

Chapter One

Introduction

The neighborhoods of Covenant Hills are modeled after the classic Southern California estate communities of the early 20th century. These communities expressed unique dignity and stateliness in architecture and landscape design and have become some of the most sought-after addresses in the nation. While diverse in both the array of architectural styles and the expression of the individual home within each style, this variety was contained within a family of styles, colors, and materials that came from the surrounding region and lent an underlying sense of harmony.

Homes were truly authentic emulations of regional architectural styles. The designs were elegant, utilizing only the best materials, but were not ostentatious or overly dramatic. Building shapes and forms were often simple, but well proportioned. The neighbors, who wished to maintain an understated elegance, discouraged overly conspicuous or garish towers, turrets, porte-cochères, and entries. When European and other imported styles were used, they strove to avoid cliché and overly romantic interpretations.

It is in this tradition that Covenant Hills has been planned. The result is intended to create a timeless, classic community to be admired and sought after for decades to come.

1.1 WHY DESIGN GUIDELINES

One reason people buy homes in new master-planned communities is to have a higher level of comfort with what others might build around them. In Custom Home neighborhoods, design guidelines establish standards for elements such as home size, height, location, and style so that the overall character of the neighborhood maintains a general consistency over time. In the case of Covenant Hills, these Design Guidelines also support specific design goals for the Village, in order to achieve articulated architecture, historical authenticity in design styles, and “landscape framing” of each Custom Homesite. They have been written to encourage individual self-expression in home design, but at the same time allow Custom Homes to complement each other in a harmonious composition reminiscent of the classic communities of Southern California.



These Design Guidelines are intended to ensure that the character, values, and vision embodied in the master plan for Covenant Hills will be protected for the long term, and that every Custom Homesite will be developed to reinforce and enhance the overall character of Covenant Hills.

1.2 HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

In order to assist both the Homeowner and their design professionals, the Design Guidelines have been organized into three sections. The first section, **What Kind of Home Do I Want?**, shares the vision behind Ladera Ranch and the Village of Covenant Hills and helps with the visualization of the various design styles that are permitted in Covenant Hills. It is recommended that the illustrated home styles be reviewed, and examples in traditional, older neighborhoods sought out, to better understand the appearance and feel of each style.

The second section of the book, **Design and Criteria**, contains detailed information about specific home styles, sizes, massing, setbacks, and plantings, as well as other technical requirements. This information should be used by the Homeowner and their design professionals in creating plans for the Custom Home. If certain formula or aesthetic criteria are confusing, the Design Review Manager should be contacted for clarification.

The third section, **Reviews and Approvals**, explains the various steps of the design review process, as well as the submissions that are required as part of the process. This process is an important part of building a home in Covenant Hills and should be viewed as a helpful resource in designing an attractive Custom Home that will contribute to the surrounding neighborhood.

The goal of the design review process is to communicate with the Homeowner and their design team so that each step of the design process is as efficient as possible. This can only be achieved when the Homeowner meets in a timely manner with the Design Review Manager so that Custom Home designs inconsistent with the Design Guidelines can be identified and corrected as soon as possible. Final approval from the Design Review Manager is required prior to commencing construction of a Custom Home.



The overall goal of these Design Guidelines is to assist in the design of a beautiful home that fits comfortably into the community and the lifestyle of the Homeowner while ensuring the Covenant Hills goals are maintained.

Interpreting the Design Guidelines

Understanding the language of the Design Guidelines relies on the definition of three important words: must, should, and may.

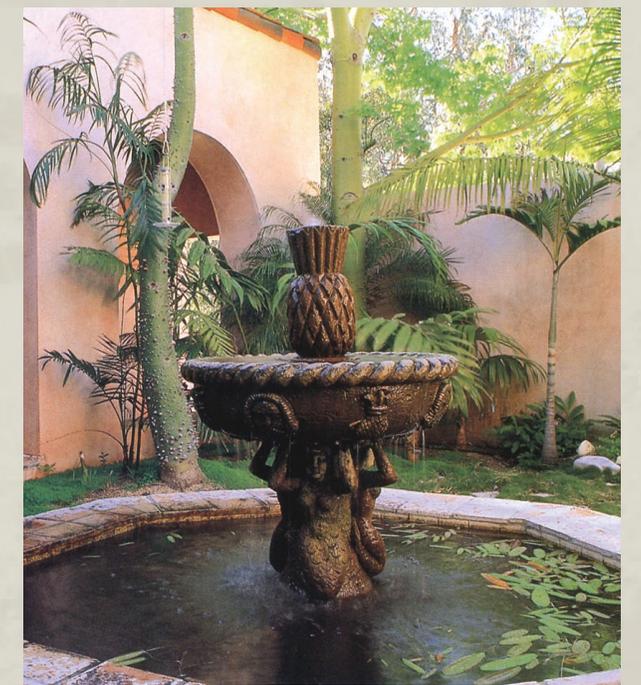
- ♦ Guidelines that include the word “must” or “shall” are required.
- ♦ Guidelines that use the word “should” are also required, but the Design Guidelines recognize that some flexibility may be needed and such cases will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.
- ♦ Some guidelines use the word “may” as the qualifier. These Design Guidelines are entirely optional.
- ♦ Occasionally, a situation will arise where no guideline exists, and the design direction is uncertain. In these cases, the Design Review Manager will utilize basic design principles for guidance.

Other Controlling Criteria

These Design Guidelines and the design review process are intended to serve aesthetic purposes only and do not replace structural requirements or building codes. In concert with

the various provisions and restrictions in the Controlling Documents, they are intended to preserve and maintain the design character, the desirability, and the attractiveness of the Custom Home neighborhoods of Covenant Hills. Although reasonable efforts have been made to eliminate errors or inconsistencies, it is the Homeowner’s responsibility to confirm that any improvements constructed on the Homesite comply with all applicable County, State, and Federal zoning and building requirements, regulations, ordinances, codes and laws. These requirements also include the Ladera Ranch Planned Community Program Text, which is the zoning code developed specifically for Ladera Ranch. In those instances where a conflict or inconsistency exists between these Design Guidelines, sound construction practices, and applicable laws, the more restrictive or stringent requirement shall apply and control.

These Design Guidelines apply to the Custom Homes within Covenant Hills; alternative Design Guidelines will cover other homes built within Covenant Hills.



1.3 THE LADERA RANCH COMMUNITY

Set in the historical ranchland of Rancho Mission Viejo, Ladera Ranch is surrounded by natural open space, ridgelines, arroyos, and views of distant mountains. On the four-thousand acre site, of which over sixteen hundred acres are open space preserve, DMB Ladera has been creating a new community that captures the best of the ranching and town building heritage of Southern California. Six distinct villages are linked together by the central Sienna Botanica, allowing easy walking and bike access to shops, elementary and middle schools, a library, day care, three community parks, and the six village clubs. The twenty-three-acre county regional sports park is a center of league-sponsored play. There are also three shopping centers for the residents of Ladera Ranch.

One of Ladera Ranch's most distinctive features is its focus on the design and character of its community with small neighborhoods, parks within walking distance, architectural diversity, and design authenticity. The LaderaLife exclusive community intranet can connect every home to organized community activities, message boards, educational programs, and organized sports.

PRIMARY STATISTICS:

- 6 Villages
- 3 Districts
- 4,000 project development acres
- 1,600 dedicated open space acres
- 2,400 developed acres
- 8,100 planned dwelling units
- 990,000 square feet retail/office/commercial



Covenant Hills as it orients to the rest of Ladera Ranch

1.4 DESIGN PHILOSOPHY

The creation of an appropriate setting for a Custom Home requires the thoughtful interplay of site planning, architectural design, and landscape. These should be conceived in an integrated, cohesive manner, rather than separate and independent from each other. This is often difficult, since a family starting out in the process of designing a home of their dreams is often preoccupied with floor plans and with fine-tuning the elevations. Site planning and landscape sometimes become afterthoughts.

In the classic estate communities of the early 20th century, the composition of house and grounds was approached as a balanced, cohesive whole. Single-story elements were placed on the flanks to create the comfortable sense that the home was growing out of the land. The site was graded so the front entry was elevated and the house was situated with a certain prominence. Landscape plantings were extended down the side yards all the way to the street so each home enjoyed an individual “picture frame” presentation from the street.

These Design Guidelines are meant to encourage design flexibility without detracting from, or over imposing on, adjacent neighbors. The basic concept is that a maximum building envelope is defined through a series of setback and density criteria, with the Homeowner controlling the design of the Custom Home within that envelope. The result should be a well-proportioned home situated to provide sufficient breathing room for air, light, and landscaping and to provide separation and visual balance within the neighborhood.

Every Custom Home should:

- ♦ Express the Homeowner’s individual needs and aspirations;
- ♦ Create a massing and setback outcome that provides interest and variety on the street;
- ♦ Not seem overly imposing in its mass and bulk;
- ♦ Feel like it is growing out of the land and landscape.



Conceptual mid-block Homesite with deep-recess garage viewed from inside the motor court.



Remnants of Ranch History

Remnants of orchards and field walls dot the hillsides with the background of trees reflective of historical windrows. The landscape and hardscape treatments, especially at the entries and on Covenant Hills Drive, are extensions of the surrounding ranch lands into the Village. The two entries reflect the architectural heritage of nearby Mission San Juan Capistrano.



San Juan Rusticity

The neighborhoods located within this setting of ranchland extend the informality and rusticity of San Juan Capistrano into the community. The naturalized and informal landscape, heavy tree cover, and rural road character blend into the adjacent enclaves of low-density, large-lot estate homes.



Classic Estate Sophistication

Although set in an historical and rustic mission-ranch setting, the homes are an expression of the sophistication and accomplishment of each Homeowner. Each Custom Homesite is framed with landscape to present, and reinforce, the individual architecture and lifestyle of its Homeowner without visually impacting the neighbor's home. Architectural styles are authentic, articulated, and well detailed, and reflect the quality of the Village and Homeowners.



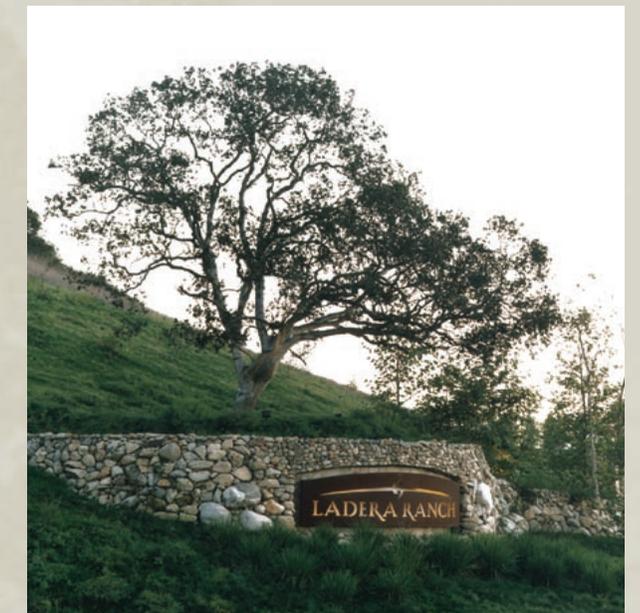
Diversity with Harmony

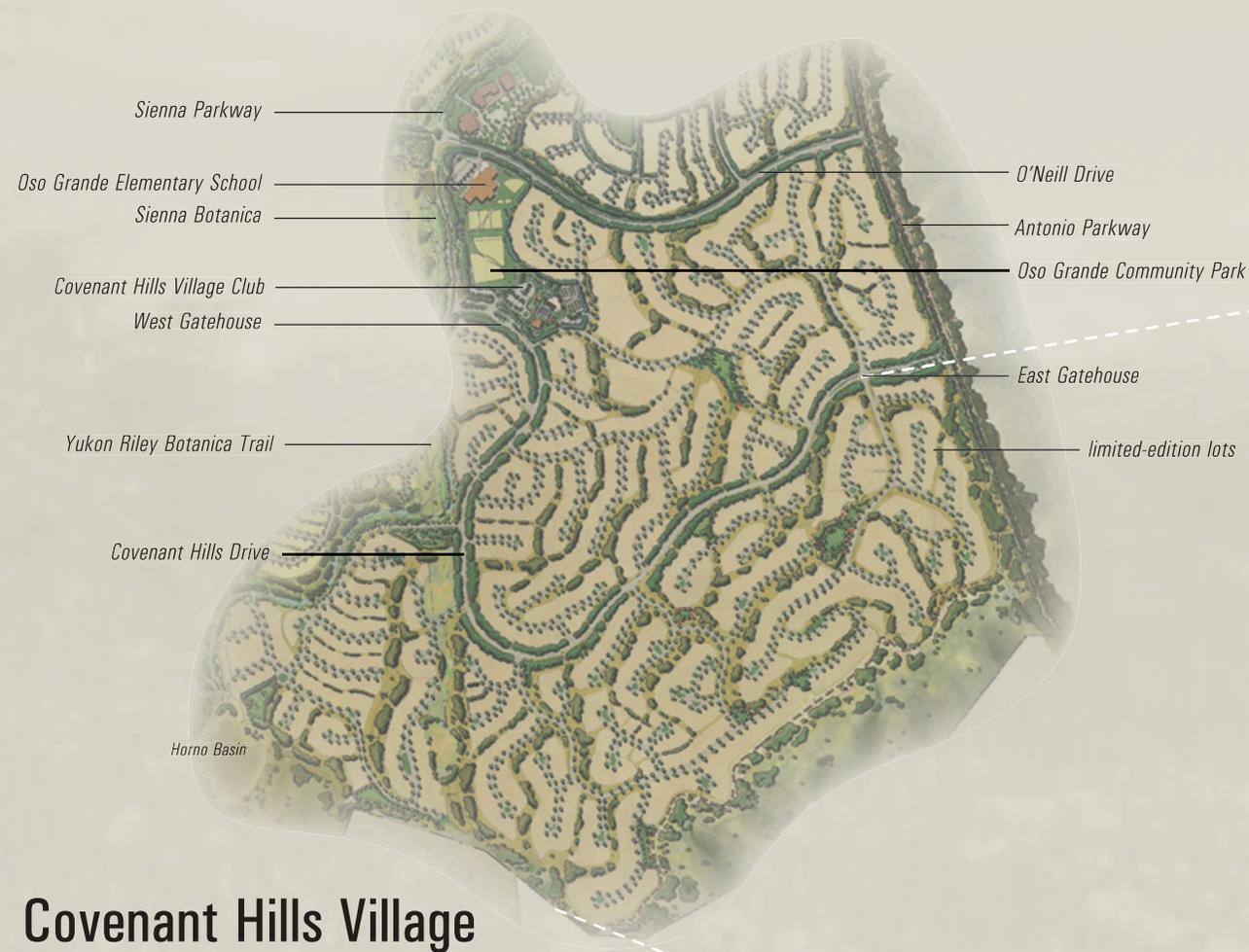
Classic towns reflect the diversity of values and aspirations of their residents. The homes and landscape settings of Covenant Hills are also diverse and varied in expression and style. But like other towns, they are somewhat constrained by the culture, materials, crafts, and skills of the period in which they were built. This results in an underlying harmony and compatibility within a family of styles and character.



In Touch with the Land

The layout of Covenant Hills allows for short, winding roads that hold tightly to rolling hillsides. The resulting neighborhoods are small and intimate and feel like they grew out of, and are nestled within, the surrounding landforms. The landscape character is in touch with the land and its timeless quality as it reinforces natural valleys and ridgelines.





Covenant Hills Village



Covenant Hills Custom Homesites

1.6 LET'S TAKE A SHORT VISIT INTO COVENANT HILLS

The following is a theoretical account of a trip to and through Covenant Hills:

As you approach the hill that extends from San Juan Capistrano to the south along the Antonio Parkway, you see Saddleback Mountain to the northeast and the Custom Homes of Covenant Hills nestled along the ridgeline to the northwest. As you near the crest of the hill, you turn left on Covenant Hills Drive and enter the Village through the Mission-inspired gatehouse.

You look out over the Village and notice that no two areas seem exactly the same, partly because of the undulating landforms and small clusters of homes, and partly due to the rich mix of color, roof patterns, and forms of the homes.

Progressing down Covenant Hills Drive, you appreciate the winding, rural nature of the road as it passes by small citrus groves and low stone walls that are reminiscent of early Rancho Mission Viejo. Eventually, Covenant Hills Drive leads you to the Covenant Hills Village Club, with its two pools, tennis courts, play lot, and hacienda club building. You see a private party—perhaps a club meeting—in one of the meeting rooms that is spilling out into the shade beneath an oak tree in an adjoining courtyard.

The Terramor Village Club water park, with its water slides, swim lagoons, play fountains, and skateboard park, is just visible to the west beyond the Covenant Hills entry. As you drive through the west gatehouse entry, you pass the Oso Grande Elementary School.

Across from the gatehouse are the Sienna Botanica and the Yukon Riley Trail, as well as the beginnings of community trails and linear parks that link much of the community together.

After you circle around and head back on Covenant Hills Drive you enter one of the Custom-Home neighborhoods and notice that these local neighborhoods also feature relaxed, winding streets, narrow in width, and without hard curbs. They're occasionally adjoined by unique paving and pull-off parking bays. In several pocket parks, residents can have their children play close to home, or simply watch a sunset. You are witness to the spectacular views afforded by Covenant Hills, including views of the San Juan Creek valley and the Pacific Ocean in the distance. As you continue to wind your way through the Custom-Home neighborhoods with short streets and cul-de-sacs, you notice several access points to the ten-mile Ladera Ranch Trail that surrounds the community.

Although the landscape and street character is informal—almost rural—the Custom Homes represent sophisticated evolutions of European and early-American styles reminiscent of the best, classic, estate communities. Although individual Custom Homes vary in size, style, and mass, they seem to have an underlying set of shared qualities that lead to a rich and well-balanced visual composition when taken as a whole.

The Custom Homes and their surrounding landscape share a comfortable relationship. Continuous street trees in the parkways filter views of the homes, and the plantings between houses extend all the way to the street, forming an individual “picture frame” for each home.

When you finally leave Covenant Hills, you cannot help but think about the wonderful community that you are leaving behind as you head out into the hustle and bustle of Southern California.

1.7 FREQUENTLY-ASKED QUESTIONS

Q *Can I build any type of Custom Home I want in Covenant Hills?*

A The interior of your Custom Home is up to you, but the exterior architectural style, size, mass, height, and other attributes must conform to the Design Guidelines.

Q *What architectural styles are allowed in Covenant Hills?*

A Nine historical styles are established as the family of architecture defined for Covenant Hills. These styles are Spanish Revival, Italian Revival, Colonial Revival, Craftsman, English Revival, French Revival, Provençal, San Juan Capistrano Rustic, and Tuscan. A complete discussion of these styles and their landscapes is set forth in *Chapter Two, Historical Styles*.

Q *How large of a home can I build?*

A Each Homesite has a maximum allowed building square footage. Additional square footage is permitted in certain basement and attic conditions. This information is provided separately in your Custom Homesite Declaration and is not included in this book.

Q *Can I place my Custom Home anywhere on the lot?*

A Yes, as long as you do not encroach into the minimum front, side, and rear yard setbacks identified in **Section II: Design and Criteria** and otherwise comply with these Custom-Home Design Guidelines.

Q *Do all Homesites have the same setback and height requirements?*

A No. There are various classifications of Homesites within Covenant Hills depending on location, size, and visual prominence. The type of Homesite you have is indicated in your Custom Homesite Declaration and is not included in this book. However, **Section II: Design and Criteria**, describes the specific requirements for each of the different Homesite types.

Q *How important is landscaping in my design process?*

A Very important. The neighborhood character planned for Covenant Hills requires that landscape and architecture carefully support each other in a unified overall design. *Chapter Five: Landscape Design Criteria*, offers historical precedents and adequate detail of style-specific landscape suggestions and requirements. Designs must be approved by the Design Review Manager and installed within ninety days of the building's Notice of Completion.

Q *How long does it take to get my plan approved?*

A Although the average plan approval time ranges from six months to one year, many variables affect the process, including selection and approval of consultants, buyer decision-making, governmental processing, the size of the home, and so on.

Q *When do I have to start construction of my Custom Home?*

A So that the neighborhoods will be built out in a timely manner, you must commence construction within three years and complete construction within five years of purchasing your Homesite. Failure to do so may result in additional charges or in DMB Ladera, LLC having the right to repurchase your Homesite.

Q *May I choose my own architect and builder?*

A While the use of qualified professionals is strongly encouraged for all trades, the selection of your consultant team is your responsibility. It is strongly encouraged that all consultants be licensed to practice their profession in the state of California.