

CHAPTER 4: DESIGN GUIDELINES

4.1 Overview

The Refuge is envisioned to be a cohesive residential community featuring right-sized recreation and open space amenities integrated throughout the project. To accommodate a wide variety of lifestyles, the Refuge allows for a range of lot sizes and housing types from conventionally loaded single family detached homes to stacked flat multi-family living. The different product types provide better livability through greater housing options and enhanced aesthetic interest through diversity. The architecture and landscape should be designed to provide a thematic character visually connecting the community.

The Specific Plan areas should be developed in a cohesive and integrated manner such that they function as and are recognizable as a single destination. Structures, hardscape, and landscape are all elements that should be considered in order to develop a pleasing and compatible visual identity.

The Design Guidelines in this section are intended to serve as the guiding design principles for future neighborhood development at the Refuge. These guidelines provide a flexible set of fundamental principles that will assure an integrated, attractive, and high-quality living environment, and are meant to promote development that is pedestrian-oriented, interconnected, and visually engaging to residents. They are intended to ensure a high level of design quality while providing the flexibility to accommodate changes in consumer preferences, economic conditions, community designs, and the marketplace. As such, the use of “should” equates to strongly encouraged and the use of “shall” means mandatory.

4.2 Design Guidelines

There are four planning areas within the Refuge Specific Plan that work together to offer a range of housing types that cater to a variety of life stages and lifestyles. These guidelines are designed to address all structure types within the four planning areas and shall be used as appropriate to the focused housing typology.

Projects developed within the Specific Plan should incorporate elements of the City’s Sustainability Plan to the greatest extent practical and utilize design strategies, building materials, and construction methods that are compatible with the Palm Desert climate.

General Development Standards

- The Project shall be developed in accordance with the City’s Zoning Ordinance, except as otherwise provided by the Refuge Specific Plan.
- All improvements constructed on the property shall conform to applicable building ordinances and codes in effect at the time construction occurs.

- Where the provisions of this Specific Plan conflict with land use or building ordinances, regulations, and/or codes, the provisions of this Specific Plan shall control.

Site Planning

- All built elements of the Specific Plan area should be developed in a cohesive and integrated manner such that they function as and are recognizable as a single destination. This includes consideration of structures, hardscape, and landscaping that visually tie these elements together in an effective and pleasing manner.
- Building frontages shall be located at the front property line where no setback requirement exists, or at the required setback. Where additional setback is necessary or a prevailing setback exists, activate the area with landscape or common area features.
- Common open space shall be located at the ground level in a manner that is accessible and visible to residential units, promoting safety and the use of outdoor areas.
- All primary residential structures shall be designed ensure that all street-fronting units have a primary entrance facing the street or internal private circulation.
- Entries shall be designed according to simple and harmonious proportions in relationship to the overall size and scale of the building. Design entries in proportion to the number of units being accessed.
- All pedestrian entries shall incorporate shelter elements.
- All multi-story development of two stories or more shall mitigate negative shade/shadow and privacy impacts by stepping back upper floors and avoiding direct views into neighboring single-family yards as feasible.
- All proposed residential development within 50 feet of Planning Area 5 shall be no greater than one-story, contained within 18 feet.
- Internal circulation should minimize pedestrian/vehicle conflicts to the greatest extent possible. Structures should be linked to sidewalks or paseos.
- Structures within Planning Area 1 and Planning Area 2 shall incorporate methods to screen line of sight from residential structures towards the Riverside County Sheriff's Station. Methods shall include window treatments which are integral to the window construction, such as frosted windows; window films and/or spandrel glass shall be prohibited. Landscaping may be used when permanently maintained.
- Where multi-family projects are adjacent to single-family zones, provide a sensitive transition by maintaining a height compatible with adjacent buildings. Mitigate negative shade/shadow and privacy impacts by stepping back upper floors and avoiding direct views into neighboring single-family yards.

- All exterior façades of the building shall be treated with an equal level of detail, articulation, and architectural rigor when visible from the public right-of-way or common open space.
- Long expanses of walls or fences should incorporate openings, changes in materials, texture, and/or landscaping. Fence materials such as chain link, wrought iron spears, barbed wire, wood, and vinyl shall be prohibited.

Parking

- All single-family residential structures shall be provided a minimum of two covered parking spaces located within an enclosed garage.
- All multi-family residential shall be provided a minimum of one covered parking spaces located within an enclosed garage or carport.
- A minimum of 50% of all residential parking not located within a garage or carport is recommended to be shaded by landscape shade trees.
- Detached and attached garages, carports, and accessory structures shall be designed as integral parts of the project and consistent with the principal structures of the project, and shall match in terms of scale, material, color, and roof form.
- Surface parking lots for multi-family developments shall be screened from public streets by a minimum 42" masonry block wall, in combination with desert native landscaping and/or berms. Trees, shrubbery, planter boxes, climbing plants, vines, green walls, or berms can be used to soften views from the public right-of-way.

Circulation

- Entry roads and street access points to Planning Area 4 shall incorporate features such as contrasting markings, signage, and/or lighting so that pedestrian crossings are visible to moving vehicles during the day and at night.
- A continuous pedestrian circulation shall be provided to link all Planning Areas of the Specific Plan with the central communal open space area.
- Use ornamental low-level lighting to highlight and provide security for pedestrian paths and entrances. Ensure that all parking areas and pedestrian walkways are illuminated.
- Utilize adequate, uniform, and glare-free lighting, such as dark-sky compliant fixtures, to avoid uneven light distribution, harsh shadows, and light spillage. All exterior lighting shall be designed pursuant to Palm Desert Municipal Code Section 24.16.

- Paseos shall be provided to facilitate pedestrian access to central community amenities, and Planning Areas 4 and 5, such that pedestrians will not need to walk the perimeter of a block to access said amenities.
- All paseos shall utilize pedestrian-level lighting, benches, landscaping, shade trees, or special paving so that they are safe and visually interesting spaces.
- Entry roads shall be designed with a landscape parkway separating the curb from the sidewalk

Streetscape Design

Attention to streetscape design enables the community to have a thoughtful aesthetic that promotes character and visual interest. Streetscape design should include the following considerations:

- Internal circulation should minimize pedestrian/vehicle conflicts to the greatest extent possible.
- Where possible, front doors should be placed along streets, common drive aisles (not including project entries) and common open spaces.
 - When front doors are along access drives, special attention should be paid to make these entries safe, pedestrian friendly, and attractive.
- Streetscene diversity should be encouraged by differing the styles, colors, and materials of the homes.
- Wall planes on building façades should be varied to provide movement along the building elevations for visual interest.
- Porches or covered entry spaces should be provided for stepped massing and transition from public to private realm.
- Low courtyard walls or fences (36 to 40-inches in height) may also be used to transition from public to private realm.
- Balconies, color blocking or other features are encouraged to minimize massing.
- In planning areas where single family detached homes are contemplated, streetscene diversity should be enhanced by avoiding the placement of the same floorplan, with the same elevation style and color scheme, adjacent to each other or across the street from one another.

Architectural Principles

Architectural detailing of building facades is a key feature of quality design that can truly liven up a streetscene. Paramount to this, however, is applying the right detail that is appropriate to the architectural style. The following are suggested considerations:

- All building elements, such as materials and color, detail elements (porches, balconies, courtyards, awnings, surface treatments, and materials), and functional elements (lights, exterior stairs, guardrails, gutters, downspouts, screen walls, electrical enclosures, or similar features) should be integral to the buildings design, consistent with the architectural vernacular of the building, and complement the surrounding neighborhood.
- The treatment of entries (doors, vestibules, porches or courtyards) should consider using enhanced trim or details to emphasize these as primary focal points.
- Building design should be sensitive and responsive to the varying temperatures and outdoor living opportunities of the Coachella Valley.
- All accessory structures should be compatible in design with the primary buildings, and be visually related to the development.

Colors and Materials

The primary goal of color and materials palettes is to further enhance and define the architectural styles within the Refuge. The composition of color and materials should be applied in a manner that complements building massing and seeks to achieve a harmonious and visually interesting community.

The plotting of elevations, color, and material palettes should be selected with the design objectives of avoiding monotony, providing depth and interest through colorful design schemes, and creating character and long-term value.

- Selected colors and materials should be appropriate to the styles they represent and used to further differentiate from the other styles.
- Building façades should be designed to incorporate the use of contrasting/complementary colors and materials.
- The predominant building colors should be chosen to create aesthetically pleasing building elevations with other tones/colors used to accentuate architectural elements/features.
- Finish materials should be appropriate in their use and application, be durable, and of high quality.

- Materials, when included, should be appropriately used in relation to the building style, scale, location, and function.
- Architectural screens and accessory structures should be compatible in material, color, and texture to the main buildings.

Materials and Finishes

The use of complementary building materials can promote a harmonious appearance and provide interest and variety to the selected architectural styles. The following material and finish principles should be considered:

- Exterior materials shall consider compatibility with the desert environment.
- Use high-quality, durable, low-maintenance materials.
- Place lighter materials above materials of a heavier weight.
- Material finishes should express permanence and quality.
- Use style-appropriate concrete roof tile blends (where appropriate), overly dramatic blends with extreme contrast are prohibited. Cool roof material should be considered.

Stucco

Stucco finish should project high quality and be appropriate to the architectural style.

- All stucco trim details (such as window surrounds, windowsills, roof eaves, column details, lintels, etc.) must be constructed with a level of precision and accuracy to express the authentic execution of the architectural style.
- Use clean, crisp and smooth stucco details.
- Carefully locate stucco control joints, if applicable, on elevation designs.
- Heavy Lace, Light Lace and Spanish Texture stucco finishes are prohibited

Wood

Wood is a material used in many architectural styles. However, maintenance concerns, a desire for long-term architectural quality, and new high-quality manufactured alternative wood materials make use of real wood material less desirable. Where “wood” is referred to in these guidelines, it can also be interpreted as simulated wood trim with style-appropriate wood texture.

Massing, Scale and Articulation

Building size should be considered during the design phase to determine appropriate massing, scale and articulation.

Smaller homes stand to benefit from a simpler, streamlined architectural treatment characterized by stacked massing, simple rooflines, and an acute attention to detail to maximize livable square footage for the residents. Architecture that results in a simplified massing should pay special attention to entries and front façade treatments to enhance the front elevation.

Larger structures should incorporate design methods that offer human scale to the building massing as well as articulation to provide visual movement along the primary elevations.

- Architectural elements may be used to break up the massing and enhance the pedestrian scale of the building including features that create shadow and relief, balconies, trellises, recesses, overhangs, awnings, and porches.
- Multi-story living spaces are permitted per Table 3.2: Development Standards.
- When designing two-story homes, “recessed” second story elements are encouraged to create human-scale buildings.

Roof Form

Roof form is an important design element that conveys the character of the community when observed from both the external edges and the inside of the neighborhoods.

- Roof forms are encouraged to reinforce the architectural style of the home.
- Roof pitches are encouraged to vary based upon chosen architectural styles.
- Flat roofs are permitted where appropriate to the style and location.

Architectural Projections (for Multi-Story Structures)

As part of the overall composition of a two-story dwelling, balconies or projections provide relief and interest at the second story. Additionally, these elements help shape outdoor rooms.

- Covered balconies and living area cantilevers are encouraged when appropriate to the architectural style.
- Balconies and projections shall proportionally complement and be integrated into the overall massing of the home.
- Architectural projections such as media niches are encouraged to facilitate massing articulation.

- Opportunities for creating shaded areas and usable outdoor spaces are encouraged.
- Multi-story structures adjacent to the sheriff station or existing single family homes shall include step backs to minimize visual intrusion into adjacent uses.

Garages

Where attached or detached garages are included, the intent is to tie them into the overall project while reducing their visual emphasis. Garage appearance should complement the architectural style of the homes they are accommodating. Some of the following methods may be used to enhance garage facilities (not all have to be included):

- Provide different style door patterns (as appropriate to the architectural style).
- Provide different colors for garage doors (does not apply to multiple doors in one building).
- Include window lites as a door design variation.

Carports

These structures should be compatible with the style, color and materials of the primary buildings (this may include metal supports).

- Prefabricated carport structures are prohibited.

Windows

Window details differentiate architectural styles and can provide a high level of architectural enrichment.

- The selection and proportion of the windows to the façade shall be responsive to the architectural style of the building. Size and shape shall be considered to assure a balanced relationship with the surrounding roof and walls.
- Divided lite windows are encouraged and should reflect the architectural style, simulated divided-lite is acceptable.
- Non-street-facing and rear yard windows may delete the divided lites.
- Attention to window placement is imperative to encourage offsetting windows from adjacent homes.
- Windows in Planning Area 1 and 2 which face the neighboring sheriff station shall incorporate window screening which is integrated into the window construction to

preclude direct line of site from residential units. Use of films as a means of screening is prohibited.

Shutters

All shutters shall be constructed of durable, climate appropriate materials and be consistent with the architectural style of the structure.

- Use only wood or simulated wood material for shutters.
- Mount shutters on finished wall material; embedded shutters prohibited.
- Match shutter size to the recessed opening window width.
- Use material at least one-and-a-half-inch thick so as to provide substantial dimensionality, avoiding a tacked-on appearance.

Lighting

Appropriate lighting is essential in creating an inviting evening atmosphere for the community.

- All lighting shall be non-obtrusive.
- Limit all exterior lighting to the minimum necessary for safety.
- Shield all exterior lighting to minimize glare and light spill onto adjacent properties.
- Use exterior entry lights that complement the architectural style.
- Refer to PDMC Section 24.16 for City's outdoor lighting requirements.

Ornamental Details

Use details that appear as functional elements and match the architectural style.

Screening:

- Rooftop equipment such as air conditioning units, antennas and communication equipment, mechanical equipment, and vents shall be fully screened from view by use of a parapet or other architecturally compatible screening.
- Place utilities such as gas, electric, and water meters in side yard setbacks or in landscaped areas and out of the line-of-sight from crosswalks or sidewalks to the greatest extent feasible.
- Utilities such as power lines, transformers, and wireless facilities should be placed underground or on rooftops when appropriately screened by a parapet.

- Any mechanical or electrical equipment should be buffered by planting materials in a manner that contributes to the quality of the existing landscaping on the property and the public streetscape.
- Trash enclosures shall be located so that they are not visible from the public right-of-way or neighboring properties. Screen outdoor standalone trash enclosures using walls consistent with the architectural character of the primary building(s) and locate them so that they are out of the line-of-sight from public streets.
- Noise and odor-generating functions shall be located within enclosed structures so as not to create a nuisance for building residents or adjacent neighbors.

Mechanical Equipment

Mechanical equipment includes but not limited to:

- HVAC equipment,
- Gas and electric meters,
- Cable/TV panels,
- Pool and spa equipment, and
- Exterior landscape/lighting equipment.

Trash Enclosures and Bins

Refuse and recyclable materials storage areas should be designed consistent with the City's Zoning Code. Enclosures should be provided to accommodate the numbers and types of trash containers as required by the disposal company.

- Community enclosures should be positioned in a centrally convenient area for residents but screened to the greatest extent possible.
- Trash enclosure areas that can be overlooked from above are suggested to incorporate roof structures to screen the contents of the enclosure from view.
 - Such roof structures should be designed to allow the doors of the refuse container to fully open.
- To enhance safety, lighted person access is recommended at each enclosure.
- Individual bins for households should be screened to the greatest extent possible from public view.

Recreation & Common Facilities

Common recreation facilities such as pools, spas, clubhouses, management offices, barbecues and other facilities appropriate to the development may be included. Common recreation facilities should be key character elements for the neighborhood.

- All architectural and community elements, such as furnishings, lighting standards, and trash receptacles shall be consistent with the selected overall architectural character for the neighborhood.
- Clubhouse and other common buildings should exhibit 360-degree architecture.
- Colors, massing, roof pitch, and materials should be compatible with residential buildings or project theme.

Site Specific

- Planning Area 3 – Lots located along the eastern and southern edges of the Refuge Specific Plan shall be limited to one story. Pitched roof homes in those locations shall be limited to a maximum height of 18' from the approved pad elevation. Flat roof, or parapet roof structures in those locations shall be limited to a maximum height of 16' from the approved pad elevation.
- Planning Area 1 and 2 – Structures adjacent to the Riverside County Sheriff Station shall incorporate screening which blocks direct line of sight from the residences into the sheriff station property.
- Planning Area 2 – Structures adjacent to the public street, and existing single family residential shall be limited to two stories or shall incorporate site-sensitive step backs on upper floors. Direct views into neighboring single-family yards shall be avoided.
- All Planning Area – Roof decks shall be prohibited in all areas.
- Planning Area 4 – Landscape shade trees shall be provided along the perimeter and throughout the site. On street parking areas shall be provided with shade trees.

4.3 Landscape Design Guidelines

The Refuge includes a generous amount of open space to serve the residents. Each planning area will feature a central amenity that includes both passive and active recreational opportunities. The landscape buffer trail in Planning Area 3 will offer a walking path that both contributes to the active amenities of the Refuge and serves as a buffer to the adjacent existing neighborhoods.

The community character is further enhanced through landscape elements. Selective plantings reinforce the scale of streetscapes, neighborhoods, and pedestrian spaces. Strategic locations of trees and shrubs define community focal points and soften architectural massing. The landscape design should incorporate the following concepts:

- Landscape treatments shall maximize the use of native desert and compatible drought-tolerant plant materials. Species must comply with City and Coachella Valley Water District water conservation ordinance requirements. Selecting drought tolerant, native landscaping will limit irrigation needs and conserve water.
- Encourage the use of plants as a major design element including using contrasting textures and mass planting of bold or fine plant material.
- Use of turf grass should be limited to functional play and active use areas.
- Use decorative gravel, decomposed granite, boulders, and similar materials as a texture and design element; size material suitable to remain in place after installation.
- As feasible, landscape in or around retention basins to enhance their appearance.
- Front yards shall provide a minimum of two 24" box shade trees. This requirement may be reduced to one on-site tree when combined with street trees permanently maintained within landscape areas.
- Front yard areas shall provide for a minimum of 60% landscape areas consisting of live plant materials, and a mixture of decomposed granite, cobble, or boulders.
- Front yard areas shall be limited to a maximum of 40% paved area for driveways.
- On corner lots, the driveway shall be oriented as far from the corner as possible.

Walls and Fences

Walls and fences should be an integral part of site design, especially in areas of public visibility. Careful consideration shall be given to their placement so as to assure a natural transition between land uses in addition to privacy, where needed. Walls and fencing should be consistent with community visual theme.

Lighting

Preserve the nighttime dark sky by modulating the number, lumens, casting, and character of exterior light sources. Utilize low intensity, direct and indirect light sources (as appropriate) to the extent required for safety, functionality, and accentuation of landscape design.

- Refer to PDMC Section 24.16 for Outdoor Lighting Requirements.
- Light fixtures should complement the architecture and enhance the landscape.

Irrigation

Planting and irrigation design must meet Coachella Valley Water District (CVWD) standards and the State of California Model Efficient Water Ordinance (MELO).

- Landscape treatments should maximize the use of native desert and compatible drought tolerant plant materials.
- Landscape plans must address wind and water erosion issues and demonstrate the water efficiency gained from plant and irrigation systems.
- All areas not covered by structures, drives, parking or hardscape should be appropriately landscaped.
- The use of turf should be limited to functional play and active use areas.