



# Neighborhood Character (Table 1) Fact Sheet & Focus Questions:

## **BACKGROUND**

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### **NEIGHBORHOOD CHARACTER**

"Neighborhood Context" refers to the defining characteristics such as setbacks, scale, and architectural styles or elements that identify an area or community.

- The South Board of Architectural Review Finding #7 for Projects Subject to Design Review reads:

"There is a harmonious relationship with existing and proposed adjoining developments, avoiding excessive variety and monotonous repetition, but allowing similarity of style, if warranted."<sup>1</sup>
- Residential Design Guidelines will emphasize adherence to neighborhood context and character in order to maintain neighborhood compatibility when considering design for new development or renovation.
- Residential Design Guidelines will also emphasize the neighborhood differences between the urban and rural areas of Summerland.

In addition to the immediate neighborhood, changes in physical and natural elements can define a broader neighborhood context. Descriptions of distinct neighborhoods are useful for determining how a new home or remodel can integrate into the setting by understanding subtle differences between different areas of Summerland.

These differences can include the following elements:

- Land Use: Changes in housing density, zoning, lot size, and public services such as sewer versus septic.
- Streets and Streetscapes: Presence of wide streets or main traffic routes such as Foothill Road, the predominance of private versus public roads, or if homes and front yard landscaping are visible from the street.
- Residential Structures: The visibility of structures and predominate elements.
- Topographic/Natural Features: Proximity to open space, a riparian corridor or arroyo, or significant changes in topography.

### **ISSUES TO CONSIDER**

- What are the important aspects of neighborhood character?
- What are the important elements for Multi-Family neighborhoods?
- What are important elements for single-family homes in the **Urban Area**?
- What are important elements for single-family homes in the **Rural Area**?
- How is neighborhood character defined?"
- If so where are the different neighborhoods and what are the boundaries?

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<sup>1</sup> County of Santa Barbara South Board of Architectural Review Findings for Approval LUDC, Section 35.82.070

## RELATIONSHIP TO EXISTING GUIDELINES AND THE LAND USE DEVELOPMENT CODE

### URBAN AND RURAL AREAS

The Summerland Community Plan established two subareas for the community. These two areas are the **Urban Area** where principally urban land uses exist and the **Rural Area** where land uses are rural or agricultural in nature. An understanding of the character and land uses plays an important role in the development of new design guidelines. When considering Neighborhood Character, it is important to recognize the different characteristics of each area.

### SCALE AND ORIENTATION

This section should be reviewed and consideration should be given to the important elements of scale and orientation in the residential area of Summerland.

"The residential and urban residential areas of Summerland are diverse in style, unimposing and small in scale. The scale of a proposal in relation to both the size of the site and the scale of the neighborhood and community is an important consideration. An applicant should visualize his or her project from different area within the neighborhood and also from higher and lower elevations within the community. The treatment of large surfaces, landscaping, grading and retaining walls should be compatible with a small scale community and should respect the grid orientation of Summerland."

### NARROW LOTS AND SIDE YARDS

This section should be reviewed for important issues or aspects pertaining to the design and articulation of structures. The existing language discusses large expanses of walls and second floor step backs. These elements may be used and clarified in the new residential design guidelines and they play an important role in the compatibility of a new structure or addition to an existing neighborhood.

"As many of Summerland's lots are narrow, special consideration needs to be given to the minimization of the massing of the structure at or near the sideyard setbacks. Single plane walls and large expanses of wall area should be avoided in order to add architectural interest and relief to these areas. Upper floors should be stepped back to enhance view corridors and a feeling of open space between structures.

Figure 9 illustrates the comparative building footprint area (which is shaded) of three conventional lots and three narrower lots of the same lot size with the same setback standards. With a conventional lot (e.g. 70 foot wide lot), the setback is 10% or 7 feet in this example. Assuming two 70 foot wide lots, a total setback of 14 feet would be provided between two adjacent

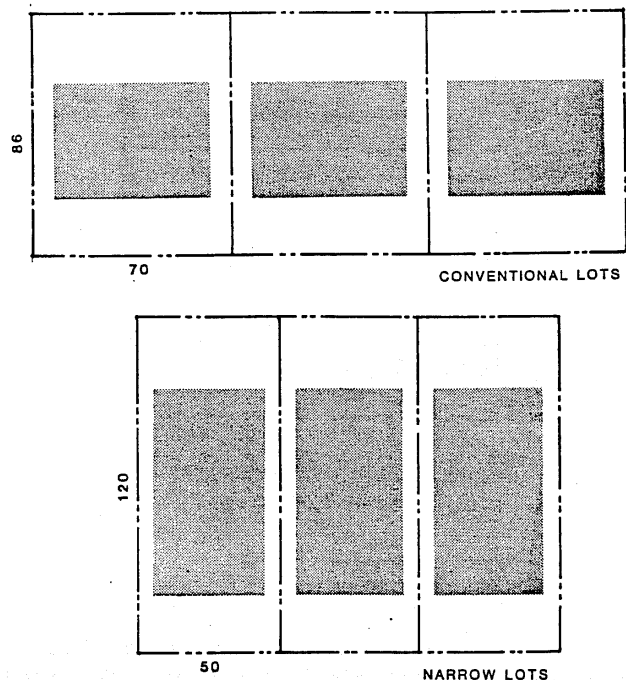


Figure 9 - Effect of Narrow vs. Conventional Lot

structures. With a narrow lot (e.g. a 50 foot wide lot), the same 10% setback (5 feet) provides a total setback between two structures of only 10 feet. In addition, the length of this narrow setback area is greater with a narrow lot than for conventional lots. This figure illustrates the potential for large wall areas and the undesirable closeness of the buildings as well as reduced yard areas."

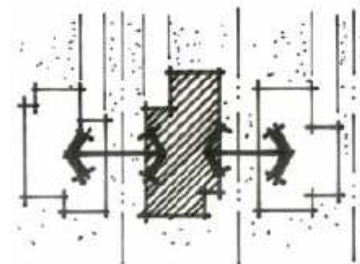
This generally applies to those properties located within the **Urban Area** of the community due to the original lot sizes that formed the community of Summerland. The articulation of long expanses of walls in close proximity is an essential design element to provide relief and solar access. **Rural Areas** of Summerland have larger lot configurations, a lower maximum height and greater options for building form. Articulation is an important element in design, however, it is not as essential as it is in the **Urban Area**.

#### ISSUES TO CONSIDER

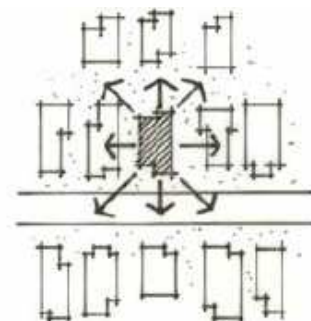
- Applicability and importance in the **Urban Area**
- Applicability to transition areas within the **Urban Area**
- Applicability and importance in the **Rural Area**
- Privacy concerns and issues

#### IMMEDIATE CONTEXT – HOW THE BUILDING RELATES TO SURROUNDING BUILDINGS ON THE BLOCK

These illustrations indicate how a building or structure relates to its immediate neighbors and other buildings on the block and across the street. Taking these aspects into account will help an architect or designer determine important elements in the area, such as setbacks, massing location, rooflines and other materials that define an area.



These illustrations are more applicable in the **Urban Area** of Summerland, where lots are smaller resulting in building being located in closer proximity top each other. The Immediate Context may be applicable in certain cases within the **Rural Area**. In these cases aerial photos and panoramic photos from the proposed building location will assist the designer and staff in understanding the immediate context.



#### FOCUS QUESTIONS

1. What defines neighborhood character?
2. What are the important defining characteristics of Summerland's residential neighborhoods? **Urban Area? Rural Area?**
3. What characteristics should be retained and or encouraged?
4. What architectural styles define the residential areas of Summerland? **Urban Area? Rural Area?**

5. *To what extent should the Summerland Residential Design Guidelines address neighborhood compatibility?*
6. *On blocks where no clear architectural pattern has been established, what standards should a project be subject to? **Urban Area?** **Rural Area?***
7. *Considering the eclectic characteristics of the residences in Summerland, how can building design guidelines be used to achieve neighborhood compatibility and appropriate transitions while still respecting the unique architecture represented in the **Urban** and **Rural Areas** areas of Summerland?*

