Malibu Civic Center:
A Rural Coastal Village

The intent of the design standards and guidelines for the Malibu Civic Center is, over time, to foster development of a pedestrian-oriented coastal village reflective of this community’s rural past. This paper defines the characteristics, qualities, and functions of this Rural Coastal Village as interpreted from the prior work of the Task Force. The content will be refined based on discussions with the Task Force at the May 12, 2015 meeting.

Overarching Influences and Character

The Malibu Civic Center district is an area framed by open spaces and natural landscapes. The surrounding foothills, Malibu Creek, the open expanse of Legacy Park, and views to the Pacific Ocean create a context for the built environment. Building forms, materials, and colors reflect the textures and colors of the local coastal environment, thereby allowing new structures and landscapes to blend seamlessly with the geography of their surroundings. Development approaches feature clustered low-scale buildings with easy pedestrian connections between properties and throughout the district. Parking areas and structures integrate into overall site design through the careful placement relative to buildings and the use of native plant materials for screening. The Civic Center serves as the City’s vibrant main street and gathering place for everyday shopping, education, and civic engagement. Development projects reflect this function by providing formal plazas and intriguing courtyards and village greens.
Building Form, Scale, Orientation, and Materials

The Rural Coastal Village builds upon successful building and landscape projects that reflect an understanding of the vocabulary of rural structures in Southern California, the particular characteristics of the landform, and the needs and desires of the users.

• **Low-Scale Buildings.** Buildings are low in scale, small in footprint, oriented to sidewalks, and oriented to provide views of the surrounding foothills, lagoon, Legacy Park, and more distantly, the ocean. Building heights do not exceed two stories. When sited against a hillside, buildings are built into and respond to the contours of the terrain to minimize grading and preserve viewsheds.

• **Building Orientation and Siting.** Building placement and forms open onto sidewalks along slow and flexible streets, with an emphasis on connectivity to views, adjacent projects, and pedestrian accommodation. Building frontages have pedestrian, human-scaled, and shallow setbacks to actively engage people walking to and from places of interest. Building forms, façades, and open spaces orient toward pathways, trails, and sidewalks. Street-side sidewalks feature close-by storefronts, curbside parking, and seating areas, with opportunities to blend the experience of both the insides and the outsides of structures. Clusters of buildings create intimate courtyards, passageways, and quiet areas, all to realize a small town and village feel. Buildings relate to and anticipate structures on adjacent lots, whether or not those structures are part of the same development.
• **Natural Materials.** Structures and site improvements use materials and colors that respond to and blend with the surrounding plant materials, rocks, and other natural features. Color palettes for materials and colors of buildings reflect the hues and textures of the surrounding landscape, Malibu’s oceanside setting, and its rural past.

• **Sustainable Design.** Protection and conservation of natural resources are emphasized with each building project. Sustainable design approaches incorporate efficient use of energy, water, and other resources into site design, building design, and operations. Construction and operations reduce waste, pollution, and environmental degradation. Every new act of construction serves as a model for sustainable design.

• **Parking.** Parking is accessible from streets and access roads that incorporate sidewalks, parkways, landscaping, and curbside parking spaces. Site design places parking behind and under structures, or tucked invisibly into hillsides to the maximum extent practical. Parking lot landscaping incorporates native materials and permeable paving (where the water table allows), and provides shade trees in natural forest-like groupings. Where parking structures are provided, they are hidden or screened by buildings and landforms, are low scale, and feature materials, colors, and landscape that blend into the surrounds. Shared parking areas are strongly encouraged to allow for park-once strategies and to preserve open space areas throughout the Civic Center district.
Connections, Mobility, and Lighting

Malibu’s Civic Center is a cohesive, connected community. The Rural Coastal Village has a balanced network of walking, biking, and local traffic routes that provides interconnectivity and cohesion among all properties.

- **Connectivity.** The Rural Coastal Village is a walkable environment distinguished by an inviting interconnected network of street-side sidewalks, pathways, and trails. All areas within the Civic Center are easily accessible to pedestrians and bicyclists. Pedestrian connections are required between properties, creating a cohesive collection of activity centers. Clearly identified pathways to transit stops are provided.

- **Pedestrians First.** The Rural Coastal Village environment is designed foremost to accommodate pedestrians and to foster walking to and from buildings, projects, and the natural surroundings.

- **Local Trips/Local Traffic.** Recognizing that local residents desire easy access to the shops, restaurants, and other destinations within the Civic Center, roadways within the district are right-sized for local, low-speed vehicular traffic. Through the use of appropriate traffic engineering solutions, regional cut-through vehicular traffic is directed away from the Civic Center district and onto major roadways that can support higher traffic volumes.

- **Connections across PCH and to Adjacent Areas.** Crossing the Pacific Coast Highway to access the beach, Malibu Pier, Malibu Creek and Lagoon, and Malibu Bluffs Parks is facilitated by an iconic pedestrian bridge with landing places that provide optimum connectivity. Pedestrian and bicycle linkages to Pepperdine University are provided via on-street or off-street pathways or trails.

- **Lighting.** Lighting of pathways and streets is minimized to reflect the district’s rural character and conform with adopted lighting standards.
Open Space and Landscaping

Landscaping consists of materials that reinforce site character with indigenous plantings that flow seamlessly into the natural environment. Consideration is given to providing plant palettes that utilize recycled water from the Civic Center water treatment facility.

- **A Natural Experience.** Landscape and open space are a formative part of the experience and place of the Civic Center district and each building project.

- **Protect the Natural Environment.** Plant choices, landscape design, and paving materials are chosen to relate to, maintain, restore, and reinforce the natural environment of the Malibu Civic Center and ecosystem.

- **Riparian Habitat.** To protect the diversity of vegetation along Malibu Lagoon and Malibu Creek, landscaping along these areas is shaped by an understanding the local riparian habitat.

- **Landscaped Open Spaces.** Both functional and passive landscaped open space areas are integrated throughout each development site and create a visual connection to the mountains and riparian areas. In site planning, landscape is carefully and purposefully interwoven around buildings and parking areas. Landscaped open spaces also serve dual purposes, such as for storm water control and decorative site definition and accent.

- **Plant Flexibility.** Except for active recreation spaces, plant palettes must meet key performance standards such as water needs, consistency with the larger setting, and the creation of a landscape experience.

- **Performance Standards.** All landscaping and irrigation systems comply with the Malibu Municipal Code Chapter 9.20 - Water Conservation.
A Local Gathering Place

• **Local Commercial and Civic Activities.** As a Rural Coastal Village, the Civic Center district emphasizes local commerce and civic activities.

• **Public Spaces.** The Civic Center provides a diversity of gathering spaces that are open and accessible to everyone. Development projects incorporate plazas for impromptu and planned events, as well as smaller, intimate spaces that provide comfortable areas to sit and relax. Within the district, the City maintains a large, flexible public space for public events and festivals.