

Friends of Squaw Valley
DRC Design Recommendations
on
Building Coverage, Open Space, Light Access
Village at Squaw Valley Specific Plan
3/28/2014

The recommendations below are in reference to the proposed Village Core Commercial district. We will comment at a later date on other District guidelines, though many of these recommendations will apply in other districts also.

Building Coverage

Guidelines/Standards for Key Issue Areas Recommended by FoSV

1. The Open Space Map in the Open Space Element of the Specific Plan shall detail in text, illustration, and map (to scale) the open space elements required in the Specific Plan and Design Guidelines including all public gathering areas, pedestrian corridors, paths, shared landscaping areas, natural areas, and parks. Where common areas are to be in separate to be in individually or jointly owned parcels, public or privately owned, this shall be delineated.
2. 50% of the Village Commercial Core area shall be open space to include public gathering places and outdoor public pedestrian areas such as parks, primary and secondary plazas, pedestrian corridors, and landscaping adjacent to public use areas, but not including open air private use areas, open air private recreational areas, or parking lots.
3. All building sides not fronting on a public gathering area must be softened by landscaping – minimum 15 feet in width along pedestrian ways, 25 feet along roads. There shall be a 40 foot minimum 'foliage buffer' along parking lots to provide a 'soft edge' transition and a welcoming entry to the village.

Open Space

Guidelines/Standards for Key Issue Areas Recommended by FoSV

1. 50% of the Village Commercial Core area shall be open space to include public gathering places and outdoor public pedestrian areas such as parks, primary and secondary plazas, pedestrian corridors, and landscaping adjacent to public use areas, but not including open air private use areas, open air private recreational areas, or parking lots. (Repeated from Building Coverage section above due to applicability here.)
2. A main public gathering area (primary plaza) shall be included in any village expansion. It shall be capable of supporting large public events and acting as a central gathering area: a

minimum of 1 acre in size not including space for any features which cannot be readily converted to public use such as a concert or event. As required in other sections, it should be unshaded (standard of 10am to 4pm, December 21) making a north south orientation of buildings around it critical.

3. Smaller public gathering places (secondary plazas) at the confluence of pedestrian corridors shall be included in the open space plan.
4. At least one covered walkway shall be provided through each primary and secondary plaza and passageway to allow for walking during poor weather.
5. At least two main pedestrian/ open space walkways to intersect in the main plaza are required in any village expansion to create additional street life and space for shops.
6. Pedestrian corridors shall be proportionate with height of adjacent buildings, widening where buildings increase in height. However, the minimum widths provided shall be:
 - Primary pedestrian corridors, minimum 50 feet wide
 - Secondary pedestrian corridors, minimum 25 feet wide
 - View corridors, minimum 80 feet wide
7. Public gathering areas and public pedestrian corridors may not be converted to private areas.
8. All building and public use areas shall be accessed above ground and without crossing a road.

Light Access

Guidelines/Standards for Key Issue Areas Recommended by FoSV

1. As discussed previously, new buildings must not cast a shadow on other buildings or on primary plazas and primary pedestrian corridors (unshaded standard: 10 am to 4 pm, December 21). 50% of secondary plazas and secondary pedestrian corridors may be shaded during this period. Individual developers shall provide an accurate shade study to illustrate this as buildings and site plans are proposed.

Squaw Valley General Plan, Land Use Ordinance and Design Guidelines

Adopted Policies and Guidelines Relevant to Critical Village Planning Design Issues

Friends of Squaw Valley has reviewed the Squaw Valley General Plan, Land Use Ordinance, and Design Guidelines as they relate to the proposed KSL project. It is a lengthy body of regulations. Because the project is so large, we have found that it is most useful to look at the “big picture” design policies and guidelines.... those addressing town planning level design issues such as the mass, height, scale and feeling and form of the community we envision rather than reviewing detailed building permit level guidelines – such as signage, snow storage, etc. We have listed what we view as the critical “big picture” design guidelines and policies below – those which are related to issues which will be discussed first by the DRC. More will follow as the DRC discussions continue.

Building Mass and Scale

1. Section 220.16 of the Placer County Code (page 87 of the SVGPLUO) does not specifically dictate height limitations in the Village Commercial District which is what much of the plan area is currently zoned. However, it gives the DRC much discretion in that it states that ***“height limits shall be set for particular developments through the design review process where other developed or developable parcels are affected by a proposed building.”***

Further direction is then given in the SV Design Guidelines also related specifically to the Village Commercial District:

2. SV Design Guidelines, Building Design Guideline 1, page 21: ***“Building design should compliment and harmonize with neighboring buildings.”*** Height and scale are listed as 2 ways to achieve compatibility.
3. SV Design Guidelines, Building Design Guideline 3, page 21 (in part): ***“A building or project should be in scale with its immediate surroundings and with the area.”***

The following guidelines relate to zones other than Village Commercial. We include PD wording in some cases since Section 220.14 (page 87) of the SVLUO calls for use of the PD ordinance unless requirements noted in the LUO are more restrictive.

4. PD projects: ***“In most cases, the 35 foot height limit shall prevail, however, where the applicant can demonstrate: 1. That the establishment of a greater height limit will result in a reduction in land area disturbed by such developments; 2. That the project, as proposed, will reduce the visual impact of a similarly sized project which would meet the normally required 35 foot limit; 3. That the additional height requested will not create additional adverse impacts on public services nor on the environment; 4. That the buildings proposed will not adversely affect the view from adjoining development, nor adjoining developable land; and 5. That the***

buildings proposed will not interrupt adjoining properties potential for solar access.” (Land Use Standards 137.13, page 81, SVGP)

5. Heights in other zones such as High Density Residential and Heavy Commercial are specifically limited to 30 to 35 ft. (Land Use Standards 137.12, page 81, SVGP)

Protection of views via restrictions on height and mass of buildings

6. The Village Commercial district text in the Squaw Valley General Plan on page 85, para 4, states that high density development may be justified but that: *“At the same time, the maintenance of the principal views of the mountain peaks and hillsides must be retained to the maximum degree possible. It is therefore intended that these regulations establish pedestrian open space requirements, floor area ratios, and open space ratios which provide the framework for a pedestrian and view oriented urban design.”*
7. SV Design Guidelines, Site Design Guideline 2, page 10: *“Buildings should be sited so that they do not interrupt the flow of the skyline as viewed from common vantage points.”*

The following guideline relates to PD zones but includes a relevant recommended finding:

8. PD projects, if they exceed 35 ft. in height must demonstrate *“That the buildings proposed will not adversely affect the view from adjoining development, nor adjoining developable land.”* (Land Use Standards 137.13, page 81, SVGP)

Building Coverage

There are no hard building coverage guidelines for the Village Commercial district listed in the SVGP, SVLUO, or SV Design Guidelines. Rather, a combination of minimum required open space and maximum floor area ratio are used to determine a maximum building coverage permitted, resulting in a great degree of flexibility by the DRC. In addition, the minimum open space and floor area ratio guidelines must be considered in concert with other guidelines such as those requiring view retention, solar access, and compatibility with existing buildings, in order to determine final coverage permitted as individual applications are proposed. As a result, the DRC has considerable discretion in this area.

Village Commercial open space guidelines are included in the SVLUO (See # 2 under Open Space (below.) However, this 20% open space guideline includes paved area such as plazas, walkways, and pedestrian areas on top of buildings (such as parking podiums or roof decks).

A Floor Area Ratio of 300% for hotels and 100% for other uses is permitted in SVLUO Village Commercial Section 220.22 (page 88): *“The gross floor area of buildings shall not exceed 300% of the gross lot area for hotel uses nor 100 percent of the gross lot area for other uses. Parking lots shall not be included in the calculations of floor area ratio.”* Thus, the more open space required on an individual lot, the lower the building coverage, and the higher that buildings would be permitted to rise. At 20% open space on an individual lot, and 300% FAR (hotel), a 3.75 story building would result. With a 100% FAR (other uses) and 20% coverage, a 1.25 story building would result. However, again, the ultimate coverage and height of buildings is also restricted by the discretion of the DRC related to other design, view, and solar issues. It is not possible to determine what building coverage will result using the FAR ratio alone before the DRC weighs all of the issues and guidelines.

Open Space

1. SV Design Guidelines, page 10, Site Plan Guideline 1: *“The existing natural features of a site should be retained and used to advantage. The incorporation of features such as creeks, trees, natural slope, rocks and views often leads to a more interesting and unusual design.”*

Pedestrian circulation as it relates to open space

2. The Village Commercial section of the SVLUO (Section 220.20, page 87) states that: *“Pedestrian open space shall be provided in an amount equal to at least 20% of the gross lot area, except in the case of parking lots and parking garages for which the minimum pedestrian open space shall be 10% of the gross lot area. The term “pedestrian open space shall mean walkways, plazas, and the like which are designed, improved, and maintained for use by pedestrians, and open to general use by occupants of the premises or the public; hallways or lobbies designed for access to hotel rooms or offices, are not within the scope of this definition; accessible landscaped or natural areas may be included. Pedestrian open space shall not be used by vehicles for purposes other than public transit, service, or maintenance. Pedestrian open space need not be at ground level and may include pedestrian ways which are sheltered by independent roofs or by projections from buildings above them. Pedestrian open space shall be so oriented, proportioned and improved as to serve as part of a coordinated general pedestrian system connecting principal origins and destinations and supplementing public sidewalks along streets.”*

We assume that this section applies specifically to individual lots and not common open space separately or jointly owned such as the major plazas which would be additional.

3. The Squaw Valley General Plan calls for a pedestrian orientation in the Village Commercial District (page 84, para 5): *“The intent of creating a “Village Commercial” land use district is to allow for and guide the development of an environment that will be interesting to people on foot, that would remove or reduce pedestrian competition with the automobile.... attracting both residents and visitors to the village core and thus promoting the social and economic vitality of the entire area.”*
4. Squaw Valley Design Guidelines: *“In the Village Commercial District special emphasis will be placed on the provision for pedestrian open space.”* (SVDG 9, page 11)

Light Access

1. SV Design Guidelines, Site Plan Design Guideline 4, page 11: *“Buildings should be sited with consideration given to sun and shade...”*

General Design Guidance for the Village provided in the Squaw Valley General Plan

The following sections from the Squaw Valley General Plan provide general design guidance which can be referred to during discussions of a variety of design issues:

Much of the plan area is designated Village Commercial in the General Plan where a mix of land uses is permitted and encouraged ***“to allow for and guide the development of an environment that will be interesting to people on foot, that would remove or reduce pedestrian competition with the automobile.... attracting both residents and visitors to the village core and thus promoting the social and economic vitality of the entire area. As the focal point of a destination ski resort, development occurring within this district must be equally oriented to the ski hill and the major pedestrian and vehicular access points. Commercial and tourist residential uses are encouraged to be provided within the same structure. The area so designated in the Squaw Valley General Plan has strong potential for complementary development, attracting both residents and visitors to the village core and thus promoting the social and economic vitality of the entire area.”*** (SVGP Pages 84, para 5)

The Squaw Valley General Plan recognizes that a vibrant village will require additional visitors lured by new accommodations and summer recreation activities. Yet, it notes that ***“At the same time, the quality of the permanent residential community must not be adversely affected by the detrimental effects of short term, high intensity use by a transient, seasonal population.”*** (SVGP Page 5, para 3) and that: ***“...it is apparent that rational limits must be placed on the development of Squaw Valley. In an ecologically sensitive area such as Squaw Valley, development beyond a certain capacity will damage the recreational and living experience of current and future users. A potential conflict exists between permanent residents, enjoying their community, and land owners profiting from a greater amount of tourist dollars flowing into the area. The construction of additional tourist related recreational development, though it may bring economic gains to many, can result in a diminished ability for the local residents and visitors to enjoy the area.”*** (SVGP Page 7, paras 1 and 2)

In addition, the following planning principles at the beginning of the Squaw Valley General Plan guide all future development decisions in Squaw Valley including design decisions:

“Sound conservation and development practices as stated or implied in the Placer County General Plan and which this plan accepts as planning principles, require that the following guidelines be followed in the future development of Squaw Valley:

- 1. Both the quality and quantity of development must be planned to conserve, protect, and enhance the aesthetic, ecological, and environmental assets of Squaw Valley.***
- 2. Future development in Squaw Valley should occur only where public facilities and services, including transportation, can be provided.***
- 3. Intense utilization of already disturbed areas shall be promoted and preferred to fringe development or non-contiguous development of previously undisturbed areas.***
- 4. Decisions regarding future development should be based upon sound social, economic, and environmental practices.***
- 5. In planning for the growth and development of Squaw Valley, an optimum balance of activities and facilities, which recognizes the strengths, weaknesses and inter-relationships of various segments of the Truckee-Squaw Valley and Tahoe area economies should be encouraged.”*** (SVGP, p.4)