles
- B** Cross-gabled or hipped roof typical
- C** Roof rarely exceeds 1:3 slope
- D** Chimney typical
- E** Columns and/or arches frame entryway
- F** Light-colored stucco façade
- G** Heavy wooden door
- H** Exposed beams

### Neo-Victorian Styled Ranch:



- A** Decorative wood detailing
- B** Embellished roof extends below the eave line
- C** Steep (1:1) roof slope at window bay; note 1:3 roof elsewhere
- D** Lap siding and board and batten
- E** Two- or three- color paint schemes
- F** Diagonal window panes

### Neo-Colonial Styled Ranch:



- A** Near-symmetry in total form
- B** Prominent porch with pediment supported by columns
- C** Gable roof with 1:3 slope typical
- D** Clapboard and shingle siding common
- E** Larger window

FIGURE 4: Styled Ranch Sub-styles

# New Traditional: 1975-Present

Many of Downey’s newer, infill homes are constructed in the New Traditional style, which derives inspiration from earlier period styles to inform the composition and detailing of all exterior components of the home including:

- Massing
- Roof form and slope
- Entry and entry expression
- Eave depth
- Windows
- Materials
- Colors
- Additional detailing

New Traditional homes replicate past styles while often relying on the utilization of modern materials and building techniques to achieve the design intent.

Downey’s New Traditional homes have been observed in a number of styles, including but not limited to:

- Colonial Revival
- French Eclectic
- Italian Renaissance
- Neoclassical
- New England
- New Traditional Craftsman (Southern California regionally-relevant)
- Neo-Tudor
- Prairie
- Shingle
- Spanish (Southern California regionally-relevant)

A

Massing, roof form, slope, entry/entry expression, eave depth, modulation methods, windows, colors and additional detailing informed by (in this case) the Neo-Colonial style



FIGURE 5: New Traditional Style

The following illustrations further describe the New Traditional styles that prevail in Downey. For further information on these and other styles, refer to the educational resources listed on page 4 and page 38 of this booklet.

### New Traditional Colonial/Regency:



- A** Symmetry
- B** Prominent porch with portico supported by columns
- C** Hipped roof with shallow (1:4) slope typical
- D** Tends to be plainer, less detailed than precedent style
- E** Bay windows

### New Traditional Spanish:



- A** Recessed window
- B** Clay roof tile
- C** Smooth stucco façade
- D** Presence of arches common
- E** Heavy wooden front door
- F** Gable roof with 1:4 slope
- G** Earth tones utilized

### New Traditional Craftsman:



- A** Shingling and stone suggest rustic, handmade quality
- B** Expression of beams
- C** Rectangular in form
- D** Roof eaves  $\leq 2$  feet in depth
- E** Sheltered, inset entry area
- F** Cross-gabled, moderately-pitched (1:4) roof
- G** Double-hung or casement windows incorporating divided panes common
- H** At least 1 prominent window on front façade

FIGURE 6: New Traditional Sub-styles



# 21st Century Modern: 2000-Present

Downey's 21st Century Modern homes, often larger and typically two stories, have been constructed as newer, infill homes, often situated on existing lots within the fabric of older, one-story residential contexts or within enclaves dedicated to modern design. These structures typically emphasize straight lines and feature moderate asymmetry, which results in massing volumes that appear boxlike and intersecting. Flat roofs often contribute to this impression, but are not a prerequisite of the 21st Century Modern approach.

Many 21st Century Modern homes are variations of the International Style, exhibiting relaxed white stucco boxes, while others feature segmented vaults, alluding to mid-20th Century regional modernisms, or skewed geometries reminiscent of the 1990s Deconstructivism style. Façades are minimally-decorated and neutrally-colored, and feature large expanses of glass that often surpass, as a percentage of the wall area, their older counterparts. This utilization of glass, in combination with the placement of terraces, porches, and decks at both upper and lower levels, allows for ample indoor-outdoor interaction. Entryways are typically recessed and garages oriented towards the street. These newer homes also tend to utilize contemporary cladding materials, such as lap siding and metal paneling, which are distributed to highlight individual wall planes, thereby modulating the mass and bulk of the construction.

- A** Typically two stories
- B** Intersecting boxlike forms featuring moderate asymmetry; emphasis on straight lines
- C** Minimally-decorated façade with neutral colors
- D** Distribution of materials highlights overall massing and modulation
- E** Recessed entryway
- F** Terraces, porches and decks create indoor-outdoor fluidity
- G** Contemporary cladding materials
- H** Large expanses of glass



FIGURE 7: 21st Century Modern Style

# A Note on Additions and the Use of Characteristic Architectural Styles

An addition to an original home should learn from and work within the parameters of the style of the original home, which, in Downey, will typically fall under the Minimal Traditional, Ranch, or Styled Ranch designations.

In addition to incorporating the same or similar stylistic characteristics including materials, colors, roof form and slope, eave depth, ornamentation, and other detailing techniques, an addition should act as a secondary mass to the original form. A second story should be set back from the first story by ten (10) feet, and/or be placed behind its ridgeline, whenever feasible.

Standards for the construction of additions are provided on page 14 and page 15 of this booklet. Relevant Guidelines are provided on page 21 and page 30.



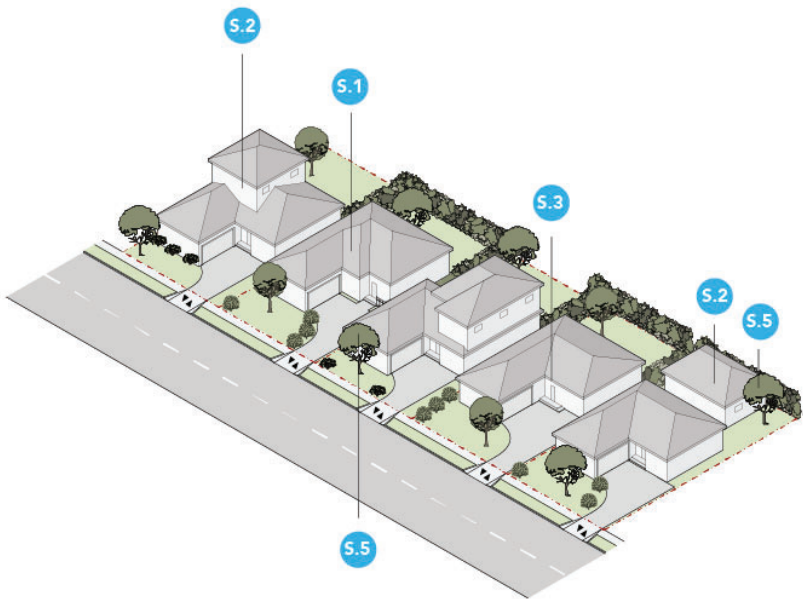
FIGURE 8: Additions

# Section 4: Development Standards

The following Section lists Development Standards noted in the *Downey Municipal Zoning Code*, which are mandatory. The purpose of this Section is to act as a supplementary reference that provides further elaboration and illustration of the Zoning Code Standards.

The following Standards are also listed in the Development Standards category of the Checklist on page 33 of this booklet. All Standards in this Section that are applicable to a designated design project shall be met by the applicant.

The majority of the development standards are generally illustrated in Figure 9. Refer to the specified standards (indicated by the corresponding numbers in the diagram) for additional explanation and illustration.



- S.1** Use 360° architecture and maintain design consistency throughout the project design.
  - S.2** Design accessory structures and/or additions with materials, roof forms, and architectural styles consistent with the principal structure.
  - S.3** Orient front entries towards the public right-of-way.
  - S.5** Provide shade trees in setback areas.
- \* **X** indicates Standard number.

FIGURE 9: Illustrative Development Standards (see S.1 through S.6)



## S.1 Use 360° architecture and maintain design consistency throughout the project design.

Any new construction, alteration, and/or addition on a lot, including a principal residence, second story, detached accessory structure, carport, and/or porte-cochere shall follow a singular architectural character and style that extends to all building features including façades, roof forms and pitches, materials, colors, and detailing. An addition shall utilize the characteristics of the style of the original home.

### Do's:



FIGURE 10: This example displays a home that utilizes the same materials, ornamentation, and detailing on all façades.

### Don't's:



FIGURE 11: This example from another Southern California city does not utilize the same materials, ornamentation, and detailing on the side yard-facing façades.

### Do's:



FIGURE 12: This example displays a home that utilizes consistent roof forms, materials, and style throughout.

### Don't's:



FIGURE 13: The inconsistent roof forms (flat versus gabled), materials, and styles, exhibited on this example from another Southern California city, results in a non-characteristic garage addition that diminishes the value of the existing home.

## **S.2 Design accessory structures and/or additions with materials, roof forms, and architectural styles consistent with the principal structure.**

Additions and detached accessory structures shall incorporate the same architectural character and style as the original structure and extend the character to all new building features, including materials, colors, and roof forms. Additions to existing structures shall utilize the same window treatments and proportions as the original structure.

## **S.3 Orient front entries towards the public right-of-way.**

New architecture, additions altering the entrance of the dwelling, and remodels altering the entrance of the dwelling shall be designed with the front door oriented towards the public right-of-way.



FIGURE 14: This rear yard accessory structure utilizes the same materials and roof form as the principal structure.

## S.4 Prioritize public street-facing lots in subdivisions.

To the maximum extent feasible, new lot subdivisions shall be subdivided in a configuration that does not require the utilization of a private road and instead orients subdivided lots towards the public right-of-way.

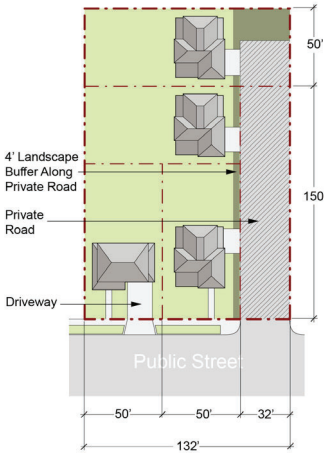


FIGURE 15: Subdivided parcels oriented towards the public right-of-way, and parcels oriented towards a private road.

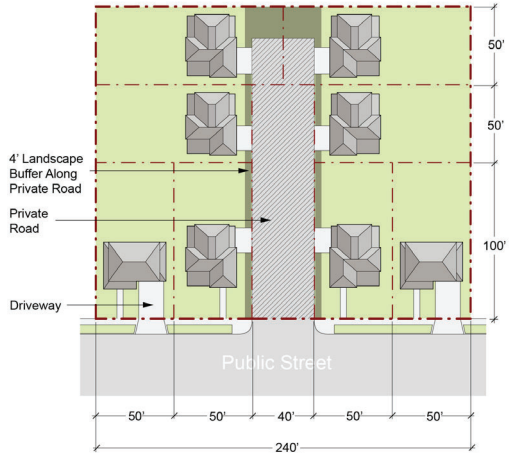


FIGURE 16: Subdivided parcels oriented towards the public right-of-way, and parcels located on both sides of the private road.

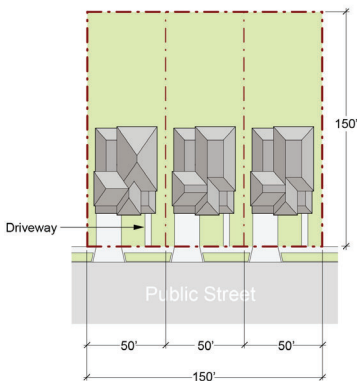


FIGURE 17: Three or more subdivided parcels with front lot lines oriented towards the public right-of-way.

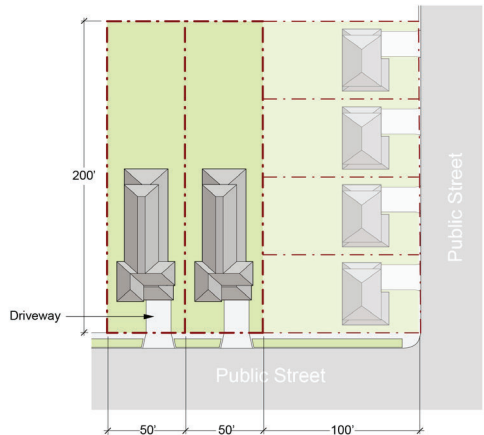


FIGURE 18: Two subdivided parcels with front lot lines oriented towards the public right-of-way.

## S.5 Provide shade trees in setback areas.

A minimum of one (1) shade tree shall be provided in the front yard and a minimum of one (1) shade tree shall be provided in the rear yard. Placement of an additional shade tree in the street-facing side and/or interior side yard with a setback equal to or greater than ten (10) feet shall provide one (1) tree for every twenty (20) linear feet of building façade for that side.

A shade tree in the front yard shall have a mature height of at least forty (40) feet and a tree canopy that is at least forty (40) feet in diameter after five (5) years of growth. A shade tree in the rear yard shall have a mature height of at least forty (40) feet and a tree canopy that is at least thirty (30) feet in diameter after five (5) years of growth. Side yard trees shall reach a maturity height greater than twenty (20) feet and a canopy width greater than ten (10) feet.

Tree selection shall be approved by the City Planner. Appropriate trees may include, but are not limited to, Deodra Cedar, American Sycamore, and Pink Cedar.



FIGURE 19: Trees located within front yards.

## S.6 Follow existing Downey landscape standards and utilize native and/or climate-appropriate plants.

New landscaping placed in setback areas shall adhere to the landscape standards provided in *Section 9312.08* and *Section 9520.04* of the *Downey Municipal Zoning Code*. New landscaping shall also incorporate species that are native California plants and/or region-appropriate plants with moderate to very low water use. Appropriate plant material resources include, but are not limited to, the *Sunset Western Landscape* by Kathleen Norris, the *Water Use Classification of Landscape Species* website ([ucanr.edu](http://ucanr.edu)), and the *Los Angeles County Drought Tolerant Landscape Design Guidelines*.





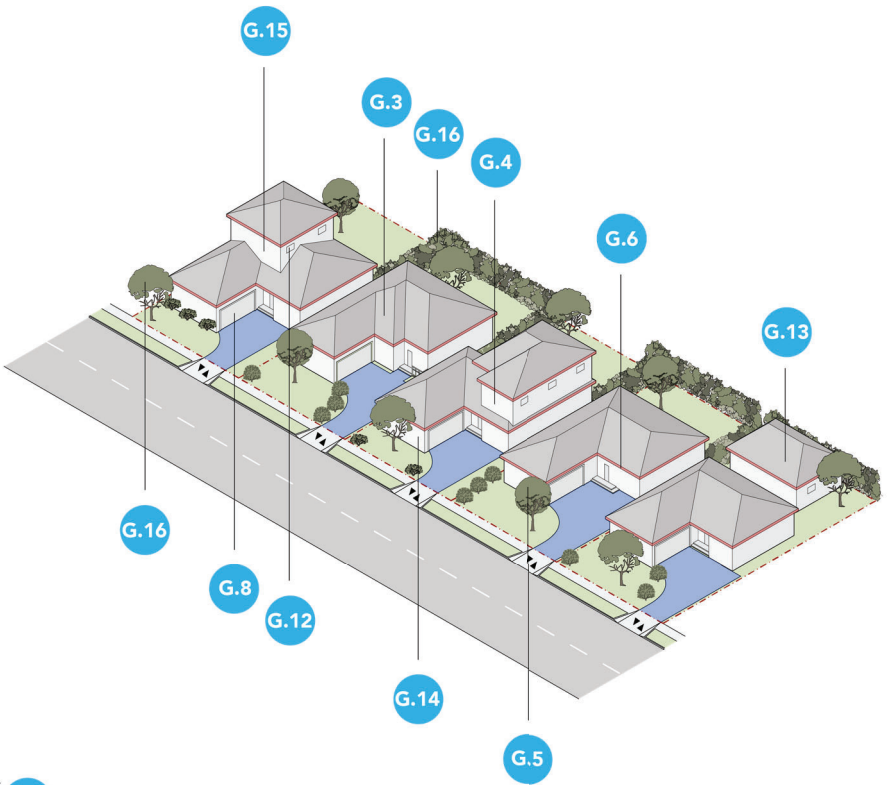
FIGURE 20: Tiered, i.e. ground cover, shrubs, and trees characterize front yard landscaping observed in Downey neighborhoods.

# Section 5: Design Guidelines

The following Design Guidelines are recommended actions. Followed to the maximum extent feasible, they will realize designs that best fit with the surrounding neighborhood. The design of an addition or new construction should utilize the following Design Guidelines as well as the Residential Design Goals and Principles of Section 2.

The majority of the Design Guidelines described in this Section are illustrated in Figure 21. Refer to the specified Guidelines (indicated by the corresponding numbers in the diagram) for additional explanation and illustration.





\* X indicates Guideline number.

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <p><b>G.3</b> Utilize characteristic major and minor massing.</p> <p><b>G.4</b> Reduce second-story footprints in relation to first-story footprints.</p> <p><b>G.5</b> Utilize single-story features facing front yards.</p> <p><b>G.6</b> Maintain prevailing floor-to-plate and overall building heights.</p> <p><b>G.8</b> Place and orient garages in relation to the prevailing neighborhood context.</p> | <p><b>G.12</b> Moderate the quality and size of side yard-facing openings at second stories.</p> <p><b>G.13</b> Design accessory structures with massing secondary to the principal residence.</p> <p><b>G.14</b> Utilize one-story characteristic features facing front yards on additions.</p> <p><b>G.15</b> Place second story additions behind existing ridgelines.</p> <p><b>G.16</b> Provide landscape in setback areas.</p> |
|---|---|

FIGURE 21: Illustrative Design Guidelines (see G.1 through G.18)

## G.1 Use Downey Characteristic Residential Architectural Styles and related typical features.

Use of a Downey Characteristic Residential Architectural Style (see Section 3) is encouraged. Residents and applicants should observe and learn from their neighborhood residential character and utilize architectural style elements that prevail in Downey. An addition to an existing tract home should utilize the original house style, typically one of three prevailing styles: Minimal Traditional, Ranch, or Styled Ranch. New infill homes should utilize one of these styles, or the New Traditional or 21st Century Modern, as described in Section 3 of this booklet. When utilized, the chosen style should determine the design of elements including but not limited to:

- Massing
- Height
- Materials
- Roof form, pitch, and materials
- Eave depth
- Skyline-enhancing features such as chimneys and towers
- Colors
- Methods of modulation
- Entry expression and orientation
- Window proportions
- Landscaping
- Other details specified by the particular style description.

When other and contemporary architectural styles are used, projects should comply with as many of the Design Guidelines of this Section as feasible, and meet bullets 1-7 of the Residential Design Goals and Principles noted in Section 2.



FIGURE 22: A Downey streetscape exhibits various styles.

## G.2 Use colors that are consistent with chosen Architectural Style.

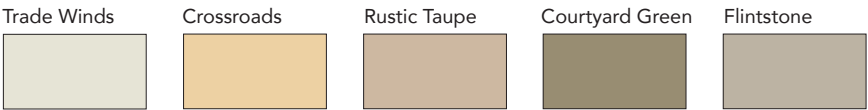
Proposed colors must be consistent with the chosen architectural style.

Reference materials must be provided to show that the color is consistent with the chosen style.

To facilitate the choice of exterior colors, paint providers, including stores and vendors, typically make available reference color guides that are based upon architectural styles. These guides typically provide options for the main house color as well choices for trim and accent tints.

The colors illustrated below are pre-approved as the main color for any of the characteristic Downey architectural styles. Applicants should provide, as part of their project submittal, the main color, accent and trim colors, and supporting reference materials. Other colors, as approved by the Planning Director and in compliance with the Residential Design Goals and Principles of Section 2, may be permitted on a case-by-case basis.

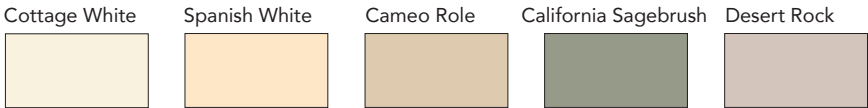
### Minimal Traditional



### Ranch



### Spanish Revival



### Neo-Colonial/Regency



### 21st Century Modern

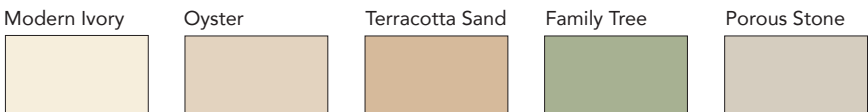


FIGURE 23: Pre-Approved Colors by Style

### **G.3 Utilize characteristic major and minor massing along front and side yard-facing façades.**

Masses and building planes facing front yards should be modulated to fall within the prevailing scale of other projects on the block; masses and building planes facing side yards should mirror the scale of adjoining structures. To best realize second-story modulation standards conveyed in *Table 9.3.3 of Section 9312.08 of the Downey Municipal Zoning Code*, buildings should be composed of a minimum of two (2) major masses and incorporate transitional minor massing to minimize overall building bulk and relate adjacent single-story structures to new structures and open spaces. Methods of building modulation should be chosen based on what is typical of the Characteristic Residential Architectural Style utilized (see Section 3 for further detail). Such methods include but are not limited to the use of:

- Variation in at least two (2) building materials and/or colors
- A variety of heights
- Varied rooflines, multi-level ridgelines, or cross-gables
- Intersecting building and roof volumes
- Overhangs or awnings
- Balconies that sit under eave lines
- One-story wings and ells
- Second stories that are fully or partially set back from first stories
- Covered or recessed entries, porches, and stoops
- Bay windows, dormers, and/or chimneys.

In all instances, minor massing should be clearly subordinate to major massing in height, volume, and scale. Buildings composed of a grouping of minor masses are discouraged.

### **G.4 Reduce second-story footprints in relation to first-story footprints.**

Provided that the maximum allowable floor area for the primary residence and accessory structures is achievable, the combined building footprint of all portions of a second story should not exceed eighty (80) percent of the first-story footprint at a primary residence. Second stories should also not project more than eighteen (18) inches beyond the exterior perimeter of the first story unless covering a usable porch or entry area. Additionally, the floor-to-plate height of a second-story should not exceed the floor-to-plate height of the story below.



FIGURE 24: These Downey homes also exhibit a variety of modulation techniques, including the incorporation of single-story components along the streetscape.

## **G.5 Utilize single-story features facing front yards.**

If one-story construction is the prevailing character on a block, a project should maintain a single-story character by doing at least one of the following:

- utilizing single-story characteristics such as dormers, porches, and front wings.
- setting back any second-story portion(s) of a project at least forty (40) feet from the front property line and/or ten (10) feet from the first-story façade
- setting back all second-story portion(s) of a project behind the primary first-story ridgeline.



**FIGURE 25:** This home utilizes single-story characteristics such as incorporating dormers and encasing the first and second story under a singular roof.



## **G.6 Maintain prevailing floor-to-plate and overall building heights.**

A project design should maintain the first- and second-story floor-to-plate heights, as well as the overall building height, observed within the prevailing range of the street block. If pitched roofs are utilized, roof slopes and eave heights should also be set within the prevailing range seen along the street block. One (1) roof shape and pitch should be used consistently throughout the project, including on additions and accessory structures. The use of more than one (1) roof type or pitch is discouraged.



**FIGURE 26:** Homes along a Downey streetscape respect the prevailing floor-to-plate and overall building heights.

## **G.7 Limit double-height exterior features.**

A project design should incorporate no more than two (2) exterior double-height architectural features such as entrance towers or double-height windows. The aggregate façade area dedicated to all front yard-facing, double-height architectural elements should not exceed twenty-five (25) percent of the total front-facing façade width, and the heights of these elements should typically not extend beyond the topmost eave line of the principal residence. At one-story residences, double-height features should be set below the highest ridgeline. Double-height exterior features shall also adhere to all relevant porch and entry standards listed in *Table 9.3.3 of Section 9312.08 of the Downey Municipal Zoning Code*.

## **G.8 Place and orient garages in relation to the prevailing neighborhood context.**

The placement and orientation of garages and driveways should follow the precedent of the prevailing neighborhood context and conditions on the street block. Garages abutting front yards are discouraged, except on blocks where front-loaded garages are the prevailing condition or where it is impractical to locate the garage behind the residence due to considerations of topography, geometry of the lot, and/or the constraining dimensions of property boundaries.



**FIGURE 27:** Maintain the prevailing condition and pattern of garages and side yard driveways.

## **G.9 Maintain existing side yard driveways and/or prevailing open space pattern.**

Where rear yard garages are the prevailing condition on a block, maintain the pattern of side yard driveways providing access to rear yard garages. A new rear-accessing driveway should not be placed along the side property line nor within a side yard where an existing rear-accessing driveway at the adjacent property adjoins the common property line, unless this was the original lot configuration. If a new, front yard-adjoining garage configuration is proposed, maintain any existing side yard driveway as an open space to retain consistency with the open space and side yard patterns of the block.

## **G.10 Provide alley-accessible required parking.**

If a lot adjoins an existing alley, garage access should be from the alley, unless the existing alley does not provide enough width for access.

## **G.11 Moderate garage height and/or placement as subordinate to the principal dwelling.**

Detached and attached garages should not exceed the height of the principal residence and should be subordinate to the primary structure in terms of massing and placement.



FIGURE 28: This rear yard garage does not exceed the height of the principal structure and is subordinate in massing and placement.

## **G.12 Moderate the quantity and size of side yard-facing openings at second stories.**

If a side yard abuts another single-family residential property, no more than fifteen (15) percent of the aggregated area of the second-story façade facing that side yard should be dedicated toward openings such as windows and doors.

## **G.13 Design accessory structures with massing secondary to the principal residence.**

Detached accessory structures should not exceed the height of the principal residence. Attached accessory structures should be subordinate to the primary structure in terms of massing and height. Accessory structures shall utilize the same materials, architectural style, color, and roof type as the primary home.



FIGURE 29: Side-facing windows at second stories should not exceed fifteen (15) percent of the aggregated side yard-facing façade area.



## **G.14 Utilize single-story characteristic features facing front yards on additions.**

An addition to an original home should act as a secondary mass to the original form and maintain a single-story character as described in Guideline 5 on page 25 of this booklet. Such characteristic features include porches, wings, and dormers.

## **G.15 Place second story additions behind existing ridgelines.**

A second-story addition to an original home should be set back from the first story by ten (10) feet, and/or be placed behind its ridgeline, whenever feasible.

## **G.16 Provide landscape in setback areas.**

All setback, open space, and adjacent parkway areas not occupied by driveways, parking areas, walkways, building projections, and other approved hardscape should be planted in a three-tiered design with a combination of ground cover (not exceeding three (3) feet in height), shrubs (not exceeding five (5) feet in height), and trees. Vertical landscape treatments such as shrubs, hedges, and trees should be planted along side and rear property lines to buffer views and enhance privacy between abutting and adjoining rear and side yards.



FIGURE 30: Landscaping three-tiered design utilizing ground cover, shrubs, and trees.



# Subdivision-Specific Guidelines

## G.17 Follow prevailing width, depth, and area of lots along the block.

The width, depth, and area of a lot at a subdivision should be within the prevailing range of the widths, depths, and areas at lots along the block.

## G.18 Provide landscaping and sidewalks along new private roads.

A private road should incorporate continuous landscape buffer zones and sidewalks that are each no less than four (4) feet in width along one (1) or preferably both sides of the private road right-of-way.

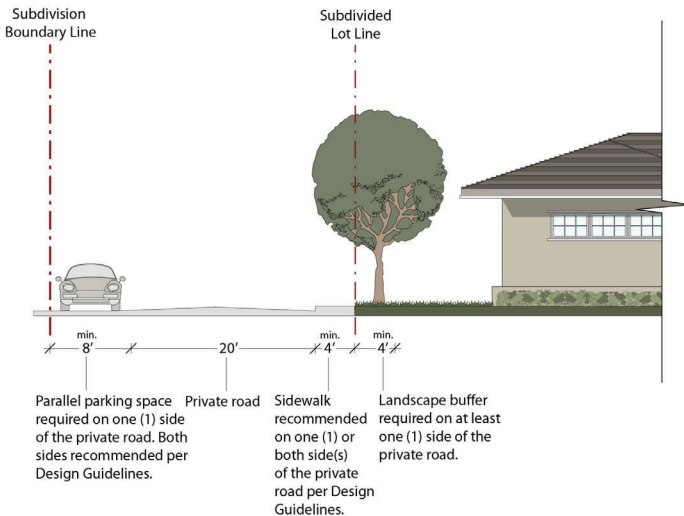


FIGURE 31: 32-Foot Private Road

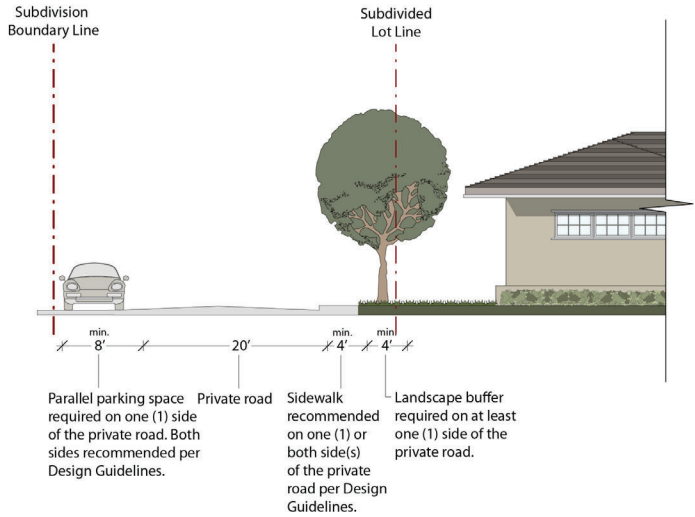


FIGURE 32: 36-Foot Private Road

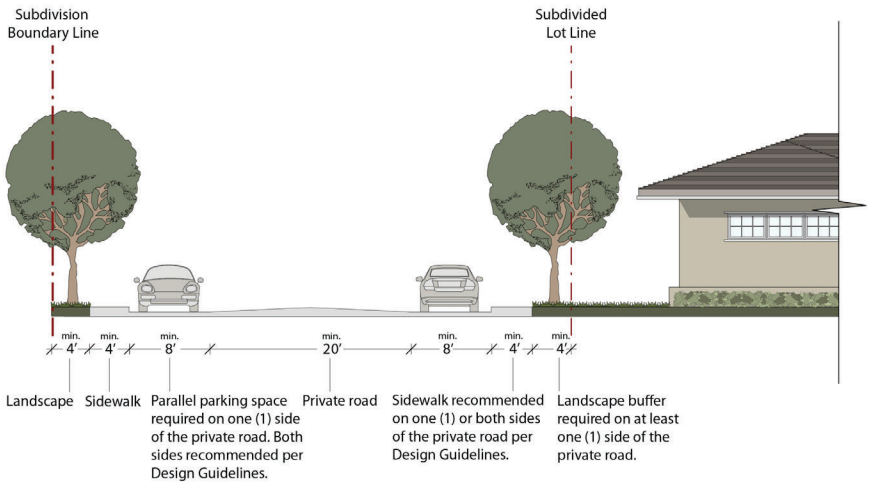


FIGURE 33: 52-Foot Private Road

# Section 6: Development Standards and Design Guidelines Checklist

This checklist should be utilized by applicants and City Staff to determine consistency with the Development Standards and Design Guidelines noted in this booklet.

## Development Standards

*This section is mandatory; meet all criteria below.*

- S.1. Use 360° architecture and maintain design consistency throughout the project design.
- S.2. Design accessory structures and/or additions with materials, roof forms, and architectural styles consistent with the principal structure.
- S.3. Orient front entries toward the public right-of-way.
- S.4. Prioritize public street-facing lots in subdivisions.
- S.5. Provide shade trees in setback areas.
- S.6. Follow existing Downey landscape standards and utilize native and/or climate-appropriate plants.

## Character and Style

*Should meet both criteria below.*

- G.1. Use Downey Characteristic Residential Architectural Styles and related typical features.
- G.2. Proposed colors must be consistent with chosen architectural style. Reference material must be provided to show color is consistent with chosen style.

## Mass, Bulk, and Height

*Should meet a minimum 4 of 5 below.*

- G.3. Utilize characteristic major and minor massing along front and side yard-facing façades.
- G.4. Reduce second-story footprints in relation to first-story footprints.
- G.5. Utilize single-story features facing front yards.
- G.6. Maintain prevailing floor-to-plate and overall building heights.
- G.7. Limit double-height exterior features.

## Parking and Driveways

*Should meet a minimum 2 of 4 below.*

- G.8. Place and orient garages in relation to the prevailing neighborhood context.
- G.9. Maintain existing side yard driveways and/or prevailing open space pattern.
- G.10. Provide alley-accessible required parking.
- G.11. Moderate garage height and/or placement as subordinate to the principal dwelling.

## Side and Rear Yards

*Should meet the criterion below.*

- G.12. Moderate the quantity and size of side yard-facing openings at second stories (maximum 15% openings).

## Accessory Structures

*Should meet the criterion below.*

- G.13. Design accessory structures with massing secondary to the principal residence.

## Additions

*Should meet a minimum 1 of 2 below.*

- G.14. Utilize single-story characteristic features facing front yards on additions (i.e. porches, wings, dormers).
- G.15. Place second-story additions behind existing ridgelines.

## Landscaping

*Should meet the criterion below.*

- G.16. Provide landscape in setback areas.

## Subdivision-Specific Guidelines

*Subdivisions should meet both criteria below. Subdivision projects should also meet other Guidelines noted in this checklist.*

- G.17. Follow prevailing width, depth, and area of lots along the block.
- G.18. Provide landscaping and sidewalks along new private roads.

## Use of Section 2: Residential Design Goals and Principles

*In cases where Guidelines are not met, as determined by use of this checklist, and/or the applicant utilizes a non-Downey Characteristic Architectural Style, the following Design Principles should be satisfied per the process outlined on page 2 of this booklet.*

- 1. Design additions and new construction that follow the prevailing mass, bulk, height, and modulation patterns of other buildings seen in the neighborhood and along the same block face(s).
- 2. Utilize single-story characteristics, such as porches, dormers, and wings, in areas with a prevailing presence of one-story homes.
- 3. Maintain street wall continuity, orientation of entries toward sidewalks, utilization of one-story components and roof elements, placement of garages, and use of materials seen along the same block face(s).
- 4. Retain prevailing setbacks, privacy, and open space at side and rear yards, particularly in cases involving rear yard accessory structures.
- 5. Use multi-tiered and region-appropriate landscape design that realizes privacy between adjacent and abutting lots.
- 6. Minimize the visual impacts of automobiles, parking, garages, and driveways along rights-of-way by utilizing prevailing driveway and garage placements.
- 7. Maintain street wall continuity, entry orientation, landscape and setbacks along public rights-of-way on new subdivisions and private roads.

# Section 7: Definitions

**Accessory Structure:** Any structure, detached from or attached to the principal structure, that is customarily a part of or clearly incidental to a residence, such as a garage, which does not change the character of the residential use and/or household.

**Accessory Use:** A use incidental and subordinate to the principal use of the premises, which does not alter the characteristics of the use considered as a whole and as related to other uses permitted in the same zone (definition per Section 9122 of the *Downey Municipal Zoning Code*).

**Adjoining:** refers to a property, lot, or completed project that meets all of the following criteria:

- is located along the same block and same side of the street as the designated design project; and
- abuts the interior side lot line(s) of the project; and
- is not located at a reversed corner lot.

**Cul-De Sac Street:** The continuous segment of a street between a dead-end and its nearest street intersection.

**Designated Design Project/Project Design/Project:** The alteration, addition, or new construction to which these Design Guidelines apply.

**Dormer:** A window that protrudes out of a sloping roof, typically from a second story.

**Double-Height Architectural Element:** An architectural element whose height exceeds the height of the first story eave line or twelve (12) feet, whichever is more restrictive.

**Eave:** The lower edge or thickness of a roof that overhangs and extends beyond the exterior perimeter wall of a structure.

**Ell:** A portion or mass of a building that extends or projects from the main portion of the structure.

**Façade:** The exterior wall or face of a building that abuts or faces a front, side, or rear yard.

**Front-Loaded Garage:** A garage that is attached to the principal structure and abuts a front yard. The entrance to a front-loaded garage may face either a front yard or a side yard.

**Gable, Cross-Gable Roof:** A gable roof is a roof form that consists of two (2) planes sloped upwards and inwards towards the center of the building. A cross-gable roof consists of two (2) or more gable roofs that intersect.



**Hipped Roof, Double-Hipped Roof:** A roof form in which all planes slope downwards towards the exterior perimeter of the building. A double-hipped roof exhibits multiple layers of hipped roofs, sometimes stacked.

**Intersection:** A point at which two (2) or more public road, alley, and/or private road sections intersect with one another.

**Mass/Massing:** The comprehensive bulk or three-dimensional form of a building or portion of a building as viewed from the exterior.

**Prevailing Character(s):** The most common qualitative features such as pattern(s), style(s), expression(s), or other attribute(s) held by at least fifty (50) percent of a designated group of completed projects. Refer to Figure 34.

**Prevailing Range:** A set of numerical values describing a quantitative specification or feature of a designated group of completed projects, exclusive of the lowest twenty-five (25) percent and the highest twenty-five (25) percent of the set. Refer to Figure 34.

**Principal Structure:** The primary structure(s) within which is conducted the principal use of the lot (definition per *Section 9152 of the Downey Municipal Zoning Code*).

**Private Road:** The curb-to-curb area of a road, driveway, or alley that runs through at least one (1) lot and/or lot subdivision to access another lot and/or lot subdivision.

**Rear-Accessing Driveway:** A driveway that accesses and adjoins or abuts an interior side yard, a street-facing side yard, or an alleyway, and leads to a detached garage or designated parking space located in the rear one-half (1/2) of a lot.

**Rear Garage:** A garage that is located in the rear one-half (1/2) of the lot and detached from the principal residence.

**Ridgeline:** The peak of a sloped or pitched roof, where two or more planes meet.

**Wing:** A portion or mass of a building that intersects with and is subordinate to the main mass of the structure. It serves as a single-story characteristic when designed as a one-story mass protruding from a two-story structure towards the public right-of-way.

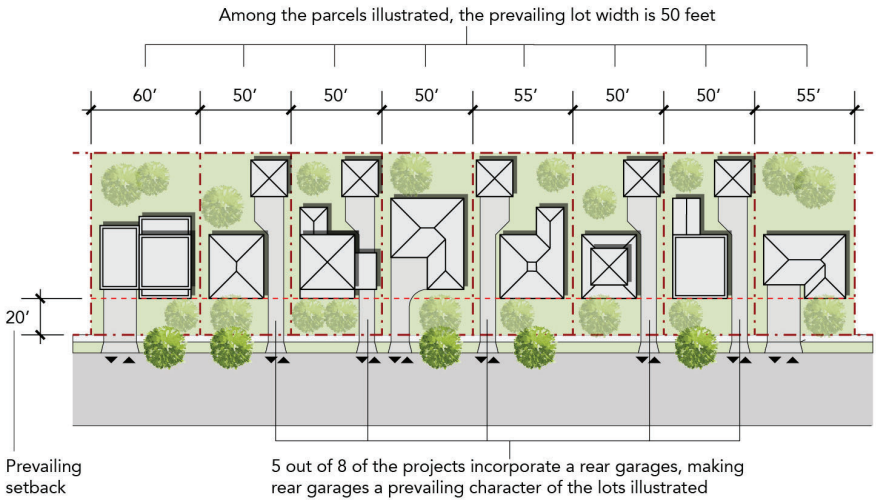


FIGURE 34: Illustrative Conditions Demonstrating Prevailing Range and Prevailing Character

# Section 8: References and Resources

## Architectural Style

- *The Abrams Guide to American House Styles*, William Morgan
- *American House Styles: A Concise Guide*, John Milnes Baker
- *A Field Guide to American Houses*, Virginia & Lee McAlester
- *A Field Guide to American Architecture*, Carole Rifkind
- *Western Ranch Houses* by Cliff May

## Double-Height Standards

- *Table 9.3.3 of Section 9312.08 of the Downey Municipal Zoning Code*

## Landscape Standards

- *Section 9312.08 and Section 9520.04 of the Downey Municipal Zoning Code*
- *Sunset Western Landscape*, Kathleen Norris
- *Water Use Classification of Landscape Species* website  
[www.ucanr.edu](http://www.ucanr.edu)
- *Los Angeles County Drought Tolerant Landscape Design Guidelines*

## Second-Story Modulation Standards

- *Table 9.3.3 of Section 9312.08 of the Downey Municipal Zoning Code*

## Subdivision and Private Road Standards

- *Section 9916 and Section 9933 of the Downey Municipal Zoning Code.*