



Town of Ross

Planning Department

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www.townofross.org

LANDSCAPE PLAN REVIEW

For applications for permits from the Town Council.

This document is provided to assist applicants in preparing planting and irrigation plans that will comply with the Town's landscaping guidelines and requirements.

When is a landscape plan required?

If planning approval is required for a project (i.e., design review, variance, hillside lot permit), a landscape plan must be submitted with the development plans submitted to the Planning Department for the following projects:

1. New single-family homes;
2. If required by the Town Council during project review in order for the project to conform to Design Review or the Hillside Lot Ordinance guidelines ;
3. New construction and rehabilitated landscapes for public agency projects and private development projects with a landscape area equal to or greater than 1,000 square feet;
4. New construction and rehabilitated landscapes which are developer or contractor-installed in single-family and multi-family projects with a landscape area equal to or greater than 1,000 square feet;
5. New construction and rehabilitated landscapes which are homeowner-provided in single family and multi-family residential projects with a total project landscape area equal to or greater than 2,500 square feet;
6. Substantial remodels, as defined in Ross Municipal Code Chapter 14.04: "the renovation of any structure, which combined with any additions to the structure, affects a floor area which exceeds fifty percent of the existing floor area of the structure within any 36 month period. When any changes are made in the building, such as walls, columns, beams or girders, floor or ceiling joists and coverings, roof rafters, roof diaphragms, foundations, piles or retaining walls or similar components, the floor area of all rooms affected by such changes shall be included in computing floor areas for the purposes of applying this definition. This definition does not apply to the replacement and upgrading of residential roof coverings."

Note: "Rehabilitated" landscapes include replacement of existing turf or replacement of turf with other landscaping.

Who can prepare the landscape plan?

Refer to the California State Business and Professions Code Section 5640 for plan preparation licensing requirements. Landscape plans should be prepared by a professional with expertise to prepare planting and irrigation plans that comply with Town guidelines as well as water efficient landscape and fire safety requirements.

Process

The process for plans that require Town Council review shall be as follows:

1. The plan must be designed in accordance with Marin Municipal Water District (MMWD) Water Efficient Landscape Code and the Ross Valley Fire Department (RVFD) Standard 220, if applicable.
2. The landscape plan is submitted with the planning application and will be reviewed with the related planning applications.
3. If approved, the landscape plan must be submitted with the building permit application and must be pre-approved by MMWD (or a letter of exemption must be submitted) and RVFD (if a VMP is required). If the MMWD or RVFD approved plans substantially differ from the Town-approved plans, the changes may require additional review by Town staff or the Town Council.

What is required at completion of landscaping?

Prior to project final the planning department must inspect the site to review compliance with the approved plans. Applicants must also schedule a field inspection with the MMWD to certify that the installation was according to the MMWD stamped and approved plans (if not exempt), and to confirm the project meets their backflow prevention requirements. A final inspection from the RVFD is also required. The Town may also require a report by the project arborist to confirm all tree protection measures have been implemented.

Applicants may be subject to construction completion penalties if landscaping is not installed within the applicable construction completion time limit.

Landscape Plan Submittal Requirements

Below is a list of items typically required in order to properly review a landscape plan. In some instances, not all the items listed below will be required. Applicants are encouraged to consult with the town planner prior to filing an application.

- Written statement of design intent, outlining the concept of the landscape design.
- Written Neighbor acknowledgements (see Variance/Design Review application requirements). The Town requires applicants to consult potentially affected neighbors as early in the process as possible, and in advance of filing the application. Applicants who work cooperatively with affected neighbors in advance move more swiftly and successfully through the review process.
- North arrow
- Drawing scale
- Identify all property lines, easement lines, dimensions, and setbacks.
- A survey may be required. If work is proposed within a Town right-of-way a survey is required, or a surveyor must locate the property boundary adjacent to the right-of-way.
- All streets and right-of-ways adjacent to the property. Provide street names.
- Total modified landscaped area in square feet.
- All trees with a diameter of 6 inches or greater measured 4.5 feet above ground.
- Identify the Non Intrusion Zone for all Protected and Significant trees (See Ross Municipal Code Chapter 12.24) on site.
- Identify the Non Intrusion Zone for all off site Protected and/or Significant trees (See Ross Municipal Code Chapter 12.24), if the Non Intrusion Zone falls on the project site.
- Submit evidence that a certified arborist has reviewed and approved all planting and irrigation proposed within the Non Intrusion Zone of a Significant and/or Protected tree.
- Locations of any wells and related tanks or equipment.
- Existing contours (dashed lines) and proposed contours (solid lines) with a minimum of two (2) foot contour intervals.
- Location of any creeks, streams or watercourses (even if seasonal) and the recommended 50 and 25 foot watercourse setbacks from the top of bank. The town may require the top of bank to be identified by a surveyor or geomorphologist.
- Location of existing and proposed trees, shrubs, plants and turf to be removed or retained. Any trees proposed for removal indicated with an "X."
- Legend summarizing botanical and common name, quantity, spacing, initial planting size and size at maturity (height/width of dripline) of all proposed plant materials.

- Plant legend should identify the following: 1.) low water use (W) 2.) native plant (N) and 3.) fire resistant plant (F). Trees should be identified as deciduous or evergreen.
- Locations of all existing and proposed structures on the property, including garages or carports, storage buildings, air conditioners, generators, arbors, patios, decks, swimming pools and spas, etc. Distinguish between what exists and what is proposed.
- Details on the design, materials, and finishes for all new walls, fences, trellises, trash enclosures, patios, paths, railings, paving, and other landscape features.
- Top and bottom height of all proposed retaining walls.
- Offsite buildings within 25 feet of property lines.
- Impervious Surfaces. The area of all existing and proposed impervious areas in square feet and percentage of site area shall be identified on the plan or a separate attachment. Impervious surfaces include, but are not limited to, building footprints, paving, hardscape that is not porous, and pools.
- Applicants are advised to review plans with the Marin Municipal Water District (MMWD) in advance of submittal to verify compliance with all requirements. If the MMWD-approved plans substantially differ from the Town-approved plans, these differences may require additional review by Town staff or the Town Council.
<http://www.marinwater.org/170/Landscape-Plan-Review-Requirements>
- Location of any large utility boxes or fire stand pipes that may be visible from the street or adjacent sites.
- Location of existing and proposed refuse and recycling areas. (Roofed structures must comply with setback, lot coverage and floor area requirements. Fenced enclosures are acceptable.)
- Exterior landscape lighting plan. If there is no lighting proposed, indicate this on the plans and application. Identify type of fixture and provide cut sheets of any proposed landscape lighting fixtures. If the lighting is not approved by the Town Council, the project may have to return for additional review if lighting will be installed prior to project final.
- Defensible Space. There may be areas on a property where vegetation will need to be thinned, limbed up, or removed to create defensible space. In addition, new landscaping must meet defensible space requirements. Please refer to the Ross Valley Fire Department Standard 220.
<http://www.rossvalleyfire.org/documents/prevention/standards/220%20-%20Vegetation%20Fuels%20Management%20Plan.doc%20Final.pdf>
Cal Fire <http://www.readyforwildfire.org/landscaping/>
Home Landscaping For Fire <http://anrcatalog.ucdavis.edu/pdf/8228.pdf>
- Plans shall identify removal of species constituting a high fire risk including, but not limited to, bamboo, cypress, and California juniper within 100 feet of structures or within

10 feet of a street or fire access road. Refer to the fire prone species list in Ross Valley Fire Department Standard 220.

- Sites within the Wildland-Urban Interface shall have a Vegetation Management Plan. See RVFD Standard 220 (above).
- Plans should identify that trees will be limbed up to at least 10' above existing and proposed structures for fire safety.

The following information is not required, but may be useful to the Advisory Design Review Group or Town Council when considering a landscape plan:

- Color plans
- Inset or keyed example photos of proposed plant species
- A section and/or elevation that includes the proposed landscaping, to scale, at the time of planting and at maturity

Tree Removals. How many trees proposed for removal? _____

Tree Replacement. How many trees are proposed for replacement? _____

	Check One	
	Yes	No
Right Plant, Right Place. Will proposed plants have adequate space when mature growth is reached, adequate sunlight and appropriate watering, verified using a reference source such as the Sunset Western Garden Book?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Water Conservation. Will the plan comply with the Marin Municipal Water District Water Efficient Landscape Plan requirements? http://www.marinwater.org/170/Landscape-Plan-Review-Requirements	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Permeability. Have impervious surfaces been reduced and permeable surfaces used as much as feasible? Is landscaping designed to slow water movement and minimize run-off?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Invasive Plants. Are any species listed on the Cal IPC list of potentially invasive plants http://www.cal-ipc.org/ such as running bamboo, fountain or Mexican feather grasses, or periwinkle proposed? If yes, which potentially invasive plants are proposed, and how many feet from the nearest open water course or natural open space are the plants proposed to be planted? List: _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sustainability. Have guidelines been followed regarding vegetation preservation, minimizing potential erosion, minimizing stormwater management, permeability, etc.?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fire Safety. Does the plan remove fire prone species within 100 feet of structures?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Screening. Does the landscaping preserve and improve privacy screening between sites? Does the landscaping minimize the appearance of driveways and parking areas?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Town Design Review and Hillside Lot Guidelines

The purposes of Town Design Review include preserving the special qualities to the town, including the ambience and beauty created by the open and tree-covered hills, winding creeks and graciously landscaped streets. The Town also seeks to improve stormwater quality and reduce site runoff. (Ross Municipal Code Section 18.41.010)

Landscape plans should be consistent with the Town Design Review and Hillside Lot standards and guidelines. The Town's landscaping guidelines are found in the Ross Municipal Code and General Plan and include the following:

General

- Landscaping should be integrated into the architectural scheme to accent and enhance the appearance of the development. (RMC §18.41.100(j)(1))
- Landscaping should include appropriate plantings to soften or screen the appearance of structures as seen from off-site locations and to screen architectural and mechanical elements such as foundations, retaining walls, condensers and transformers. (RMC §18.41.100(j)(2))
- Parking pads, pools and tennis courts, should be sited to minimize their observed presence on the site, taking into consideration runoff impacts from driveways and impervious surfaces. Front yards and street side yards on corner lots should remain free of structures unless they can be sited where they will not visually detract from the public view of the residence. (RMC §18.41.100(l)(1))
- Landscaping should be provided to protect privacy between properties. (RMC §18.41.100(m))
- Sites should be kept in harmony with the general appearance of neighboring landscape. All disturbed areas should be finished to a natural-appearing configuration and planted or seeded to prevent erosion. (RMC §18.41.100(a)(2))

Access and Parking (RMC §18.41.100(e)(1-3))

- Good access, circulation and off-street parking should be provided consistent with the natural features of the site. Walkways, driveways, curb cuts and off-street parking should allow smooth traffic flow and provide for safe ingress and egress to a site.
- Access ways and parking areas should be in scale with the design of buildings and structures on the site. They should be sited to minimize physical impacts on adjacent properties related to noise, light and emissions and be visually compatible with development on the site and on neighboring properties. Off-street parking should be screened from view. The area devoted to driveways, parking pads and parking facilities should be minimized through careful site planning.
- Incorporate natural drainage ways and vegetated channels, rather than the standard concrete curb and gutter configuration to decrease flow velocity and allow for stormwater infiltration, percolation and absorption.

Lighting

- Exterior lighting should not create glare, hazard or annoyance to adjacent property owners or passersby. Lighting should be shielded and directed downward, with the location of lights coordinated with the approved landscape plan. Lamps should be low wattage and should be incandescent. (RMC §18.41.100(f))
- Lighting expressly designed to light exterior walls or fences that is visible from adjacent properties or public right-of-ways is prohibited. (RMC §18.40.190)
- Lighting generated by outdoor use of television, video or other electronic devices shall not be permitted if it creates glare or annoyance for adjacent property owners. (RMC §18.40.190)

Fences and Walls (RMC §18.41.100(g))

- Fences and walls should be designed and located to be architecturally compatible with the design of the building. They should be aesthetically attractive and not create a “walled-in” feeling or a harsh, solid expanse when viewed from adjacent vantage points. Front yard fences and walls should be set back sufficient distance from the property line to allow for installation of a landscape buffer to soften the visual appearance. Transparent front yard fences and gates over four feet tall may be permitted if the design and landscaping is compatible and consistent with the design, height and character of fences and landscaping in the neighborhood. Front yard vehicular gates should be transparent to let light and lines of sight through the gate. Solid walls and fences over four feet in height are generally discouraged on property lines adjacent to a right-of-way but may be permitted for properties adjacent to Poplar Avenue and Sir Francis Drake Boulevard based on the quality of the design, materials, and landscaping proposed. Driveway gates should be automatic to encourage use of onsite parking. Pedestrian gates are encouraged for safety, egress, and to encourage multi-modal transportation and pedestrian-friendly neighborhood character.

Preserve Natural Features and Protect Creeks

- The existing landscape should be preserved in its natural state by keeping the removal of trees, vegetation, rocks and soil to a minimum. Development should minimize the amount of native vegetation clearing, grading, cutting and filling and maximize the retention and preservation of natural elevations, ridgelines and natural features, including lands too steep for development, geologically unstable areas, wooded canyons, areas containing significant native flora and fauna, rock outcroppings, view sites, watersheds and watercourses, considering zones of defensible space appropriate to prevent the spread of fire. (RMC §18.41.100(a)(1))
- The high-quality and fragile natural environment should be preserved and maintained through protecting scenic resources (ridgelines, hillsides, trees and tree groves), vegetation and wildlife habitat, creeks, drainageways threatened and endangered species habitat, open space and areas necessary to protect community health and safety. (RMC §18.41.100(i)(1))
- The filling and development of land areas within the one-hundred-year flood plain is discouraged. Modification of natural channels of creeks is discouraged. Any modification

shall retain and protect creekside vegetation in its natural state as much as possible. Reseeding or replanting with native plants of the habitat and removal of broom and other aggressive exotic plants should occur as soon as possible if vegetation removal or soil disturbance occurs. (RMC §18.41.100(i)(4))

- Safe and adequate drainage capacity should be provided for all watercourses. (RMC §18.41.100(i)(5))
- The area along the top of bank of a creek or waterway should be maintained in a natural state or restored to a natural condition, when feasible. (RMC §18.41.100(i)(1))
- Where possible and appropriate, invasive vegetation should be removed. (RMC §18.41.100(j)(5))

Fire Safe Landscaping

- Attractive, fire-resistant, native species are preferred. (RMC §18.41.100(j)(1))
- Landscape plans should create and maintain defensible spaces around buildings and structures as appropriate to prevent the spread of wildfire. (RMC §18.41.100(j)(4))

Tree Preservation and Protection

- Trees on the site, along public or private streets and within twenty feet of common property lines, should be protected and preserved in site planning. Replacement trees should be provided for trees removed or affected by development. Native trees should be replaced with the same or similar species. Landscaping should include planting of additional street trees as necessary. (RMC §18.41.100(j)(1))
- Wherever possible, residential development should be designed to preserve, protect and restore native site vegetation and habitat. (RMC §18.41.100(j)(5))

Erosion Control

- Landscape plans should include appropriate plantings to repair, reseed and/or replant disturbed areas to prevent erosion. (RMC §18.41.100(j)(3))

Reduce Impervious Surfaces and Low Impact Development for Stormwater Management (RMC §18.41.100(t)(1-3))

- Development plans should strive to replicate natural, predevelopment hydrology. To the maximum extent possible, the post-development stormwater runoff rates from the site should be no greater than pre-project rates. Development should include plans to manage stormwater runoff to maintain the natural drainage patterns and infiltrate runoff to the maximum extent practical given the site's soil characteristics, slope, and other relevant factors. An applicant may be required to provide a full justification and demonstrate why the use of Low Impact Development (LID) design approaches is not possible before proposing to use conventional structural stormwater management measures which channel stormwater away from the development site.
- Maximize Permeability and Reduce Impervious Surfaces. Use permeable materials for driveways, parking areas, patios and paths. Reduce building footprints by using more than

one floor level. Pre-existing impervious surfaces should be reduced. The width and length of streets, turnaround areas, and driveways should be limited as much as possible, while conforming with traffic and safety concerns and requirements. Common driveways are encouraged. Projects should include appropriate subsurface conditions and plan for future maintenance to maintain the infiltration performance.

- Disperse Runoff On Site. Use drainage as a design element and design the landscaping to function as part of the stormwater management system. Discharge runoff from downspouts to landscaped areas. Include vegetative and landscaping controls, such as vegetated depressions, bioretention areas, or rain gardens, to decrease the velocity of runoff and allow for stormwater infiltration on-site. Avoid connecting impervious areas directly to the storm drain system.
- Include Small-Scale Stormwater Controls and Storage Facilities. As appropriate based on the scale of the development, projects should incorporate small-scale controls to store stormwater runoff for reuse or slow release, including vegetated swales, rooftop gardens or “green roofs”, catch-basins retro-fitted with below-grade storage culverts, rain barrels, cisterns and dry wells. Such facilities may be necessary to meet minimum stormwater peak flow management standards, such as the no net increase standard. Facilities should be designed to minimize mosquito production.\

Special Requirements for Hillside Areas under Ross Municipal Code Chapter

18.39

- Grading, cutting and filling and retaining walls should be minimized for hillside development by using building techniques which reflect the natural topography of the site. Applicants should balance cut and fill on site. Graded slopes shall not exceed 2:1. Individual retaining walls shall not exceed a height of six feet. Terraced retaining walls should be at least three feet apart to allow for screening vegetation. The aggregate height of retaining walls should not exceed eighteen feet for any particular slope. Upslope walls up to four feet in height may be constructed of pressure-treated timber. All walls up to six feet in height may be constructed of reinforced concrete block. All other walls shall be constructed of reinforced concrete. Visible concrete and concrete block walls should have an appropriate architectural finish.
- Native shrubs and trees should be retained on hillside terrain wherever possible to help reduce erosion and preserve the character of the hillside environment. Newly introduced landscaping shall blend with the site setting.
- Drought and fire-resistant plantings are recommended.
- Native vegetation and trees shall be protected from damage during construction.
- An irrigation system shall be required to establish new hillside landscaping.
- Landscaping should preserve the penetration of sunlight to neighboring properties.
- Small patios, terraces and pathways are allowed. They should be porous in nature wherever possible.
- Fences and walls enclosing a parcel are not recommended. All fences and walls are subject to review as part of the landscaping plan or design review as mandated.

- Railings should be transparent and compatible with the architectural design.

Ross General Plan Policies and Programs

1.1 Protection of Environmental Resources. Protect environmental resources, such as hillsides, ridgelines, creeks, drainage ways, trees and tree groves, threatened and endangered species habitat, riparian vegetation, cultural places, and other resources. These resources are unique in the planning area because of their scarcity, scientific value, aesthetic quality and cultural significance.

1.2 Tree Canopy Preservation. Protect and expand the tree canopy of Ross to enhance the beauty of the natural landscape. Recognize that the tree canopy is critical to provide shade, reduce ambient temperatures, improve the uptake of carbon dioxide, prevent erosion and excess stormwater runoff, provide habitat for wildlife and birds, and protect the ecosystem of the under-story vegetation.

1.3 Tree Maintenance and Replacement. Assure proper tree maintenance and replacement.

1.4 Natural Areas Retention. Maximize the amount of land retained in its natural state. Wherever possible, residential development should be designed to preserve, protect and restore native site vegetation and habitat. In addition, where possible and appropriate, invasive vegetation should be removed.

2.1 Sustainable Practices.

Choose the most sustainable portion of a site for development and leaving more of a site in its natural condition to reduce land impacts on the natural environment.

Conserve water, especially in landscaping.

2.2 Incorporation of Resource Conservation Measures. To the extent consistent with other design considerations, public and private projects should be designed to be efficient and innovative in their use of materials, site construction, and water irrigation standards for new landscaping to minimize resource consumption, including energy and water.

2.3 Reduction in the Use of Chemicals and Non-Natural Substances. Encourage landscape designs that minimize pesticide and herbicide use.

3.2 Landscape Design. Where appropriate, encourage landscape designs that incorporate existing native vegetation, enhance the cohesiveness of the Town's lush, organic landscape and integrate new planting with existing site features. Plans shall recognize the importance of open space on a lot and shall address the look and feel of the space between structures so as to avoid overbuilding.

5.4 Maintenance and Landscaping for Fire Safety. Ensure that appropriate fire safety and landscaping practices are used to minimize fire danger, especially in steeper areas. Due to the high fire hazard in the steeper areas of Town, special planting and maintenance programs will be required to reduce fire hazards in the hills and wildland areas, including removal of invasive non-native vegetation such as broom, acacia and eucalyptus.

6.5 Permeable Surfaces. To the greatest extent possible, development should use permeable surfaces and other techniques to minimize runoff into underground drain systems and to allow water to percolate into the ground. Landscaped areas should be designed to provide potential runoff absorption and infiltration.

6.7 Riparian Vegetation. Protect existing creek and riparian vegetation and encourage the use of native species during creek restoration. Assure that modification of natural channels is done in a manner that retains and protects creekside vegetation, integrates fish passage and includes habitat restoration in its natural state.