

Mission Sisters Residences Narrative

DYAR Architecture

March 6, 2025



Dear Chair LePage and Members of the Planning Commission:

This letter is to give an introduction and description of what we are calling the Mission Sisters Residences, located on Mission Street (2, 3, and 4) Northeast of First Avenue. The projects consist of three, new, single-family residences on directly adjacent lots in the 'Carmel Woods' neighborhood, replacing three unremarkable homes.

Designing three homes together provided wonderful opportunities to address, respond and manifest the residential principles and character of the village in a way designing a single home on a one lot can never do. There are some stellar examples in town of multiple homes being designed and built together, perhaps most notably Hugh Comstock's development on 'Comstock Hill' (fives homes together) and the Three Sisters by Henry Hill on Lopez where the relationship of connection and difference between the buildings is explored and connective, shared landscapes are created. We take these historic examples as inspiration, but the design process really began and was very much guided by the principles and objectives laid out in Carmel's Residential Design Guidelines. Below, we'll use the guidelines as a format to describe these projects:

Preserving the Forest Character (1.0, 2.0)

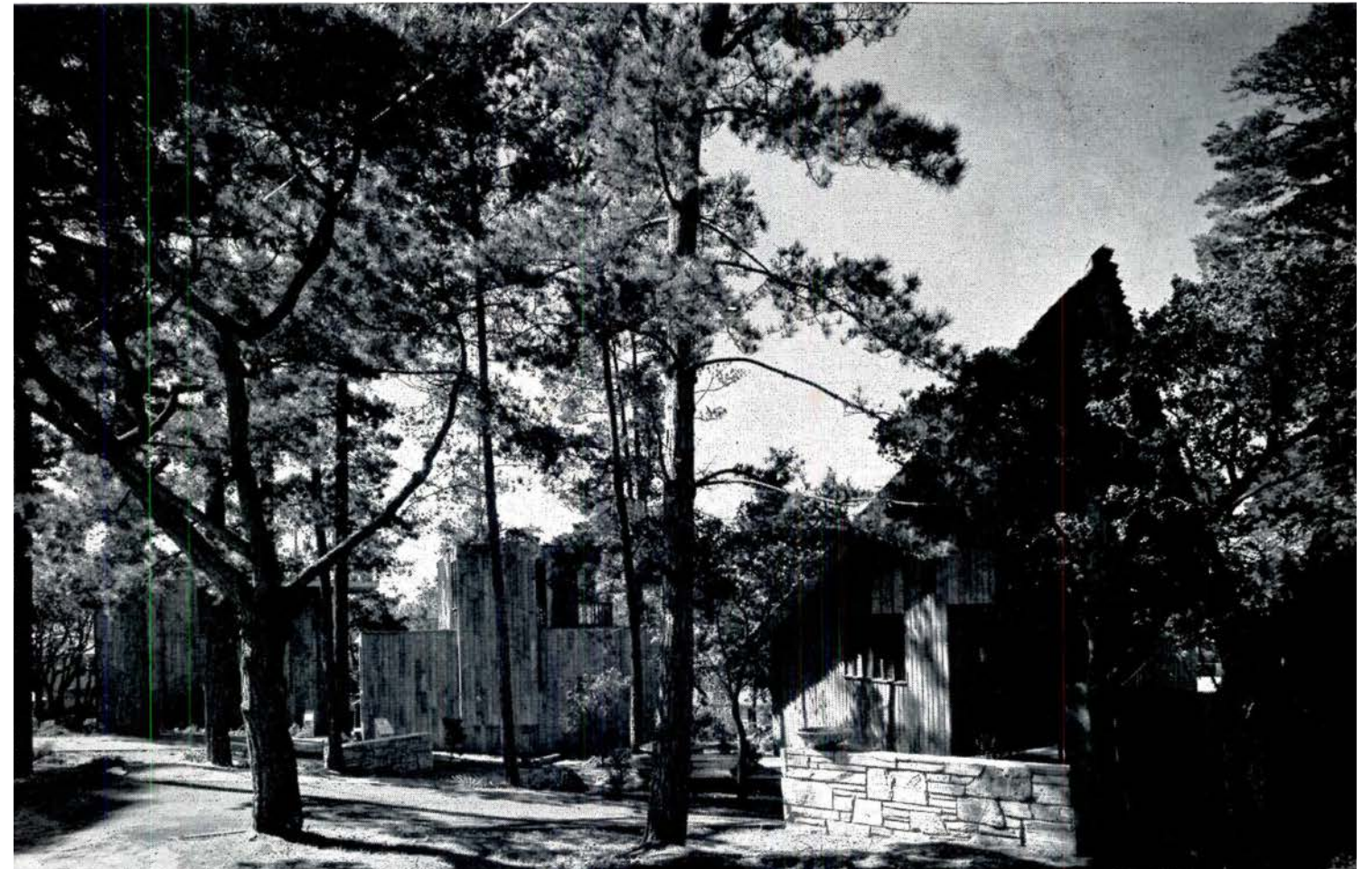
These designs absolutely began with understanding the existing forest character and preserving and enhancing the existing Oak and Pine woodland which stretches across the front of these properties. We worked to establish a continuity of the existing urban forest across lot lines, so that it was the forest character and not man-made demarcations which defined especially this street facing edge of the sites. By doing so, the architecture is, exactly per the guideline objective, filtered by the forest and landscape reducing its 'scale and prominence' from the street.

Another guiding principle for the site and architectural designs is creating an informality with no imposition of 'grandiosity' whether in scale or the layout of the architecture in the landscape. More to be discussed on this this later, but the emphasis on informality certainly extends to the treatment of the public right-of-way where the natural woodland landscape spills across the property line blending and integrating the property site and the area to the pavement. Existing edges of the street pavement and drainage are maintained.

Topography (3.0)

While there is a fairly gentle slope down from North to South across the front of the properties, the middle and Southern-most lots slope more steeply down from Northwest to Southeast. The design for each of the properties seeks to maintain the sense of the natural, existing slopes of the lots and each takes advantage of the slope to reduce the bulk and mass, especially as seen from the street. What we are referring to as the Hapuna residence at the North, has the least slope, but the narrow, two-story element of the building is kept towards the lower section of the property, away from the oak/pine woodland and back from the upper-level windows of the Primary Bedroom of the neighbor's house to the North. Additionally, in the revised design, the bottom floor of the two-story element is below grade, creating a split level and keeping the maximum height of the two-story slate roof lower than the maximum allowed height for a one-story home. This lower the roof 6'-6" down from the original design. An existing, low retaining wall between North lot and the Middle lot (Hapuna and Kailea) is proposed for removal in lieu of a planted slope, where landscape screening is installed. (3.3, 3.4). The Kailea house follows the topography and its entrance is lower than the street. As it moves East into the site, it steps down to a hallway directly off a courtyard terrace at grade. It again steps down to the bedroom wing which is two-story. This taller, two-story element is purposely located at the lowest area of the site to minimize mass. At Ahana (the Southern property), there is more of a topographic drop from West to East. In this design, we take advantage of that to provide the look of a low one-story house at the street and locate a lower level just slightly below grade at the bottom rear of the property. (3.3)

All storm water is proposed to be retained on site with natural swales, augmented by percolation pits. Kailea and Ahana both have extensive green roofs which will also increase stormwater retention. (3.5)

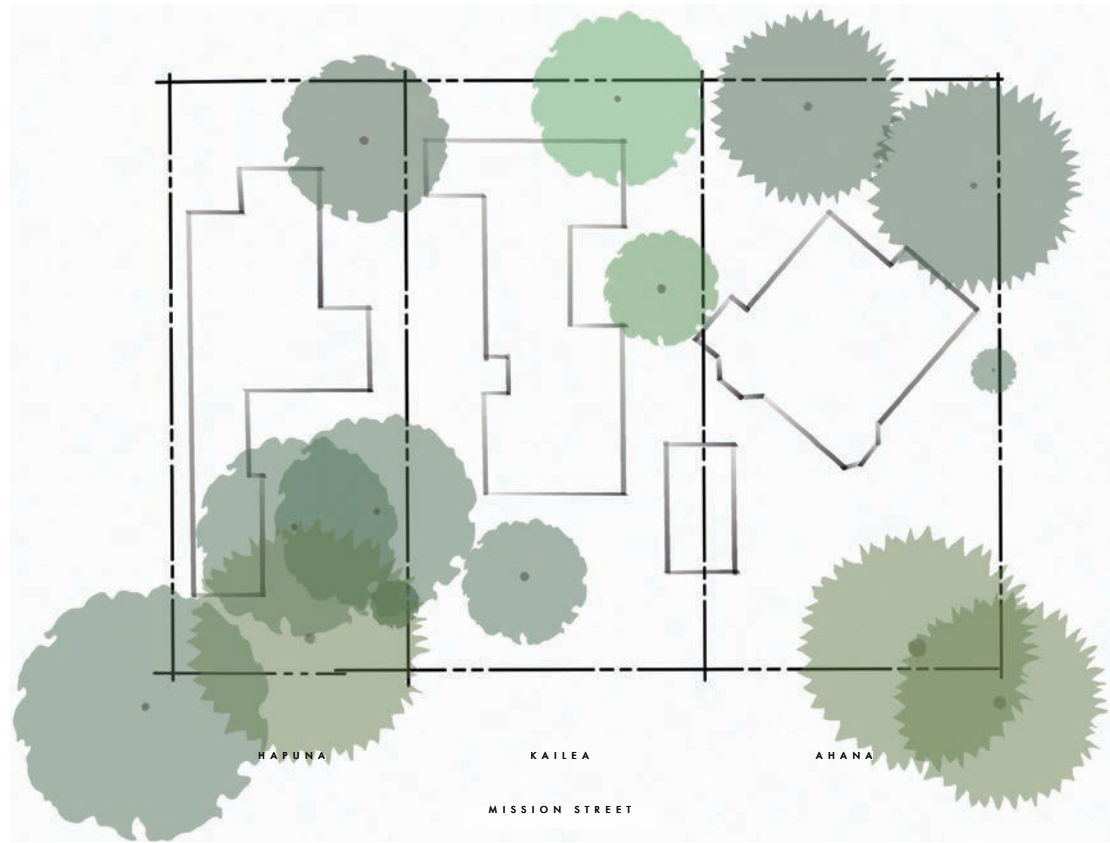


Three Sisters By Henry Hill

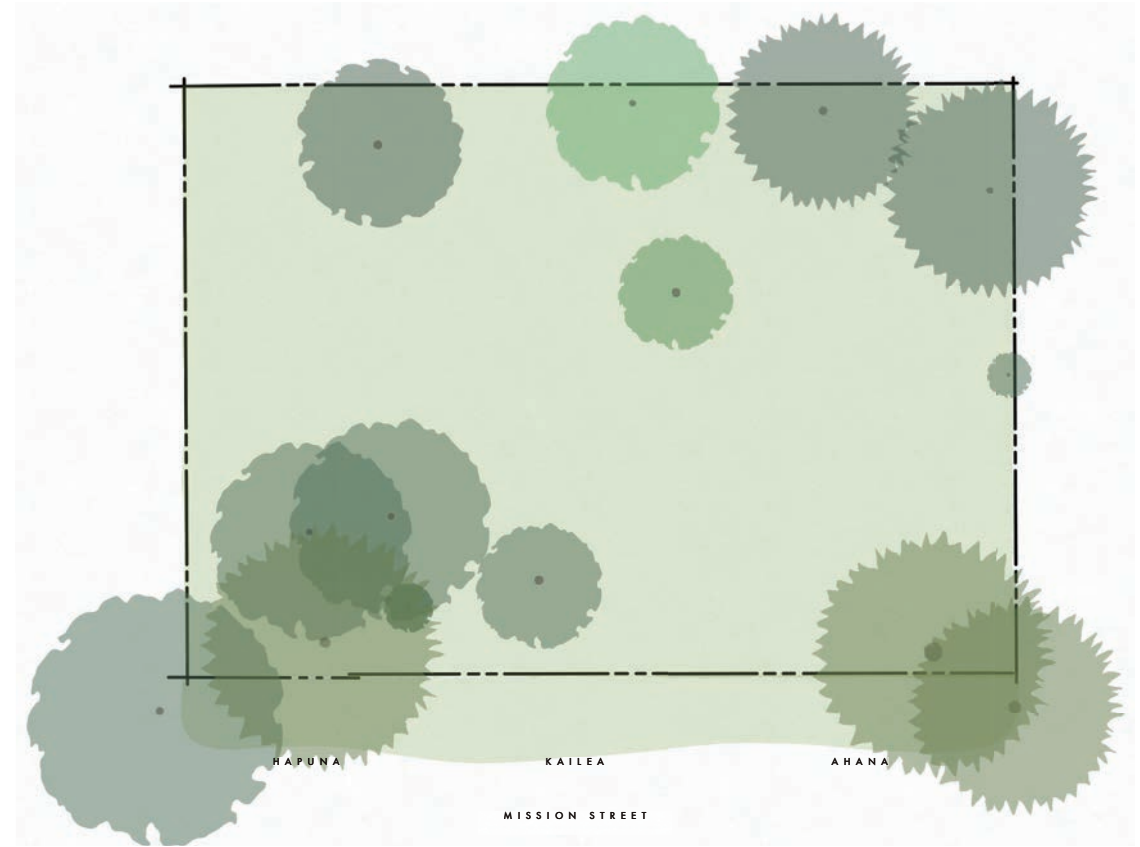


Comstock Hill By Hugh Comstock

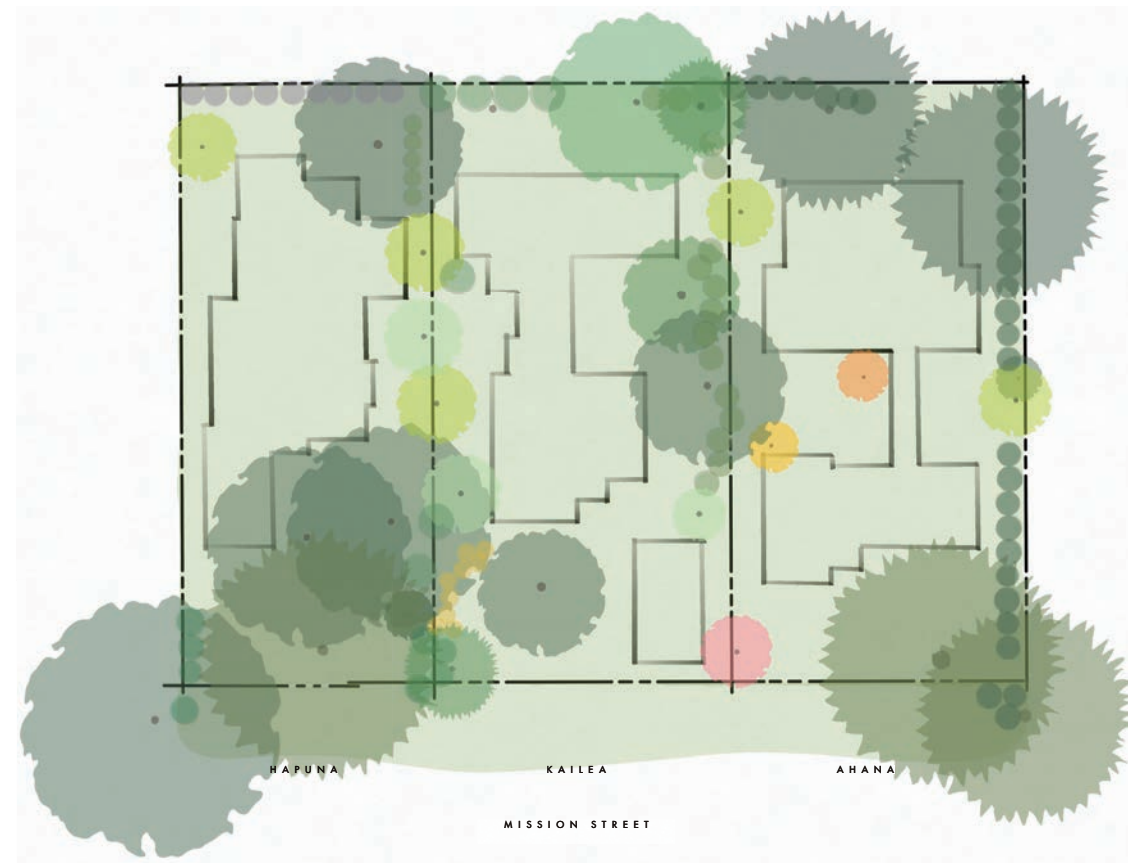
EXISTING HOUSES AND TREES



OAK/PINE FOREST UNIFIES THE SITE



PROPOSED SITE - NATURAL SCREENING



Shared Landscape and Open Space (4.0)

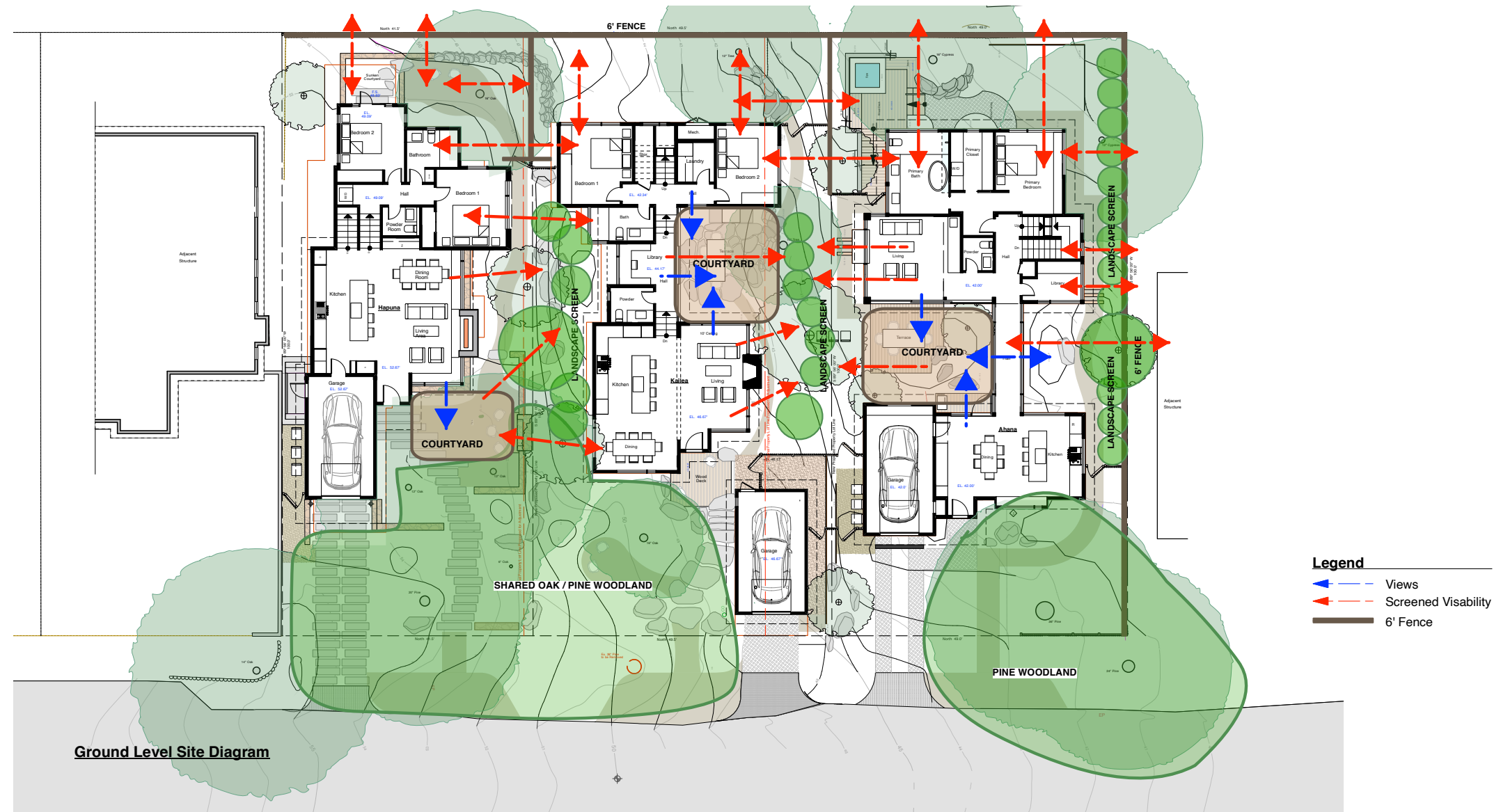
It was important to us to create a shared landscape and large open space with the oak/pine woodland which extends across the fronts of the properties to enhance the views and experience from the street. This maintains the forest character of the streetscape and provides a thick buffer or layer between the private homes and the street. A shared, forest woodland is emphasized while (what unfortunately is NOT often the case in Carmel) the property line demarcations are very much obscured and blurred. We designed this so that it is not the repeated, typical 40' lot widths, one after another that are conspicuous. We even have used more varied, non-standard lot widths for the three properties which also deemphasizes this artificial demarcation.

We also created usable, open space courtyards for each of the homes. Each of the courtyards acts as an outdoor room with strong visual connections from interior to exterior. They are also well insulated from the street and the adjacent properties. Hapuna, at the North, because of the configuration of its woodland, has its courtyard as an entry court under the oaks, but is still 25-feet back from the front property line and 35-feet back from the street pavement. Both the middle lot, Kailea, and the Southern lot, Ahana, have their open courtyards separated from the street by parts of the structure. The houses both open to their respective courtyards and the courtyards are heavily screened with landscaping from the adjacent property. These courtyards are staggered from one property to the other for privacy but also to create irregular, informal side yards as encouraged in the guidelines. (4.3, 4.4). The layered landscape screening also deemphasizes the side property lines creating visual 'penetrations' from one property to the other and limiting the use of fencing.

The structures themselves, based on the existing oak/pine woodland, shared landscapes and open space, provide varied setbacks along the street frontage. (4.3). We also are proposing one detached garage closer to the street on the middle lot, which adds to the variability of streetscape.

Progression of Spaces (4.5)

Hapuna, the Northern property, progresses from informal, planted right-of-way, through layered plantings getting taller as you move into the site through a couple of low stone walls which lead to an entrance courtyard well in from the street, enclosed by a low stone wall. Kailea, the middle lot, goes from the informal right-of-way, stepping down with the topography into the site on natural stone steps to an entrance deck, below the street level. Ahana, on the South, goes from the informal right-of-way, into the site on natural wood square pavers, passing by a fence-enclosed garden to the entry porch.



Privacy, Views, Light and Air (5.0).

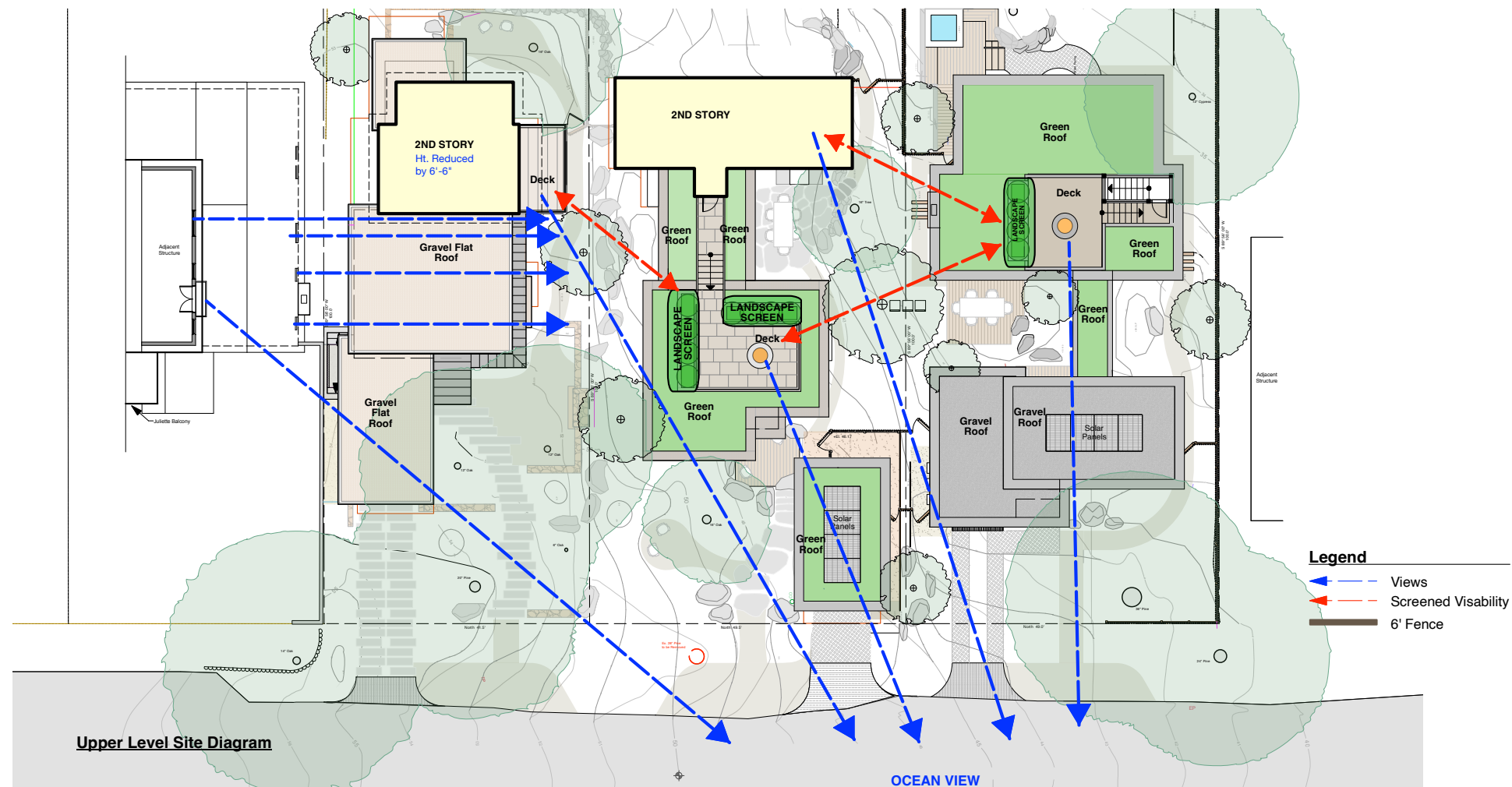
This section of the guidelines, as it was prioritized from the very beginning of the design process, we feel these projects are particularly successful at addressing. These properties are fortunate to have a view of the ocean through the trees out towards the Southwest. We worked to locate usable outdoor spaces with small, upper level decks on each home to allow opportunities to view this beautiful natural feature, (5.2) while screening them from each other and adjacent properties and the street (5.3).

The siting and massing of the different houses was significantly generated from the need to maintain (from one property to the other) light, air, and privacy, as well, as, views across to the Ocean View beyond. Thus, lower building forms are positioned towards the street and two-story elements back farther and downslope-all per the design guidelines. These considerations also led to the configuration of the two-story elements being narrow and slim in the East-West Direction, so light, air and views are protected North to South across the properties. We enable views from second floors and from one property across the other (including from the neighbor to the North) by using low flat-roofs on the higher West sides of the lots.

As the Commission is well aware, whenever very small, single-story homes are replaced in town, it's very difficult to satisfy all the neighbors, as they usually prefer no change. We did try hard to balance ALL the respective neighbor impacts with the rights to be able to fairly use the City's development standards and design guidelines. It must be said, however, that the proposed new roof heights barely exceed the existing roofs and are often lower.

From the beginning of the design process, we focused on the impacts of the Hapuna House which has much less topography than the other two properties and thus less potential to lower the different building masses. Listening carefully to the neighbors to the North who do have some views to maintain across the Hapuna property to the South and Southwest, and the neighbors to the East and Northeast, who wanted to see as little of the new structure as possible, we went back to the drawing board and redesigned the home keeping the front part of the home actually lower than the existing house, still keeping the two-story element back from the South windows of the neighbor's house to the North and reducing the height by 6'-6" from the original submission. Additionally, we shifted the two-story element away from the North property providing even more light and air to the neighbor.

Because of the view issues for the neighbor to the North and a significant tree in the rear property line, the two-story element really cannot be located anywhere else to minimize impacts, but it is still over 60-feet from the homes to the East, and the lower Kailea's two-story will be 45-feet from its Easterly neighbor. Also, existing trees to remain screen most of the Hapuna house from its East neighbor and help screen Kailea as well. Objectively, there are no significant impacts to privacy, view, light or air to the East. The property behind Ahana is actually built almost on the rear property line. This condition, along with the fence and existing trees to remain, eliminates any views from this property to the Ahana property. Any views from the Ahana property to this neighbor will just extend over the neighbor's existing roof. (5.1)



Kailea locates its 2-story bedroom element also as a narrow, pitched roof form at the lower, rear of the property. The building forms toward the West of that are flat, living roofs (as well as the detached garage), so the views from the properties higher to the North are to natural landscape. The small, upper deck on Kailea has a deep planter located along its North and East sides so that taller screening plants can be installed to block views to and from anyone sitting at the location. The small deck is also located at the center of a roof at the approximate center of the lot, to minimize privacy impacts. It is over 38-feet to the property line and almost 53-feet to the pavement. It also has a large existing lower canopy Oak tree screening it from the street, as well, as the detached garage with its own living roof. A new Tree will be planted to the south to screen it from Ahana.

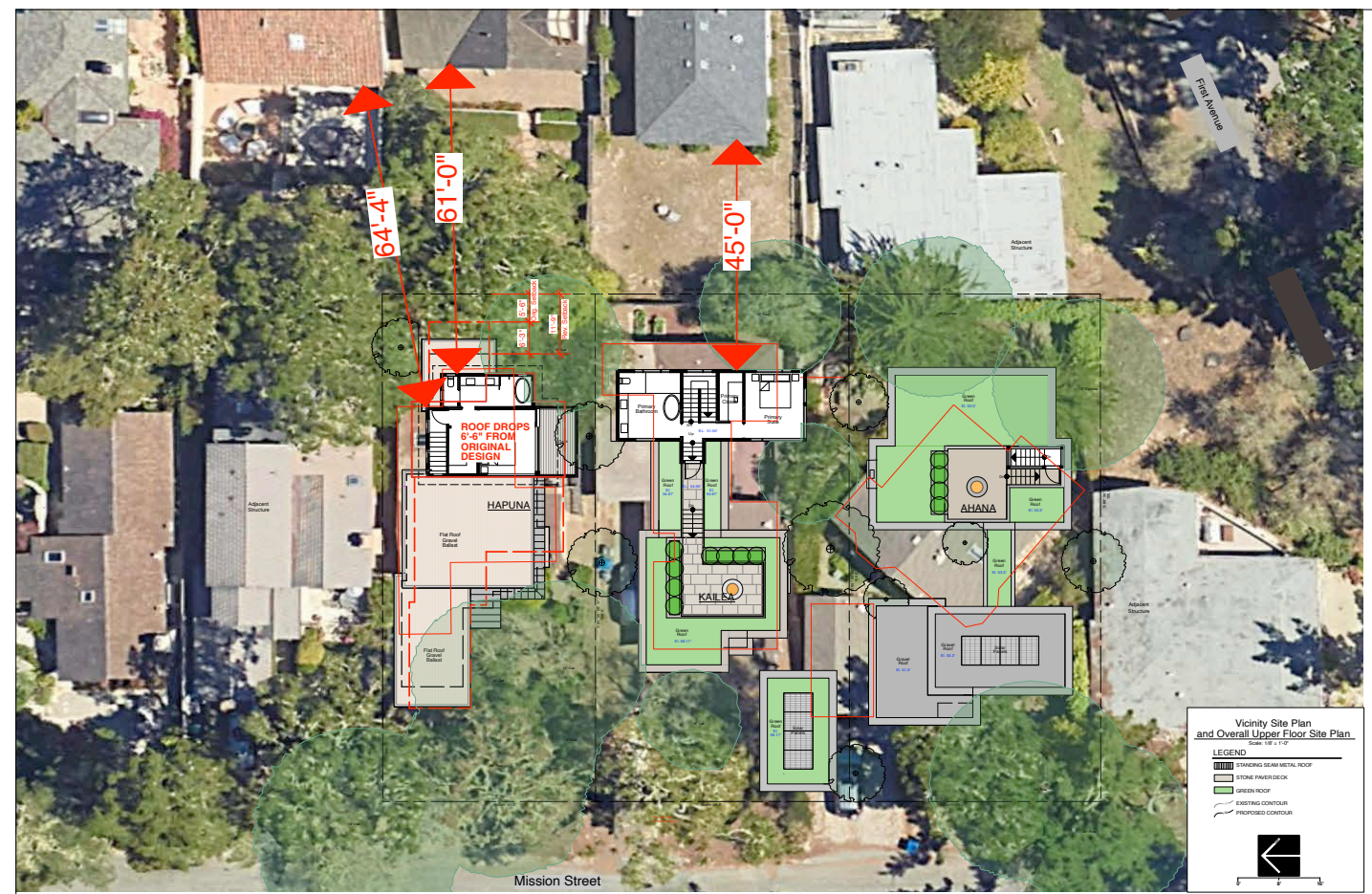
As discussed previously, the design for Ahana utilizes the steeper topography to locate a second floor below, instead of above the entrance level, thus being the least impactful towards the street, as well as maintaining views across it. The small, upper deck here is also set below the level of the roof to additionally obscure anyone sitting here. As with Kailea, a deep planter is located at the north of the deck to provide natural landscape screening. Here again, the deck is located at the center of the property and is 55'-7" to the front property line and almost 68-feet to the street. It is also well set back from the rear property line with an extensive living roof between it and the eave.

Parking and Access (6.0)

All three garages are small and for a single car. They are all integrated into the respective building designs and subordinated to the overall main homes. (6.1). Each of the garages are clad in, along with the garage doors themselves in the respective siding style of the house of which it is connected. To enhance variety along the street edge (6.2), the setbacks to the garages and main houses are staggered. Hapuna, at the North, is a single-car, simple, traditional flat-roof form setback 22'-7" from the property line, leaving room for the oak/pine woodland to the South. At the Middle lot, Kailea, we are proposing a detached garage (6.2) with living roof in the front setback and pulled toward the South to provide room for the Oak/Pine Woodland shared with Hapuna. Not only is this critical to providing the varied front yard setbacks, it allows the main portion of the house to be lowered and made less massive from the street. The Southern lot, Ahana, has the garage well integrated into the overall building form, including using a flush-mount garage door where the board and batten wood siding is in the same plane as the siding surrounding it.

Driveways are all kept minimal with Hapuna using stone-paver tire strips, Ahana using wood-paver tire strips, and Kailea with a decomposed granite drive which is very short as the garage is within 18" of the property line. (6.3)

All front pedestrian walks are separated from the driveway. (6.4).



Building Mass and Scale (7.0)

As part of the design process, we started with designing building forms/blocks which contained the different functions in narrow widths to minimize scale of the pieces and then augment that with smaller elements for a particular function, like a single-door entrance way. We found this overall keeps the scale of the building elements minimal. (7.6)

The other extremely effective strategy was to keep the building forms nearer the street, on the higher side of the lot, low, while locating 2-story elements down slope. The two-story elements are also narrow, all below the maximum height and we keep the second stories to less than 25% of the overall floor area. The Ahana house reveals the least mass to the street of all three projects and appears to be a single-story home. We found the strategy of keeping the large majority of the floor area as a single-level balanced with a smaller upper level to work exceedingly well to balance the need to mitigate bulk and mass, while providing necessary open space for the site. (7.2)(7.7)

The northern Hapuna house, with the least topography of the three properties, requires the flat roof forms near the street to maintain neighbor views and has a low pitched, narrow, gable form for the two-story element. Its two-story element has its narrowest side at the North and South, avoiding the 'tall canyon' effect.(7.3). The middle property, Kailea, as discussed, by using a detached garage at the street and lowering the home, nestling it into the hill, as well as, stepping the building down with the natural topography very much keeps its mass and scale down to all the properties around it. (7.4)

Building Form (8.0)

The forms of all the buildings are traditional and simple. Hapuna uses low, flat roofs and a minimally pitched roof with natural stained wood overhangs. Kailea uses the slate-clad gable for the 2-story element (no overhangs) with traditional, mid-century flat roof, here done as a living roof. Ahana uses the traditional, mid-century modern roof. These flat roofs are similar to the work of Koningsofer and connected to the Bay Area Modern style as identified in the Historic Context statement.(8.1, 8.3)

The forms all emphasize an informality and natural elegance. Entries are small, human scale and deemphasized.

Connection and Difference (9.1)

The Mission Sisters Residences draw from a rich tradition of Carmel homes built together or as a group, such as with the storybook style of Comstock Hill (Five homes), the original Sand and Sea development by Koningsofer, and Henry Hill's Three Sisters. The Mission Sisters, as did these other groupings, seek to create connection between the houses, as well as, differentiating themselves amongst the urban forest which extends across all three. These historic examples and what we are proposing on Mission Street, take a more nuanced, subtle approach to the idea of diversity and style, which helps emphasize the shared landscape and open space between them. It has to be said that exceedingly different architectural styles directly juxtaposed can be more jarring and conflictive. As with the older examples, the Mission Sisters relate and engage in a dialog with each other with landscape as the connective tissue. Perhaps, most importantly each home is positioned and sited based on its individual situation between each other, on the topography of the hillside and based on nestling each into the woodland. This automatically creates difference, interest, responsiveness and appropriateness to each other, the neighborhood and the setting. These designs are really the opposite of a tract home development. It is also true that just style difference does not necessarily create diversity that is compatible with the city in a forest concept. Each of these homes has very different organization, layout, and general character from each other while still relating. The use of living roofs, modern interpretations on wood siding, and general innovative craftsmanship is used throughout each project. They are each individual and each has its own unique elements. (9.1). The architectural language and detailing of each home stays consistent to itself. (9.2). The detailing is simple and emphasizes the informality of the overall designs- nothing is grandiose. (9.3)

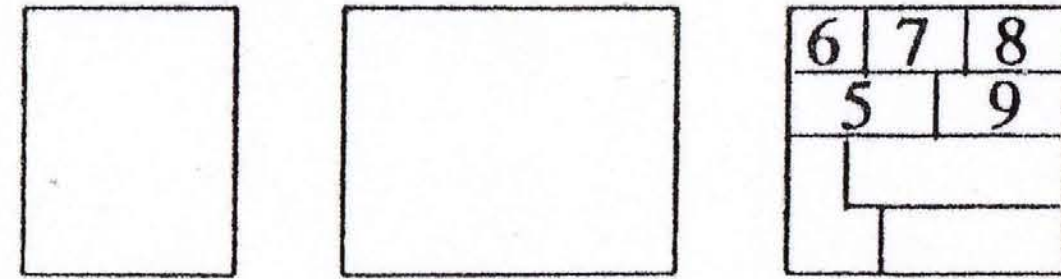
Materially, it was decided that each would be finished in warm, natural materials and predominantly be wood cottages, but each would be a different type of wood, stain and siding pattern. Hapuna is a warm brown, wood, horizontal shiplap siding with slate on the sloping roof, Carmel stone garden walls and pavers. Kailea is a naturally greyed board and batten siding with a slate on the pitched roof form, natural boulders and stone for walkways and site retaining slopes, granite for house accents like the fireplace, natural, ipe wood spaced board decks as well as an extensive living roof. Ahana is a warm, natural wood finished tight board and batten siding, living roofs, board-formed concrete for accents and natural wood spaced board decking. (9.5, 9.6, 9.7, 9.8)

Each home has its own magic and character yet are linked together by a similar sensibility on connecting to landscape, light, and openness.

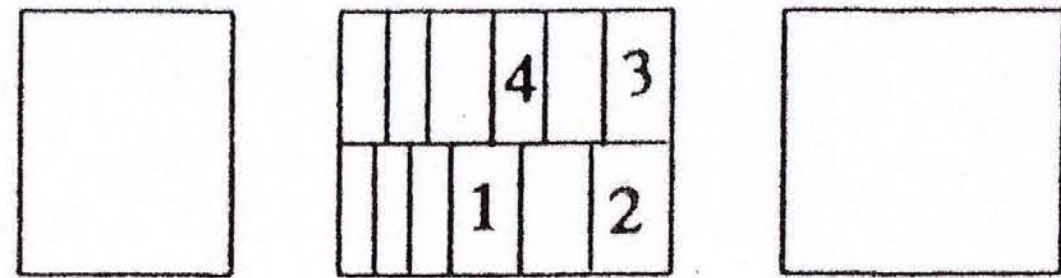


Comstock Hill Tudor Revival By Hugh Comstock from 1924 to 1928. Photo from Santa Rita Street

Santa Rita



Santa Fe



10 →

Ocean Avenue

Torres

Site Plan of Comstock Hill (Lots 5,6,7,8,9)



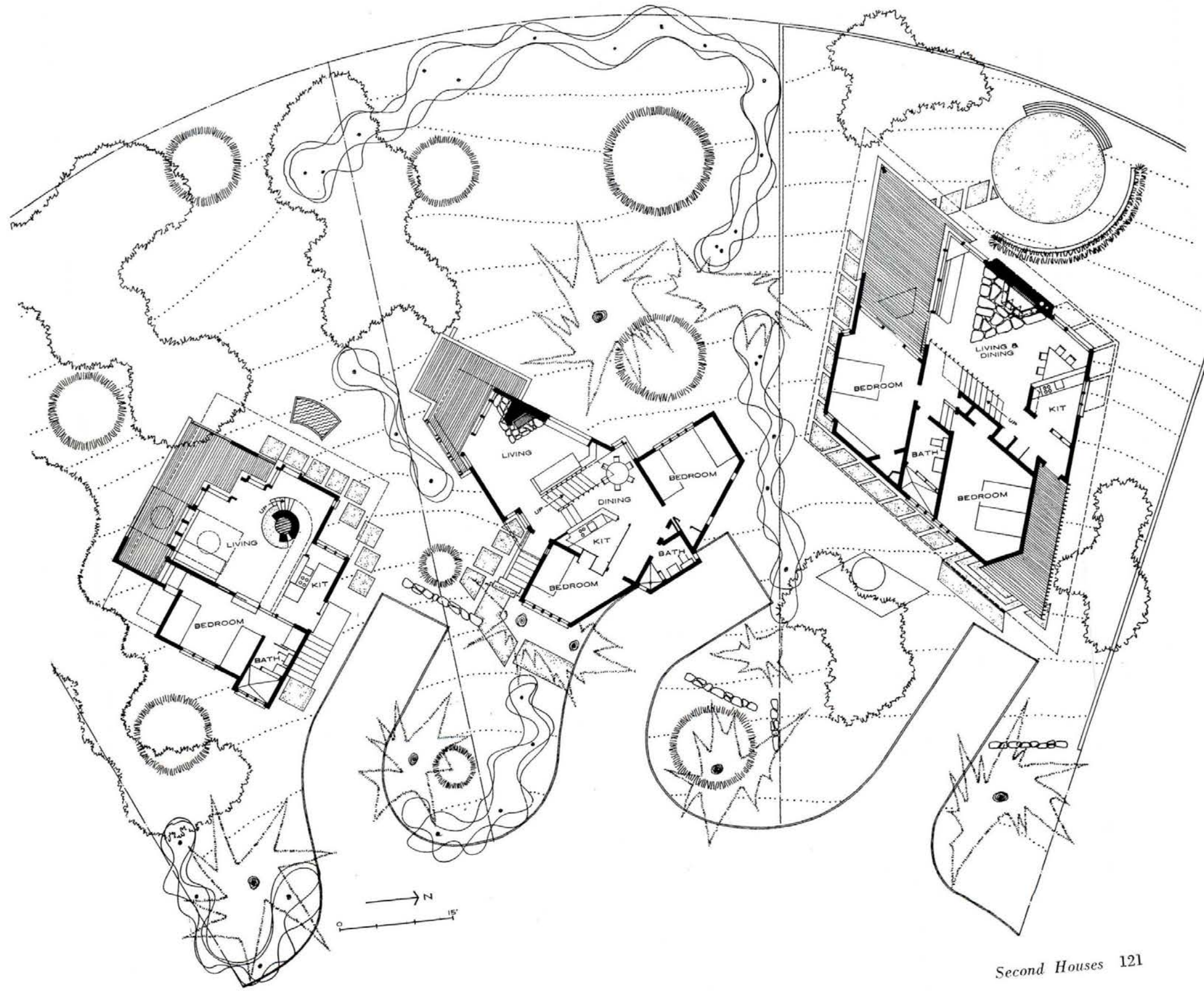
Scenic House By David Allen Smith with Shared Landscape



Three Houses of Different Styles Lacking Diversity



Modern-style "Sand and Sea" house cluster by Jon Konigshofer From 1941



ARCHIT 1962 P/A

Glass (9.11, 9.12)

I would like to differentiate between glass/glazing and windows. As these designs are all of a modern sensibility, linked to the Bay Area Modern tradition, the glass used is appropriate to the style. One of the character defining elements of any modern style is creating an inside/outside connection with glass. The character defining element of the Bay Area Modern style from the Historic Context Statement' states, "wide expanses of glass set within wood frames'. In the modern idiom, glass needs to be seen as a system of solid and voids, with glass defining the spaces BETWEEN the mass. The use of glass in the modern tradition is wholly different from what the guidelines refer to as "windows". Windows are located within a wall and are appropriate to more traditional architectural styles. Large expanses of glass in the modern style, actually reduce the sense of mass and scale as they dissolve the materiality of a structure and act as a 'space between' the masses. Additionally, glass used under overhangs and under a dense tree canopy appears darker and dematerialized.

In these homes, the use of glass, is reduced toward the street for privacy and is primarily opened up into interior courtyards screened by landscape. Each of these homes makes strong inside- outside connections to connect the inhabitants to the forest and landscape of this wonderful natural environment. Landscaping is used for layering and screening.

The frames for the glass in each of the homes is different: Hapuna uses Douglas Fir wood, Kailea uses Mahogany, and Ahana uses aluminium consistent with the more modern style.

Landscape (10.0)

The landscape designs closely follow the design guidelines objectives. All trees will remain (except for an unsafe Pine on City property). Plantings are native and drought-tolerant. The shared landscapes reinforce visual continuity along the street while maintaining a sense of informality and discovery.

Sincerely,

Erik D. Dyar, AIA



Adjacent Clarence Mayhew and Jon Koningsofer houses