
8 Urban Structure and Design

Pacific Grove's many natural features provide a dramatic backdrop for a variety of buildings. The most striking features are its oceanfront setting, trees, and geographical containment. The city is surrounded by ocean on the north and west, and vehicular entrances to Pacific Grove are limited. The two main entrances to the city are Highway 68 (Holman Highway) from the south, and Central Avenue (which is named Lighthouse Avenue in Monterey) from the east. David Avenue, Prescott Lane, and Ocean View Boulevard are the other major entrances from Monterey on the east.

Two organizing principles have shaped Pacific Grove's development—keeping the shoreline open and accessible to the public, and a sustained commitment to a low-scale residential character in the built environment.

8.1 VISUAL ASSESSMENT OF THE CITY

To assess and describe its physical and visual qualities, the city has been divided into seven areas. Each area constitutes a relatively homogeneous geographic area with respect to three factors which give it its visual character: (1) dominant landscape or seascape features, (2) topography, and (3) predominant land use.

Three of these areas are dominated visually by the natural landscape: (1) the coastal corridor; (2) forested lands; and (3) lawns and golf course. The remaining four areas are visually dominated by the urban or built environment: (4) the historic commercial core; (5) the historic residential core; (6) non-historic commercial; and (7) non-historic residential. The geographic locations of these areas are shown in Figure 8-1.

8.1.1 Coastal Corridor

The immediate presence and visual dominance of the shoreline defines the coastal corridor. The approximately four linear miles of the coastal corridor extend west along Ocean View Boulevard from the city boundary near David Avenue to Point Pinos and continue south along Sunset Drive to the southern end of the Asilomar State Beach and Conference Grounds.

All of this coastal corridor is contiguous to a public drive. As a result, the public enjoys a nearly unobstructed view of the ocean along the Pacific Grove shoreline. Except for the Hopkins Marine Station structures at Point Cabrillo, the Old Bath House restaurant and snack bar at Lovers Point, and one single-family residence west of Sunset Drive near Lighthouse Avenue, no major structures exist seaward of Ocean View Boulevard or Sunset Drive. Rock seawalls along parts of the bay shoreline have modified some natural features, but have temporarily controlled loss of streets and coastal gardens to erosion.

The views within and from the coastal corridor are exceptional. The foreground provides a diverse landscape, and the views of Monterey Bay and the open sea are among the most scenic along the California coast.

The coastal corridor is an important scenic resource appreciated by Pacific Grove residents and visitors alike. Its roads and pedestrian paths are used principally and extensively for recreation. The corridor can be divided into four distinctive subareas:

Coastal dunes. Coastal dunes occur at the westernmost segment of the Planning Area between the ocean and Asilomar Avenue, and continue southward beyond the city limits along Moss Beach. The dunes extend up to a quarter-mile inland.

**Figure 8-1
Visual Units**



American Tin Cannery

The dunes are an important open-space element and visual transition from urban or forested lands to the expansive, open seascape. Ranging from approximately six to 12 feet in height, the dunes are delicate, dynamic landforms maintained in a continual state of drift. They host unique vegetation, predominantly low-lying plants that give the coastal dunes their open and exposed character.

The coastal dunes have been significantly modified by single-family residential development in areas south of Lighthouse Avenue. The City's Local Coastal Program policies now regulate development in these areas.

Commercial areas. Within the coastal corridor are two commercial areas: a shopping area on the northeastern coastal boundary of the city, and a restaurant and visitor accommodation area at the midpoint of the northern shoreline at Lovers Point.

The northeastern shopping area along Ocean View Boulevard is a continuation of the northwestern coastal edge of New Monterey. The Monterey Bay Aquarium and the commercial shops along Cannery Row establish the visual character of this area. There is, at the northern boundary of Pacific Grove, a multi-story commercial building (now known as the American Tin Cannery) fronting along Ocean View Boulevard. (This shopping area is part of the Central-Eardley commercial area which is discussed separately in Section 8.1.6.)

Restaurants and motels dominate the Lovers Point commercial area. This area extends along Ocean View Boulevard between the foot of 17th Street and Marine Street two blocks to the west. With the exception of a restaurant and a snack bar, the coastal side of this area consists wholly of public recreation facilities including an instructional swimming pool, sandy beaches, volleyball courts, a shore fishing pier and dock area, picnic tables, and a lawn area.

The character of the coastline at Lovers Point is dramatic, whether seen against a calm sea or with waves crashing against the rocky outcrops. On the inland side of Ocean View Boulevard, different periods of commercial development are in evidence. Where two- and three-story motels were once allowed, the height has since been reduced for new developments.

Residential areas. Four distinct types of residential areas are located within this subarea: (1) Between 1st and 17th Streets is a mixed use residential area in which are located single-family homes, apartments, and bed and breakfast inns. (2) The Mermaid Avenue neighborhood, extending southwestward from Lovers Point, has the feeling of a beach-front community with older, small residences on small lots mixed in with newer duplex residences as well as a few multi-family dwellings, many of which are rentals. (3) Between Sea Palm and Asilomar Avenues are 47 residences, mostly single-family, of varying age and size, with some of the older homes now being remodeled into structures larger than the original houses. (4) The Asilomar Dunes area is characterized by larger, single-family residences set on open dune-land and on heavily-wooded sites between the crest of the dunes and Asilomar Avenue. Ninety percent of the



Lovers Point



Historic Downtown

lots in this area are one-half acre or larger.

Golf course. The back nine holes of the Pacific Grove Municipal Golf Course are located in the dunes inland of Ocean View Boulevard, between Asilomar Avenue and Lighthouse Avenue. The front nine holes of the course stretch from Asilomar Avenue on the east to the intersection of Jewell Avenue and Pacific Avenue on the north, within the Beach Tract and Fairway Homes neighborhoods. The golf course is one of the community's principal open space areas. The absence of structures and the verdant appearance of the Pacific Grove Municipal Golf Course give this subarea a pleasing and natural visual quality.

8.1.2 Forest Lands

Coastal coniferous forests in the Planning Area have a dominant visual impact on the city. These forested lands provide a visual contrast to the open coastal corridor and add a rich dimension to the total landscape. Much of the area east of Asilomar Avenue and west of 17 Mile Drive contains a substantial amount

of coniferous tree cover, primarily Monterey pines. Although many trees have been removed over the years to allow for low-density residential development, this area retains a lush, forest-like character. On its east, Washington Park provides approximately 20 acres of similar forest landscape that is largely undeveloped. Tree stands and denser, low-lying vegetation have been allowed to remain in their natural state in some parts of the park as well. Lynn "Rip" Van Winkle Open Space along Congress Avenue south of Sunset Drive also contains approximately 20 acres of lush undeveloped forest. This large stand of Monterey pine and coast live oak is largely undisturbed and forms a highly visible and scenic backdrop.

8.1.3 Lawns and Golf Course

Lawns and golf course lands (characterized by extensive turf areas) are confined primarily to the Municipal Golf Course, the cemetery, school playing fields, and a number of small parks including Jewell Park, Berwick Park, Caledonia Park, and Lovers Point Park.



House in Asilomar Dunes

Each of these provides an important open-space element in the city.

8.1.4 Historic Downtown

Pacific Grove's Downtown is located along Lighthouse Avenue, between Cypress Avenue and 12th Street, and on Forest Avenue between Central and Pine Avenues. The visual character of the Downtown is dominated by one- to three-story commercial buildings, many of which were built during the early 1900s. However, many have been remodeled over the years and fixed with fronts typical of the period in which the remodeling took place.



Diagonal parking on Lighthouse Avenue, 1925

The downtown commercial buildings are sited on both sides of Lighthouse Avenue and Forest Avenue and adjacent side streets. The side streets have a different visual character because most businesses are located in smaller buildings, with a few in Victorian cottages.

Lighthouse Avenue and Forest Avenue have different appearances. Along the narrower Forest Avenue and the adjacent side streets, there is more vegetation, and cars are parked parallel to the curbs on each side of the street. Along Lighthouse Avenue a variety of building facades represents various periods in the city's history. Although there are some smaller street trees, plants and amenities for pedestrians are generally lacking. The existing street lights seem visually obtrusive and out of scale. The city council has approved a plan for street light replacement with more compatible lamps and standards, appropriate to the Victorian character of the Downtown.

Parking fills the center as well as the sides of the street, so the streetscape is dominated by parked cars. However, this diagonal parking is a historical pattern on Lighthouse Avenue and contributes to the Downtown's sense of place.

The Downtown is discussed in greater detail in Section 2.8 of the Land Use Chapter, which also contains goals, policies, and programs for enhancing the Downtown.

8.1.5 Historic Residential

Pacific Grove has a wealth of historic, well-maintained homes. Many were constructed during the late 1800s and early 1900s. These buildings add richness and



Diagonal parking on Lighthouse Avenue, 1994

diversity to the overall urban fabric of the city and constitute an important scenic amenity.

Although homes of historic value are found throughout the city, the majority are located near the historic commercial core. The historic residential area is generally bounded by Junipero Avenue, 1st Street, Ocean View Boulevard, Pacific Avenue, and Alder Street.

The older parts of this area consist of small, densely planned blocks, approximately 300' x 120' (about 4/5 of an acre in area). Most commonly, the blocks were originally subdivided into 20 parcels, each approximately 30' x 60' (approximately 24 lots per acre). The visual impression of this area is one of densely packed, well-maintained homes along narrow streets. Many large, mature trees, notably Monterey cypress, Monterey pine, and coast live oak, grow throughout the historic residential district. The trees are a highly visible and important asset, and the overall scenic quality of the area is high.

8.1.6 Non-historic Commercial Areas

Pacific Grove has four non-historic commercial areas. Two are located at the city's major entrances, and are thus highly visible and frequently viewed. One (Central-Eardley) is located at the northeast corner of the city and is bounded by Eardley Avenue, Ocean View Boulevard, Dewey Avenue, and Central Avenue. This commercial area offers a variety of service and retail businesses, including several restaurants. Overall, this district is similar in scale and ambiance to Cannery Row and New Monterey and is visually linked to these areas.

The second commercial area is located at the southern entrance to the city on Forest Avenue. Development here is in two forms: a large suburban shopping center at the northwest corner of Forest and David Avenues, and a commercial strip along Forest between Stuart and David Avenues.

The shopping center is well-sited at a lower elevation than the surrounding roads. Its landscaping helps maintain a desirable forested look. By contrast, the commercial strip, which was developed under county jurisdiction prior to annexation, would be improved with a long-range plan which might address style of signs, height of buildings, and landscaping.

A third and smaller commercial district lies along Sunset Drive between 17 Mile Drive and Asilomar Avenue. It houses a mixture of commercial and

industrial uses and the City Corporation Yard. The development pattern of this area is uneven, but its visual quality is enhanced by vegetation and coastal views.

The fourth and smallest commercial area is located along Presidio Boulevard and Austin Avenue near the Presidio Boulevard entrance to the city from Holman Highway.

8.1.7 Non-historic Residential Areas

The majority of Pacific Grove's housing falls into this classification. It includes most of the residential development south of Junipero Avenue and west of Alder Street, and the residential development both north and south of the Municipal Golf Course.

The non-historic residential areas were developed at lower densities than the older historic residential neighborhoods. They offer a rich diversity of housing that is generally well-maintained, landscaped, and attractive. The varying architectural styles tend to be traditional, but contemporary designs are not excluded.

8.2 GOALS, POLICIES, AND PROGRAMS

GOAL	Emphasize and promote the overall visual attractiveness of Pacific Grove.
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A commitment to improving the urban design of a few key elements in the built environment could substantially reinforce and enhance the city's visual assets.

POLICY 1 Develop a cohesive and aesthetically-pleasing urban structure for Pacific Grove.

Throughout its history, Pacific Grove has succeeded in maintaining a small-town character and scale in both its commercial and residential areas. The city's overall visual coherence and urban structure is well established, although the appearance of commercial areas and certain thoroughfares could be improved.

POLICY 2 Continue to require citywide architectural review for all new structures,



A collection of pleasing architectural details

and for exterior changes to existing structures.

As of 1994, the major exception to design review requirements is exterior modification of existing single-family dwellings in most R-1-zoned areas, if the modification involves no more than 25 percent of the existing square footage of the house.

Program A Review and improve architectural review guidelines to implement the policies of this General Plan.

Program B While recognizing the individuality of existing neighborhoods within the city, develop design standards that encourage new structures and additions to contribute to the existing scale and character of the area, while allowing for creativity in design.

Programs A and B will be carried out by modifying and codifying current standards for design review. The primary intent is to retain an eclectic mix of buildings, prevent the construction of canyons, keep space between buildings, and ensure that new construction is in proportion to its lot and neighborhood.

Statements in Chapter 7 of this Plan, Historic and Archaeological Resources, also support this intent.

POLICY 3 Improve the visual quality of Pacific Grove's major boulevards.

POLICY 4 Enhance city entrances and major commercial nodes.

Since the major commercial areas (exclusive of the Downtown) are also the entrances to the city, upgrading the design of these areas is particularly important.

POLICY 5 Give priority to improving the Forest Hill commercial area.

POLICY 6 Endeavor to beautify the Sunset Drive commercial district.

Program C Use the street system, pedestrian ways, and bikeways as elements in improving the urban fabric of the city.

Street systems and pedestrian ways should be designed to be accessible to persons with disabilities.

The city's network of streets and highways offers many and varied scenic views and vistas. Coastal views along Sunset Drive and Ocean View Boulevard are of exceptional quality. Views along many of the streets sloping toward the north coastline provide vistas and panoramic views of Monterey Bay. And entering Pacific Grove from the south, the passage through and views of the Monterey pine forest along Highway 68 are particularly noteworthy. The continuing and changing view and vista of Monterey Bay as one travels along Forest Avenue north toward the Downtown is spectacular.

In the Forest Hill commercial area, sidewalks and other pedestrian circulation areas and traffic patterns need to be more clearly defined.

Program D Prepare a Street Frontage Improvements Master Plan.

The City currently requires the installation of curbs, gutters, and sidewalks in conjunction with all developments unless an administrative waiver has been granted. Discontinuities in street frontage improvements result from existing lots without improvements and new development with improvements. Because of the topography and the character of some neighborhoods, full frontage improvements may not always be appropriate.

The master plan will establish policies and standards for when and where full curbs, gutters, and sidewalks and undergrounding of utilities will routinely be required and where lesser improvements will be allowed. These policies and standards will be based on the following considerations:

- pattern of existing improvements
- topography
- pedestrian convenience
- maintenance
- safety
- appearance
- drainage patterns
- landscaping
- scale
- increase in impervious surfaces



Chautauqua Hall landscaping

- need for sewer and water line improvements affecting street frontage improvements.

Program E Establish design and siting standards for satellite dishes.

Program F Develop a specific plan for the Forest Hill commercial area that recognizes its importance as an entrance to the city while respecting nearby residential uses.

Program G Provide a landscaped visual buffer for Sunset Drive commercial and industrial uses.

Commercial districts should be appropriately landscaped. Landscaping can reduce the visual impact of areas such as large parking lots. However, the landscaping should be accomplished in a manner that will not compromise security or traffic safety, or obscure business display windows. Access points to commer-

cial parking should be readily apparent and easily accessible.

POLICY 7 Visually link buildings in the civic center block.

Color, sign design, and choice of trees and other landscaping materials are examples of design elements that can visually link civic buildings.

GOAL 2 Enhance the relationship between the city and the Pacific Ocean and Monterey Bay.

The City considers it important to protect the visual quality of designated coastal scenic areas. The Local Coastal Program Land Use Plan (sections 2.5.4.1 through 2.5.4.3) requires development to be sited and designed to protect views to and along the ocean and scenic coastal areas, to minimize the alteration of natural landforms, and to be visually compatible with the open space character of surrounding areas.

Sections 2.5.5.1 through 2.5.5.9 of the Local Coastal Program Land Use Plan require new development, to the maximum extent feasible, to retain public views of the ocean and bay, to conform to the overall scale and character of existing development, to be subordinate to the open space character of the area, to place all utilities underground, to minimize loss of native Monterey pine and oak forest, and to follow a landscaping plan, approved by the architectural review board, where any landforms may be affected.

GOAL 3 Maintain and enhance the quality of the city's landscape and streetscape.

POLICY 8 Endeavor to protect the tree canopy created by mature trees by planting replacement trees.

POLICY 9 Use street trees to enhance and soften the visual character of major streets within the city.

A carefully developed street tree management program would give greater visual structure to the urban streetscape and would accentuate the primary



A tree-lined residential street

elements in the circulation system. Urban streets (such as Lighthouse Avenue, Central Avenue, Forest Avenue, and Pine Avenue) warrant an urban planting plan and a careful choice of street trees. Residential streets, and those with a less urban character (such as Sunset Drive, Asilomar Avenue, and 17 Mile Drive), merit a less formal planting program consistent with the natural landscape. The City's ongoing tree management program will replace diseased and dead trees as appropriate.

POLICY 10 Ensure that the use of signs in Pacific Grove is not excessive but appropriate.

POLICY 11 Reduce the visual chaos that results from overhead wires, light poles, and a high density of commercial signs.

Program H Establish a sign program for the city's several commercial areas.

Developing a functional sign hierarchy would be particularly useful in reducing the number of signs intended to be visible from the road. Stronger sign guidelines regarding size, location, and lighting would also be helpful.

Program I Ensure that traffic, safety, and directional signs are designed to meet ADA standards for visually-impaired persons.

Program J Develop a unified system for entry signs which complements the current directional sign program.



Butterfly sculpture at Lovers Point

Continue to implement the sign program submitted by the Beautification Committee and approved by the city council.

Information kiosks or citywide location maps could be located at these gateways. They would be helpful for all visitors, including motorists, bicyclists entering the city from Del Monte Forest, and pedestrians using the regional trail system along Ocean View Boulevard. Detailed site plans, landscape designs, and sign programs would have to be developed.

Program K Underground all utilities in entry areas that are particularly scenic or provide important views into Pacific Grove.

During the undergrounding of Forest Hill utilities, the city will work with the State Department of Transportation (Caltrans) to improve traffic and pedestrian patterns.

Program L Develop a street lighting program emphasizing adequate public safety, minimum glare, and aesthetics.

The City will evaluate the use of special districts to underground utilities and improve street lighting.

Program M Appoint a group to study undergrounding of utilities.

GOAL 4 Encourage public art in Pacific Grove.

POLICY 12 Encourage the display of art in public places.

Program N Display City-owned art on City property periodically or as appropriate.

Program O Encourage the display of loaned or privately purchased art on or in business properties.

Program P Maintain the City Arts Commission.

