



VISUAL AIDS & STORY POLES

SUPPLEMENTAL APPLICATION



GENERAL INFORMATION

WHAT IS A VISUAL AID?

“Visual aids” include story poles, photo simulations, digital animations, and other means, such as 3-D computer models, to assist the City and the public in understanding a project’s size, bulk and scale in relation to the neighborhood and its effects on important public scenic views.

WHEN ARE STORY POLES NECESSARY?

Story poles are required on most development review projects subject to review by the Planning Commission or Staff Hearing Officer in order to make the required findings, or when necessary to make a determination on whether the project will result in significant environmental impacts on important public scenic views. Design Review bodies also require story poles or other visual aids in order to make findings regarding appropriate size, bulk and scale, and neighborhood compatibility.

HOW DOES THE PROCESS WORK?

If required, story poles shall be installed after design review conceptual review but before project design approval or Planning Commission or Staff Hearing Officer review. Planning staff, or the design review bodies, may consider exceptions to the requirements for story poles, based on the criteria described on page 3, prior to determining application completeness. Design review bodies or planning staff may also request other visual aids, such as photo simulations, perspective drawings, neighborhood context studies, three-dimensional aerial views, or massing models, on a case-by-case basis.



STORY POLE REQUIREMENTS

Story poles are required for the following projects. On development review projects, exemptions must be requested by the applicant and granted by staff prior to determining application completeness. On design review projects, the design review body will consider requests to waive story poles during conceptual review.

Development Review Projects

- A new **nonresidential, mixed-use, or multi-unit** residential building, or substantial addition, that exceeds 17-feet in height from existing grade.
- A new **single-unit** residential building, or substantial addition, when **ANY** of the following apply:
 - Floor to lot area ratio exceeds **0.40**
 - Height of the building **substantially exceeds** that of surrounding buildings
 - Building will block or reduce important **public scenic views**
 - Building is **highly visible to the public***
 - Proposed on, or to project above, a topographic **ridgeline**
 - Exceeds **85%** of the required **Maximum Floor Area**

Design Review Projects

- A **single-unit** residential project that exceeds **85%** of the required **Maximum Floor Area**
- At the **discretion** of the design review body, story poles may be required if the project has the potential to substantially exceed the height of surrounding buildings, or block or reduce important public scenic views, or if the majority of the design review body is having difficulty finding the project consistent with the **Project Compatibility** criteria or **Neighborhood Preservation** findings.
- Multi-unit housing projects using the **Average Unit-Size Density Incentive Program** require story poles when **ANY** of the following apply (per City Council Resolution 17-006):
 - Projects with **4 stories** located outside of El Pueblo Viejo (EPV) Landmark District
 - Projects with **3 stories**, or that measure 30-feet or more in height (whichever is lower) when proposed in a **residential zone** (R-M or R-MH Zones)
 - Projects with 3 stories, or that measure 30-feet or more in height (whichever is lower) when proposed in a location where 3-story buildings do not currently exist within **300-feet** of the project site.
 - Projects of any height proposed within 150 feet of a designated **Historic Resource**
 - Projects that require **Planning Commission Concept Review** pursuant to [Section 30.150.060](#). Pre-Application and Concept Review Required.
 - Projects that are determined to be **highly visible to the public*** and referred by the design review body for Planning Commission comments.

Projects That Do Not Include Buildings

Tentative Subdivision Maps often do not include future buildings to be constructed on the new parcels. In order to provide information necessary to evaluate the project, the following information shall be provided on site for the Planning Commission or Staff Hearing Officer site visit:

- Mark all **trees** to be removed.
- Stake all **building envelopes** or footprints and driveway locations.
- Stake or otherwise mark all existing and proposed property and **parcel corners**.
- In some cases, where impacts on important **public scenic views** are potentially significant, story poles may be required to delineate a reasonable worst-case scenario for environmental review. Planning staff will determine if they are required. In some cases, staff may request story poles to show **retaining walls** that are more than 42-inches in height. Story poles should be installed at the ends of the retaining walls, as well as at various points in-between sufficient to indicate the length and height of the retaining walls.

Criteria for Story Pole Exemptions

The following projects may be exempted from story pole requirements if planning staff, or the design review bodies, make the following determinations during Conceptual Review, or prior to determining application completeness.

- Structures are **clearly consistent** in terms of size, bulk, and scale with other buildings in the surrounding neighborhood.
- Structures are the **same height** as, or smaller than, existing buildings in the neighborhood.
- The proposed structures will not involve blockage or substantial reduction of an important **public scenic view**.
- The proposed structures will not be on or project above a **topographic ridgeline**.
- The **existing condition** of the site (dense vegetation, existing buildings, etc.) does not allow for adequate story pole installation. In this case, one or more of the other types of visual aids will be required.

***Highly Visible to the Public.** A building, structure, or improvement is highly visible to the public if it appears prominently and is easily observed by an average person standing or traveling upon a public right-of-way (including streets and sidewalks) or prominent and easily visible from a public park, beach, or other area generally open for public use. A building, structure or improvement highly visible to the public usually fronts public streets or other public areas.



SUBMITTAL INFORMATION

Provide any supporting materials described in this Supplemental Application and submit it along with a complete Planning (PLN) Application.

STORY POLE SITE PLAN

Plans are required for all story pole installations prior to the application being determined complete.

Location

Show location and height of each pole. Show major plate heights and ridgelines to be identified in the field. Focus on major ridgelines and wall plate lines along the building edges. The goal is to show a simple “box” that outlines the mass of the building. It is not necessary or appropriate to include all of the articulations. Do not forget to account for proposed changes in grade or finished floor with depictions of proposed finished height and elevation notations. Show location of any stakes or chalk/string lines used to outline the building footprint.

Legend

Include a legend on the Story Pole Plan that shows the location of each story pole with a symbol for each story pole that includes its number, location and height. In addition, all stake locations and all chalk/string line locations shall be noted.

STORY POLE INSTALLATION

Story poles shall be installed prior to the public hearing for decision-maker determination as follows.

Materials

Story poles should be made of 2x lumber, PVC piping, or other sturdy material and should be properly braced for safety purposes. The connections used to show ridgelines and plate heights should be made of bright construction tape or netting. Other materials may be acceptable, subject to approval by the Planning Division.

Placement

The major building corners, outer plate heights (not the outer edge of the eaves) and ridgelines should be shown. In addition, stake and string or chalk the property lines where they are not clear and outline the building footprints with stakes and strings or chalk lines. Also, mark all trees to be removed. If there is substantial grading that will result in tall or long retaining walls, the Planning Division may request that their location and height be marked on the property. The number and placement of story poles may be reduced in order to reduce costs, subject to consultation with staff or design review bodies, to assure that there will be sufficient story poles to illustrate the end product.

Timing

The story pole installation shall be completed a **minimum of 7 days** prior to the public

hearing and shall stay in place until the public hearing, unless story pole placement will result in substantial obstructions to the existing use of the property and a shorter installation period has been approved in advance by the Planning Division. For major projects, longer installation periods may be required. Planning staff will determine whether they will be installed prior to the environmental hearing or for the project consideration hearing. In certain circumstances, re-installation of the story poles may be required for City Council appeals. The applicant may choose to leave the installation in place until the appeal period is over.



Adequacy

In the event required story poles are not installed, or are inadequate, the applicant will be requested to install or improve the story poles and the project hearing will then be continued to a future date to allow the decision-making board or commission to make an additional site visit.



Photographic Record

Once the story poles are in place, the applicant shall photograph the story pole installation, including any angles from which it is visible to the public. Where the project has the potential to affect important public scenic views, additional photos from more distant points may be required. Include a plan or map showing the locations from which the photos were taken and the direction of the photos (i.e., with an arrow), keyed to the photos. The record shall be submitted to the Planning Division at least 1 day prior to removal of the story poles or earlier, if possible. It is recommended that at least one of the photos include a person next to a story pole to provide scale. In addition, prior to issuance of the Final Inspection/Certificate of Occupancy for the project, the applicant will be required to submit photographs of the completed building from the same locations as the photographs taken of the story pole installation for documentation purposes.



Certification Letter

Story poles shall be installed and certified by a licensed professional (surveyor, engineer, architect, landscape architect or contractor). A signed certification letter shall be submitted to staff after installation of the story poles, and before their removal. The certification letter shall include the project address, Assessor Parcel Number (APN), the PLN Record ID number, plus the following statement:

This is to certify that on _____ (date), the story poles located on the above-referenced site were installed or inspected by the undersigned, and found to be in conformance (+/- six inches) with the design, height and location shown on the plans, elevations and the attached story pole plan. For additional information, please contact me at:

- _____ (Email and Phone No.)
- _____ Signature
- _____ Name (printed or typed)
- _____ Title and Professional License Stamp

OTHER VISUAL AIDS

Other visual aids are required as noted below or may be requested on a case-by-case basis by the design review body or planning staff prior to project design approval.

NEIGHBORHOOD CONTEXT STUDY

A Neighborhood Context Study is required on all Full Board/Commission projects to assist in the presentation of proposed infill development projects. A Neighborhood Context Study is required for SFDB projects greater than 85% of the maximum required Floor to Lot Area Ratio (FAR).

- The Neighborhood Context Study should include at least **10 surrounding parcels** (ABR and HLC) or **20 surrounding parcels** (SFDB projects). Begin by selecting all parcels directly abutting the project site, parcels located directly across the street and at least one parcel in each direction along the streetscape.
- **Aerial Photographs** to show the project's site and the parcels selected for the Neighborhood Context Study. The maps must display the following: property lines, building outlines, and locational reference for the photos provided.
- Supplemental **photographs** must include the following: all buildings, any established public vistas of the ocean and mountains, photos must be keyed to match the locational reference on the map described above.
- Neighborhood context **data** for the surrounding properties should include heights of buildings, number of stories, zoning designation, size of parcels, building lot coverage (square footage of building outlines).

PHOTO SIMULATIONS

Photo simulations help demonstrate how a proposed building will integrate into its surroundings.

- At a minimum, the **proposed project** shall be shown as an overlay over the existing property, showing the existing buildings on either side of the proposed project for a minimum of one parcel in either direction.
- The photographs should be taken at **eye level** (approximately 5 feet above grade). Reduce proposed building elevations to match the scale of the photographs and overlay on the site photograph. **Color** the elevation to match the proposed materials. If **landscaping** is shown, it shall be shown at no more than 5 years growth unless it is included as a separate overlay. Verify the accurate depiction of plate height, overall roof height and other measurements.
- Include a **map** or plan showing the locations from which the photos were taken and the direction of the photos (with an arrow), keyed to the photos.
- The photo simulation may be created by combining a drawing of the proposed building with photographs. The drawing may be cut out and pasted into a **panoramic photograph** or several photographs put together into a montage of the subject property and neighboring properties. It is vital that the **scale** of the drawing accurately match the scale of the photographs. Also, the viewing perspective of the drawing must accurately match the **viewing perspective** of the

photographs. An effective and accurate way to produce the photo simulation is with a computer program such as SketchUp, CAD, REVIT, or similar 3-D program.

- **Streetscape:** In some cases, a larger section of streetscape, such as the entire street block, may be required to be presented to evaluate a project's compatibility. In these cases, a **rendered streetscape elevation** may be required. The elevation may need to show all of the buildings on the block, including the proposed new building. This elevation should be no less than 1/8" scale and should be in **color**. It is helpful to see the streetscape drawn with and without **trees**. An additional plan sheet might include building elevations that are color-coordinated to show the setback from the street (0 to 5 feet, 5 to 10 feet, etc.).

PERSPECTIVE DRAWINGS

A perspective drawing shows an object as solid volume, rather than as a flat, two-dimensional drawing and shows the composition of the project as it would appear from a certain distance and height, or "perspective" from the project.

- Perspective drawings from one or more prominent **viewpoints** may be required. All roofing variations, wall articulation and eave lines (including plate heights) must be shown. Major trees should also be shown. These drawings must be drawn from the viewpoint of a person (approximately 5 feet above grade).
- The drawings should show **neighboring buildings** and **important features** of adjacent sites in sufficient detail to demonstrate the relationship between the proposed development and its surroundings.
- The drawing must represent how the proposed project would appear to a passerby as seen from the public street at the primary **property frontage**. If the project does not have frontage on a public right of way or is not clearly viewable from the public right of way, the drawing must display an on-site **front view** of the project the drawing must include at least **one human figure** to give a sense of scale.

THREE-DIMENSIONAL MASSING MODEL & AERIAL VIEWS

Computer based 3-D modeling or physical scale models may help visually explain the project.

- Design details are not required; however, all **roofing variations, wall articulation and eave lines** (including plate heights) should be shown. Major trees should also be included as part of the model. Changes in topography in the area covered by the model must be shown accurately.
- Provide a minimum of **four** aerial photographs from different angles of the existing project site along with the 10 closest properties. Aerial view modeling may be added to the **aerial photographs** to create a photo simulation to visually represent the proposed project's building massing, height, lot coverage, and open space in relation to neighboring buildings and the surrounding area.

A technical guide titled [*A Comparative Analysis of Three Story Buildings for Downtown Santa Barbara with Respect to Size, Bulk and Scale*](#) is available on the City's website to assist in the preparation of supplemental studies for the purpose of comparing height, length, elevation, floor-to-floor heights, and relative scale of architectural elements.