

The Beautification of Valley Center Road

Valley Center's Design Guidelines In A Nutshell

Along the Road Edge:

- Native trees, shrubs and ground covers in natural groupings.
- Lodge-pole (post and rail) fencing along both sides of the pathway
- Signage design integrated with site and building design; size limit is 32SF; more than one business at the same address should use a monument sign.

General Guidelines:

- preserve oaks, sycamores, natural topography and landscape features such as rock formations
- diverse "early California" architectural styles, and contemporary interpretations of these styles
- small parking areas with tree canopies for shade
- use of stone or wood for fencing and walls

Design Guidelines History

In the late 1980s, the County Supervisors appointed a five-member Design Review Board for Valley Center, and adopted Guidelines for site design, architecture, signage, parking areas and landscaping in the heart of town. Valley Center's Design Guidelines are unique to Valley Center and are also part of the County Zoning Code. They apply to commercial, industrial and civic projects, and to planned residential developments. These land uses are concentrated mainly in VC's two "Village" areas -- along VC Road between Woods Valley and Vesper, and from the south end of Cole Grade north to Horsecreek Road. Another commercial-industrial niche is located at Harvest Farms Village, 29000 Lilac Road; a third is located at the intersection of Castle Creek and Route 395 near the I-15.

Business and property owners who are relocating parking lots, replacing landscaping and in other ways remodeling their VC Road properties will find

lending copies of the Design Guidelines in the Valley Center Library. Copies of this 82-page booklet can also be purchased for less than \$10 from the County Department of Land Use, 15 Ruffin Road, San Diego. Even if your project does not require permits, you'll find ideas in the Guidelines that will help make your property attractive to customers and will also contribute to a spruced-up country flavor in the heart of town!

The Valley Center Design Review Board meets on the 2nd Tuesday of every month in the VC Library. Current members of the Design Review Board are: Roger Levkulics, Lael Montgomery, Gary Martin, Susan Moore, and Robson Splane. For more information, or if you would like to get involved in Design Review Board projects, contact Lael Montgomery 751-0300

A NEW LOOK FOR VALLEY CENTER ROAD

Valley Center Road is a mess right now but in just a few months a spiffy new road will emerge from the clutter. Traffic will move more freely -- imagine two lanes in each direction! Left turns will be safer thanks to left-turn pockets and a raised landscaped median on most of the road between Woods Valley and Cole Grade. Three miles of recreational pathways, which eventually will be fenced, will encourage walking, jogging and horseback riding between the North and South Villages. What a difference \$43 Million can make!

Properties along Valley Center Road are changing, too. Business owners have been re-locating their signs and parking areas. A few extensive remodeling projects are already underway. Other renovations are in the works. Properties are also changing hands. New commercial and residential developments are being planned for both the South and North Villages. In a few years, the heart of Valley Center will be completely transformed.

Design Guidelines Promote Details that Reflect VC's History and Spirit

The purpose of Valley Center's Design Guidelines is to ensure that renovations and new construction add to the rural, small-town feel that most residents

value so highly. Even though our Guidelines were written twenty years ago, they are remarkably in-step with many of today's ideas about building upon, rather than destroying, a community's own distinct "sense of place."

Features of the NEW VC Road

Between Woods Valley and Cole Grade, the NEW Valley Center Road will feature:

- **Pedestrian/equestrian dirt pathways** on both sides of the road; pathway surfaces are dirt; pathway widths vary from 6- to 20-feet depending on the location; pathway will be 6-inches higher than the road surface @ the same height as the curb; pathway begins behind the curb and extends to private property; in some areas where the pathway abuts a slope, the County has purchased an easement for that slope.
- **Lodge pole fencing.** The County will line one mile of this pathway, on both sides, with lodge-pole fencing; the remaining 2.7 miles of lodge-pole fencing will be installed as properties are developed.
- **Concrete sidewalks** in the South Node from Woods Valley to just past Mirar de Valle.
- **6" Concrete curbs and gutters** and curbed driveway entrances.
- **Asphalt surface consists of** a 6-foot bike lane on each side, two traffic lanes in each direction (12' wide outside lane, 11' wide inside lane); separated by a 14' wide median.
- **Fewer dips and rises.** Most of the new road will relate similarly to roadside properties as the existing road, the centerline elevation will be within 12-inches of what it is now. However, the centerline elevation in areas close to Moosa and Keyes Creeks will be as much as 18" higher than it is now. In these spots, the view of the road from roadside properties, and the view of properties from the road will be significantly different.

Where's the road edge?

The NEW, IMPROVED Valley Center Road is being built for motorized and non-motorized traffic. Therefore the "road edge" actually is the outside edge of the

non-motorized pathway which abuts private properties on both sides of the road. Gradually private property edges will become obvious. In the meantime, property owners might appreciate the following hints for deciphering the cryptic codes that are written on the layers of wooden “stakes” that are lining the edges of the construction project. Stakes marked “R/W” (Right of Way) mark the outside edge of the Public Right of Way; your private property begins here. When the pathway abuts a slope, the public/private property boundary is marked with an “S-E” (Slope Easement) stake is outside the “R/W” stake to show where the Slope Easement ends.

What About Landscaping?

Landscaping, signage and fencing along Valley Center Road are details that contribute to the look and feel of the heart of town, and to how well it functions. The Design Guidelines call for extensive landscaping of private property along the road edge, reflecting the longstanding community goal of a tree-lined Valley Center Road. (Many of the huge eucalyptus trees that were removed to accommodate the current road widening were planted years ago by the Optimists with the help of the Scouts, and other service clubs.)

Except for hydro-seeding on some slopes, however, the County project EXCLUDES ROADSIDE LANDSCAPING. Unless there is another community-wide tree-planting effort, (any volunteers?) individual property owners will be responsible for planting trees and other frontage landscaping after DPW finishes the curbs driveway cuts, and pathways.

The Guidelines include a Plant Suggestion Guide that lists plants and briefly describes characteristics and growing requirements. Remember that not all of these plants are suitable for the relatively extreme microclimate along Valley Center Road where winter temperatures dip to the mid twenties routinely, and to the mid-teens at least once a decade, and summer temperatures soar to more than one hundred degrees. Local nurseries can suggest drought tolerant AND cold hardy trees, shrubs, grasses and groundcovers that will also do well in the

soil conditions along Valley Center Road. It pays in the long run to consult with a professional and to design an overall landscaping plan -- before you plant anything. A professional can help you select plants that suit your microclimate and your site, and make sure they are planted correctly.

Tips that will help your design reflect the valley's rural, arid character are:

- group trees, and shrubs, in natural clusters instead of in rigid rows or geometric forms.
- limit the use of shrubs in plantings with trees and ground covers; lush "tropical" landscapes are out of character AND expensive to maintain.

Signs & Fences

The County Department of Public Works is required to relocate on private property all signs and fences that the road widening disturbs -- *whether or not existing signs and fences comply with the Zoning Code*. Evidently, DPW and Code Enforcement work independently. (This dashes the dreams of many that the road widening would automatically eliminate the abundance of code violations along VC Road -- such as chain link fencing and razor wire, and signs that are too-many, too-cluttered, too-big, too-tall, and/or internally lit.)

Roadside signs and fences are as important as landscaping to the "feel" of our community. While Valley Center's Design Guidelines leave plenty of room for individual creativity, they also promote dimensions and materials for signs and fences that have a rural flavor. The underlying big idea is for the built environment to fit into and harmonize with the natural environment. Generally, earth tones or secondary colors are preferred to primary colors.

Fences, walls and gates along Valley Center Road should be constructed of natural stone, wood, stucco, or wrought iron. Long stretches of fence should be "broken up" by landscape features - trees, shrubs, rock formations, or variations in topography. Fences should be not more than 42-inches high, and walls less than 36-inches. Property developers will be asked to install lodge-pole

fencing along pedestrian pathways that abut their frontage as commercial and residential properties are built, and re-modelled.

Guidelines for signage are:

- Monument sign or a freestanding single pole hanging sign; limited use of wall signs.
- Wood, with painted or raised letters or logos.
- Colors coordinated with buildings, limited to three, plus black and white
- External lighting - projected & shielded.
- One sign per 250-feet of frontage; one additional sign for properties with more than 250-feet of frontage.
- Properties with more than one establishment should consolidate their signs into a common sign panel.
- Height limits: Monument Sign is 42”; Pole Sign is 10-foot pole with a panel @ 8-feet.
- Area limits: Monument Sign Face is 18SF; Pole Sign Face is 15SF; Wall Sign is 10% of elevation area to a maximum of 100SF per building
- Dimensional limits: Monument Sign: Length is 6-feet; Width is 3.5 feet. Pole Sign: Length is 4-feet, Width is 4-feet.

Architectural Styles & Details

New building and extensive remodeling projects are required by the County Zoning Ordinance to be in compliance with local Design Guidelines. Again, the big idea is to build in a way that reflects our town’s history and country heritage, and most importantly retains the human scale, variety and individualized details that typify California country towns that have been built over time. Valley Center’s Design Guidelines for architecture leave a lot of room for individual preferences and creativity by encouraging a variety of “early California” styles, as well as modern interpretations of these. Architectural styles include Adobe, Mission, Classic Western, and Monterey; Monterey style combines the Classic Revival architecture that characterizes the eastern United States with early adobe and mission. The point of the Guidelines is to assemble

the sort of pastiche that characterizes Ojai, Montecito and Old Palm Springs – rather than the architectural uniformity, for instance, of Rancho Bernardo.

Good Examples

Good examples of properties – built or renovated recently – that differ greatly from one another but are still in accord with the Design Guidelines are easy to find. On Cole Grade Road: Valley Center High School and Theater (building and landscaping); St. Stephens Church (building, landscaping and signage); Countryside Veterinary Hospital (building, landscaping and signage); and the Valley Center Library (building and landscaping). On Valley Center Road: The Country Skillet (building, landscaping, and signage -- except for the spot of neon); The Courtyard (building, landscaping and signage); Fat Ivor's (building); and Wynn Engineering (building and signage).

Elements to Be Avoided

The Guidelines pointedly discourage: chain link, razor wire, unfinished concrete and concrete block, dumpsters, artificial turf, neon and illuminated plastic signs, and highly reflective or garish colored surfaces. New construction and renovation project plans need to show substitutes for these in order to comply with the County Zoning Code and secure building permits.

Code Compliance

Code compliance in Valley Center has been a mite relaxed along Valley Center Road since the road construction started. People say, why put energy into landscaping, signs, and fences when the entire heart of town is torn to shreds? Well, true! But, this is the ideal time for planning. In a year, or so, the road will be finished, existing properties refreshed and remodeled, and new enterprises built. (In the last year, or so, we've seen some nice looking plans at the Design Review Board!) Some renovation projects are already in the works. Property owners who recognize that it's time for a makeover are getting a jump on a friendly visit from County Code Enforcement!

The Design Guidelines can help create a distinctive and traditional small town flavor that most residents value - but it will be Valley Center-ites who do the work! It will take everyone's enthusiastic cooperation to make the heart of town as attractive as possible.