



### III. SITE PLANNING

The intent of this section is to ensure that new development fits into the topography with minimum impacts to the site physically and visually.

Refer to the  
Town's  
Grading  
Ordinance

#### A. Grading.

A grading permit shall be obtained as required by the Town's Grading Ordinance. Vegetation removal may qualify as grading.

#### Standards:

1. The following cut and fill criteria are intended to ensure that new construction retains the existing landform of the site and follows the natural contours.

Cuts and fills in excess of the following levels are considered excessive and contrary to the objectives of the Hillside Design Standards and Guidelines. Grade to the minimum amount necessary to accommodate buildings and to site structures consistent with slope contours. These are maximum numbers and may be reduced by the deciding body if the project does not meet other grading standards or is not consistent with the goals and objectives of the Hillside Development Standards and Guidelines.

**Table 1**  
**Maximum Graded Cuts and Fills**

Site Element	Cut*	Fill*
House and attached garage	8'**	3'
Accessory Building*	4'	3'
Tennis Court*	4'	3'
Pool*	4'***	3'
Driveways*	4'	3'
Other (decks, yards) *	4'	3'

\* Combined depths of cut plus fill for development other than the main residence shall be limited to 6 feet.

\*\* Excludes below grade square footage pursuant to Section 29.40.072 of the Town Code.

\*\*\* Excludes excavation for pool.

2. Earthwork quantities (grading) shall be categorized as follows:
  - a. access: driveway, parking and fire turnaround, if applicable
  - b. house footprint
  - c. below grade square footage pursuant to Section 29.40.072 of the Town Code

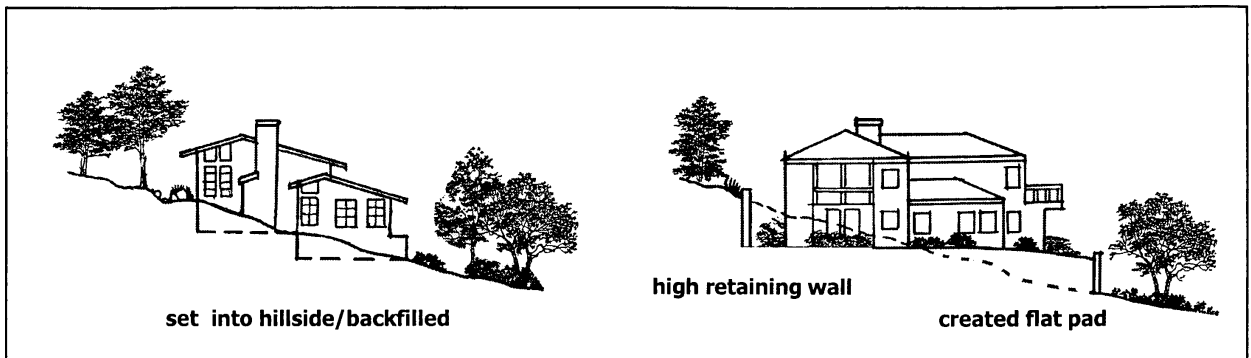
**TOWN OF LOS GATOS**  
**HILLSIDE DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES**

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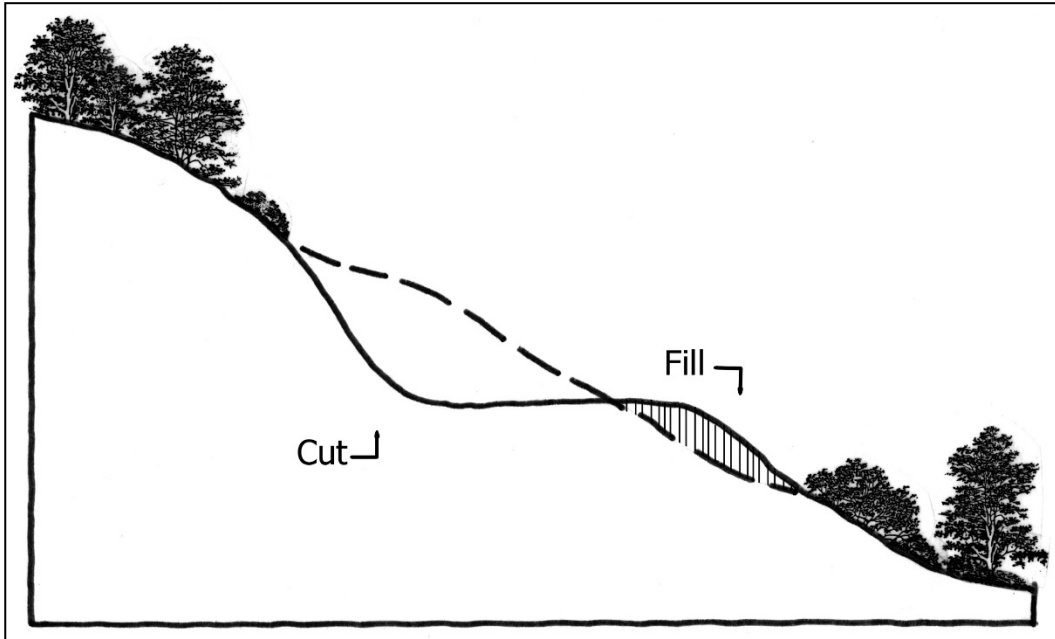
- d. other areas including landscaping, hardscape and outdoor spaces
  - e. total
3. Buildings shall be located in a manner that minimizes the need for grading and preserves natural features such as prominent knolls, ridgelines, ravines, natural drainage courses, vegetation, and wildlife habitats and corridors to the maximum extent possible.
  4. Unless specifically approved by the Town, strip grading for the purpose of clearing land of native vegetation is prohibited except for small areas adjacent to buildings, access drives, and parking areas.
  5. Graded areas shall not be larger than the area of the footprint of the house, plus that area necessary to accommodate access, guest parking, and turnaround areas.
  6. After placing development the site shall be restored as closely as possible to its original topography.



**Do this**

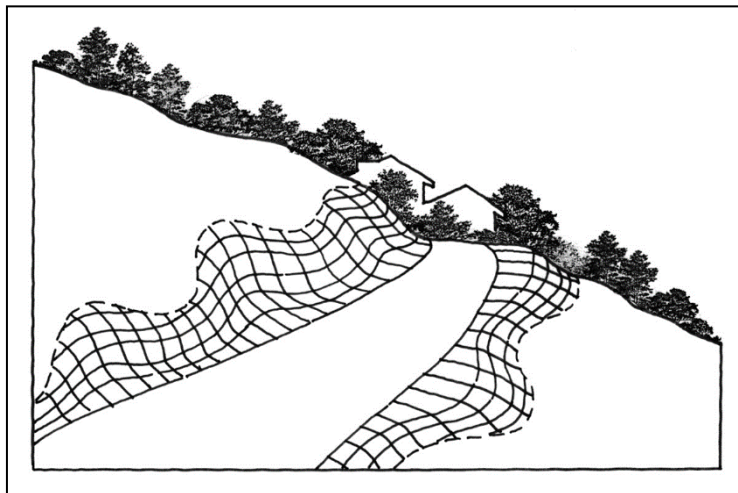
**Don't do this**

7. Contour grading techniques shall be used to provide a variety of both slope percentage and slope direction in a three-dimensional undulating pattern similar to existing, adjacent terrain. The following concepts shall be utilized:
  - a. Hard edges left by cut and fill operations shall be given a rounded appearance that closely resembles the natural contours of the land.



**Rounded edges resemble natural slope**

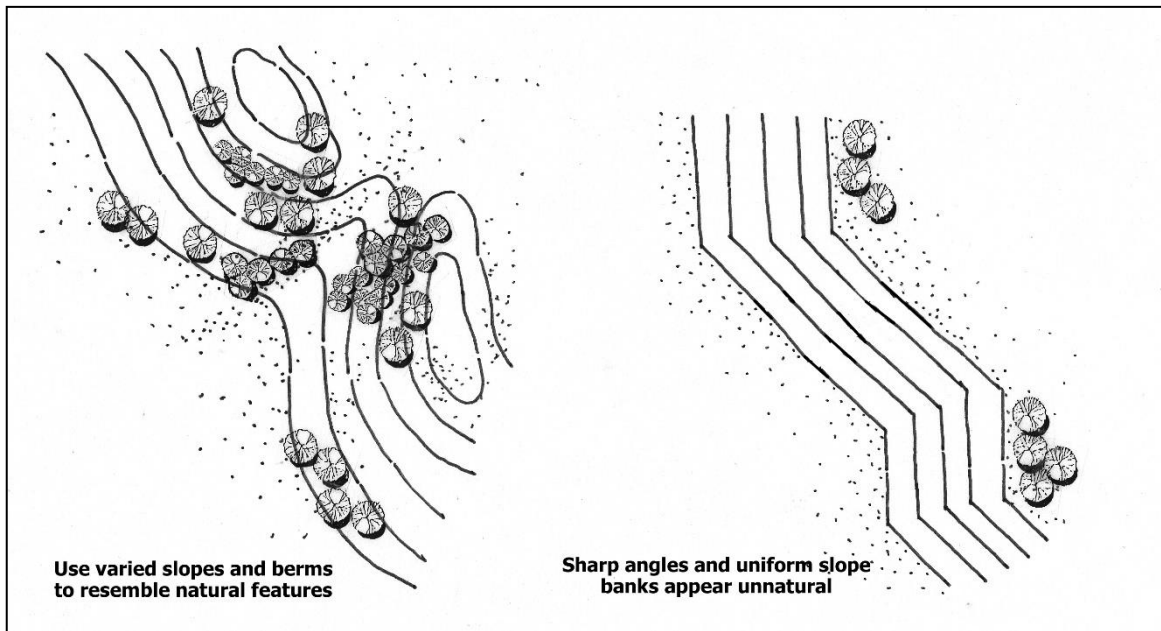
- b. Manufactured slopes adjacent to driveways and roadways shall be modulated by berming, regrading, and landscaping to create visually interesting and natural appearing streetscapes. However, preservation of trees and elimination of retaining walls is a priority.



**Modulate manufactured slopes to appear natural**



- c. Where cut and fill conditions are created, slopes shall be varied rather than left at a constant angle, which creates an unnatural, engineered appearance.



**Do this**

**Don't do this**

- d. The angle of any graded slope shall be gradually transitioned to the angle of the natural terrain. Creation of new grades slopes, significantly steeper than local natural slopes should be minimized.
8. Grading plans shall include provisions for restoration of vegetation on cuts and fills. All manufactured slopes shall be planted with native, fire-resistant, low water using plantings to control erosion.
9. An erosion/sedimentation control plan shall be included with all site plans and/or grading plans. The erosion/sedimentation control plan shall provide interim (during construction) and ultimate plans for control of erosion and sedimentation or describe in detail why this is not necessary.
10. Grading shall not occur during the rainy season (October 1 to April 1) unless approved by the Town Engineer. If grading is planned to occur between October 1 and April 1, interim provisions for erosion and sedimentation control shall be in place before grading begins.



## Guidelines:

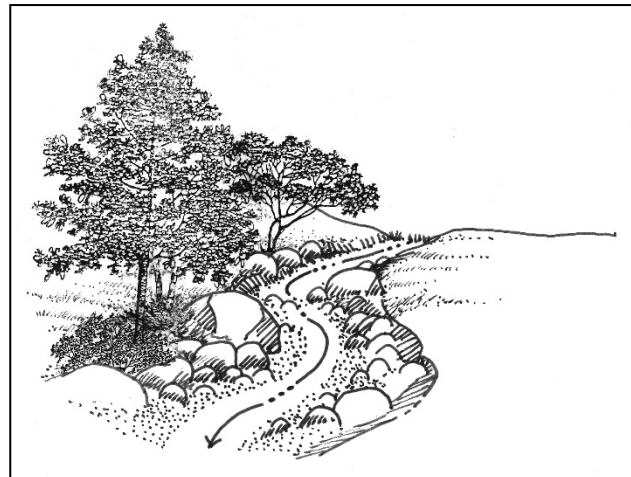
1. The creation of permanent flat pads, except for the house footprint and area needed for access, parking and turnaround, should be avoided

## B. Drainage.

### Standards:

1. Runoff shall be dispersed within the subject property to the greatest extent feasible. Runoff concentration that requires larger drainage facilities shall be avoided.
2. Upslope drainage shall not negatively impact downslope development.
3. Natural drainage courses shall be preserved with any native vegetation intact and shall be enhanced to the extent possible, and shall be incorporated as an integral part of the site design in order to preserve the natural character of the area.
4. Manmade drainage channels shall receive a naturalizing treatment such as rock and landscaping so that the structure appears as a natural part of the environment.

**Manufactured  
drainage courses  
shall simulate  
natural drainage  
courses**



### Guidelines:

1. Manmade drainage channels should be placed in the least visible locations possible.
2. Lining of natural drainage courses is discouraged.



3. Dry Stream effects (manufactured drainage courses designed to simulate natural drainage courses) that move water over the property are preferred over channeling or underground methods.

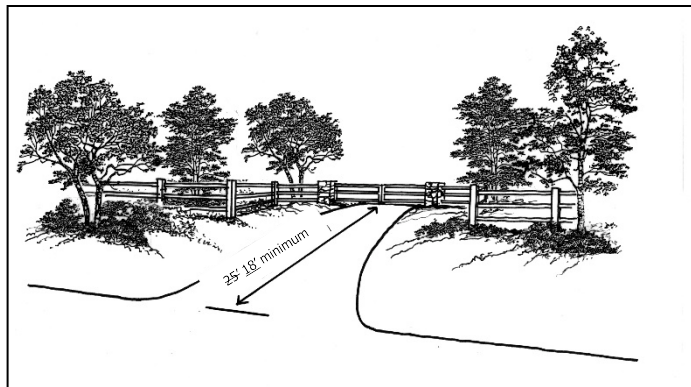
### C. Driveways and parking.

It is recommended that the Fire Department be consulted early in the design process about water supply, accessibility and the need for emergency vehicle turnarounds, turnouts, etc.

#### Standards:

See  
Chapter  
VII.B.  
Standard 2

1. Driveways shall be located so as to minimize the need for grading.
2. Driveways shall be paved in compliance with Town standards, and shall be installed prior to occupancy.
3. When a gated entrance is provided, the gates shall be set back a minimum of 18 feet from the right-of-way to allow vehicles to pull completely off the roadway while waiting for the gates to open. Gated entrances serving more than one house may be required to have a greater setback. Gates should open away from or parallel to the street.



**Entrance gates shall  
be set back at least  
18 feet from the  
street**

4. Driveways shall have an all-weather surface in compliance with Fire Department weight loading requirements (40,000 pounds).
5. The maximum slope of a driveway shall not exceed 15 percent unless it can be demonstrated that a flatter driveway cannot be constructed without excessive grading (more than 4 feet of cut or 3 feet of fill). Driveway slopes in excess of 15 percent require approval by the Town Engineer and Santa Clara County Fire Department.



## **Guidelines:**

1. Driveways serving one residence should have a 12-foot minimum width.
2. The maximum length of a driveway should be 300 feet unless the deciding body makes specific findings for deviation and places additional conditions such as turnouts and secondary accesses to reduce hazards. A turnaround area shall not have a grade that exceeds five (5) percent.
3. Driveway approaches should be located a safe distance from intersections. On adjoining properties, driveways should be spaced a minimum of 20 feet apart or located immediately adjacent to each other.
4. Shared driveways serving more than one lot are encouraged as a means of reducing grading and impervious surfaces.
5. Driveways should be located and maintained so as to ensure an adequate line of sight.

## **D. Safety.**

### **Geologic hazards.**

Potential geologic hazards, if not avoided or mitigated, can result in damage to the environment and structures and can place public safety at risk.

## **Standards:**

1. Site specific geologic engineering investigations and reports are required of qualifying projects in State of California Seismic Hazard Zones (Liquifaction and Earthquake Induced Landslide Areas) and in areas believed to be geologically hazardous as determined by the Director of Community Development and /or Town Engineer. Refer to California Geological Survey Seismic Hazard Zones Map, Los Gatos Quadrangle, dated September 23, 2002.
2. Construction shall be avoided in areas with geologic hazards (e.g., slope instability, seismic hazards, etc.) as identified in the site specific geologic investigations and reports, unless adequate mitigation design measures are proposed to achieve a low level of risk.

**Guidelines:** None.





## **Fire hazards.**

The hillsides above Los Gatos are areas of high fire hazard. House fires in the hillsides have the potential to become wildfires if not controlled quickly. A dependable, adequate water supply, automatic fire sprinklers, access for fire fighting equipment and fast response times are critical factors in gaining quick control over a structural fire. Factors that affect the speed at which a wildfire spreads include topography, available fuel, weather (wind, humidity) and availability of fire fighting resources. Lack of adequate circulation or evacuation routes can also impact public safety.

Development in the hillsides presents inherent conflicts between creating and maintaining a fire safe environment, preserving existing vegetation, and minimizing the visual impacts of new development. These conflicts can be minimized by incorporating the concept of fire defensible space into site planning and landscape design. The concept of defensible space involves reducing fuel load, designing structures and landscaping with fire safety in mind, and locating structures to minimize their exposure to wildfires.

## **Standards:**

1. Building locations shall be selected and structures designed to minimize exposure to wildfires (also see Chapter V. Section I.).
2. A landscape plan shall be provided and will be reviewed by the Town's Landscape Consultant with input from the Fire Department. The landscape plan shall create defensible space around the home, and if there is a fire ladder on the property it shall be eliminated in an environmentally sensitive manner.
3. Development shall have adequate fire access (also see Chapter III section C. and Chapter VII section b.2.).
4. A dependable and adequate water supply for fire protection and suppression purposes, as required by the Santa Clara County Fire Department, shall be provided for all properties. If no public hydrant is available, there shall be an on-site water supply in a storage facility with an appropriate outlet valve in close proximity to an accessible hard road surface.
5. Water for fire suppression shall be available and labeled before any framing may begin.
6. Above ground water tanks shall not be located in required setback areas.



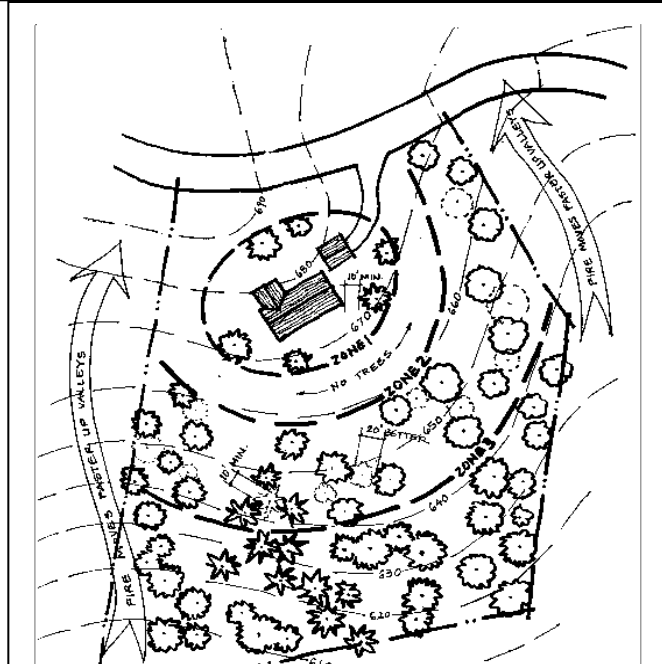
## **Guidelines:**

1. Development should avoid areas subject to severe fire danger. In order to achieve this, development should:
  - a. Be set back from the crest of a hill
  - b. Not be located at the top of a canyon
  - c. Not be located on or adjacent to slopes greater than 30%
  - d. Not be located within densely wooded areas

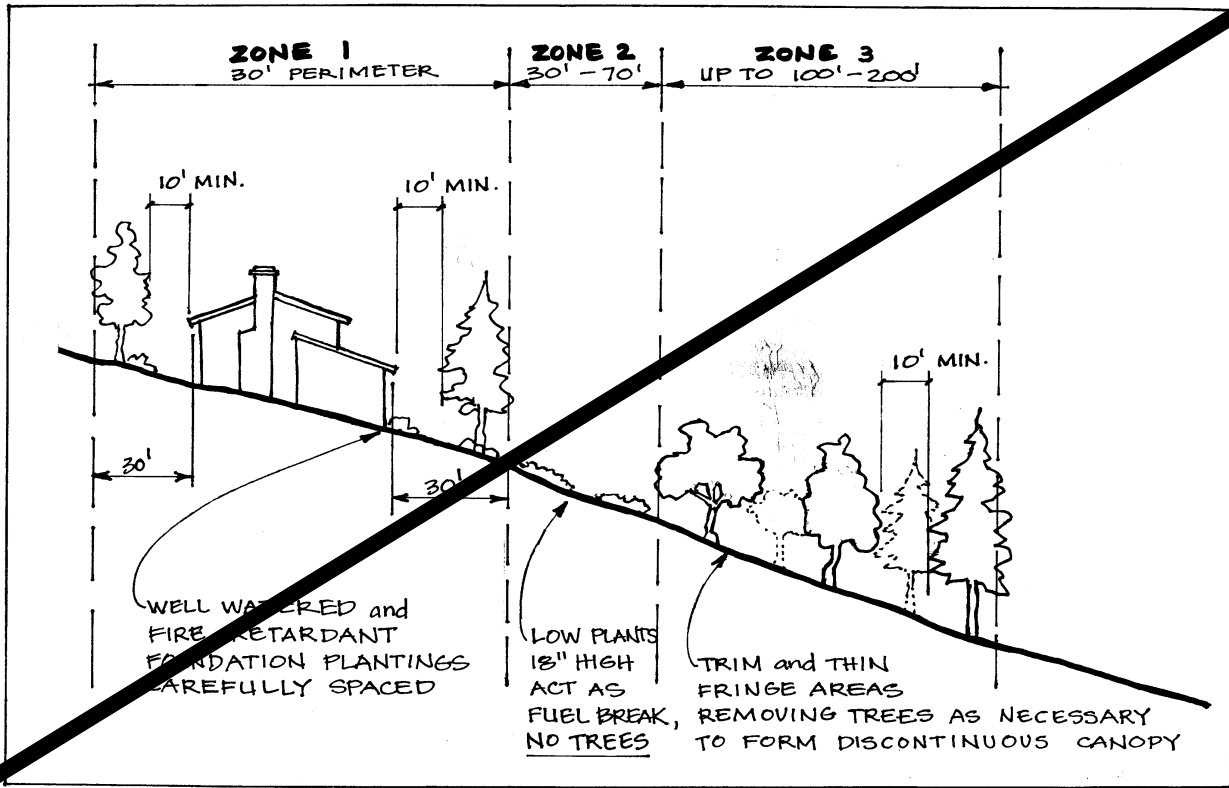
If this is not possible, measures designed to assure the highest degree of fire prevention, and fast effective means of evacuation and fire suppression shall be provided.

2. The fuel load within a defensible space should be minimized by use of selective pruning, thinning and clearing as follows:
  - Removal of flammable species and debris
  - Removal of dead, dying or hazardous trees
  - Mow dead grasses
  - Removal of dead wood from trees and shrubs
  - Thin tree crowns (maximum of 25%)
3. Discontinuous fuel sources should be created and maintained within a defensible space through use of the following techniques (see illustrations on page 27):
  - Thin vegetation to form discontinuous groupings of trees or shrubs
  - Limb trees up from the ground
  - Establish a separation between the lowest branches of a tree and any understory shrubs.
4. Landscaping within a defensible space should be designed with fire safety in mind. Landscaping in defensible space should be:
  - Fire resistant and drought tolerant
  - Predominantly low growing shrubs and groundcovers (limit shrubs to 30% coverage)
  - Limited near foundations (height and density)
5. Above ground tanks should not be located in areas of high visibility unless it can be demonstrated to the satisfaction of the decision making body that no other feasible locations are available.

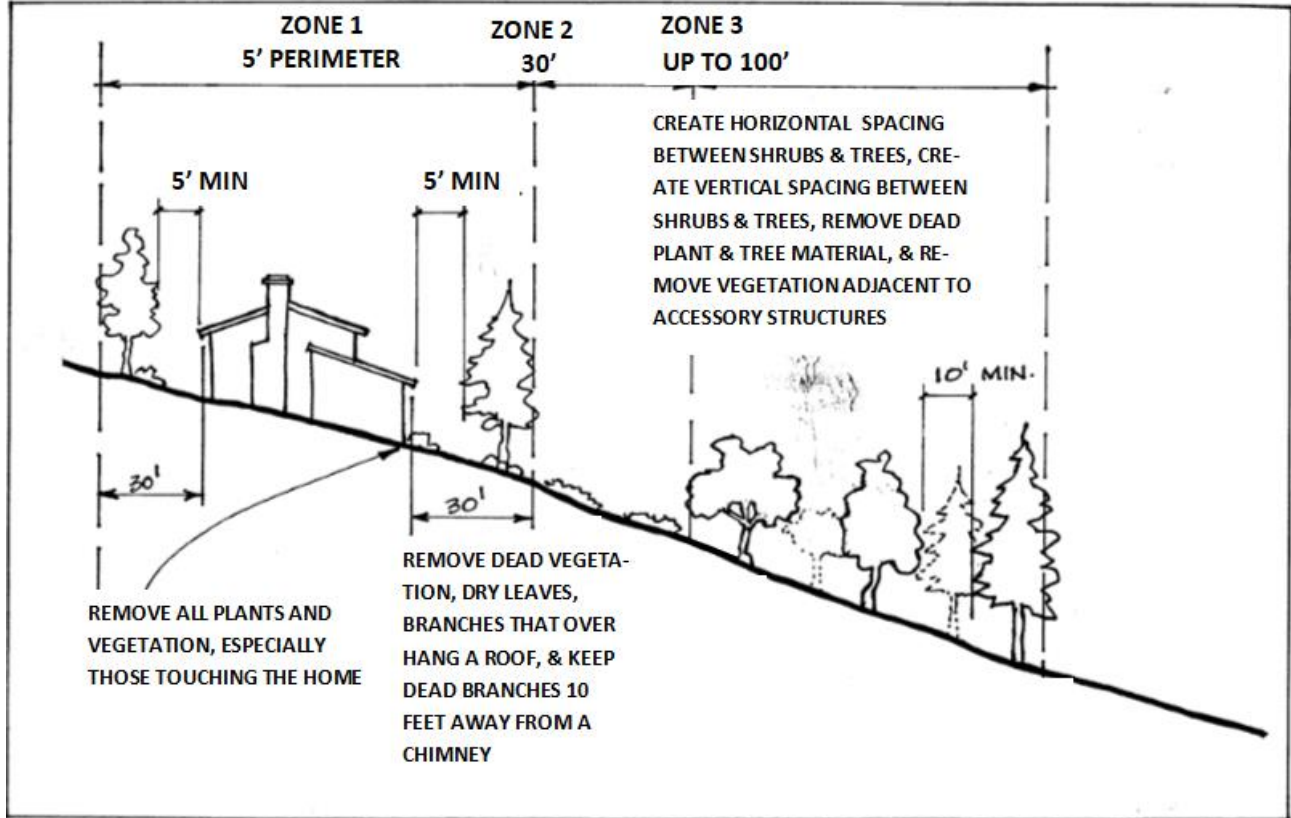
Refer to  
Appendix  
A



**Defensible space  
 should be  
 maintained  
 around the home**



**TOWN OF LOS GATOS**  
**HILLSIDE DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES**



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