



**TOWN OF CAREFREE**  
**PLANNING AND ZONING DEPARTMENT**  
2021

# **SINGLE-FAMILY**

**RURAL-190**   **RURAL-70**   **RURAL-43**   **R1-18**   **R1-10**

## **COMMUNITY DESIGN STANDARDS & GUIDELINES**

# TOWN OF CAREFREE



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## **INTRODUCTION**

Carefree is a unique, semi-rural small town in the upper Sonoran Desert, master-planned to be entirely distinct from the surrounding communities. It is a community where residents enjoy the dramatic natural landscape features and seek to preserve this sensitive ecosystem.

As the Community matures and additional residential lands are developed or redeveloped, it is vital that the Community's vision and standards are preserved and carried forward. To preserve Carefree's sense of place, the following principles should guide any single-family development application.

- Maintain the natural desert to preserve native desert ecosystems, wildlife habitat, and the sense of wide open spaces.
- Preserve the dominance of the native desert environment and terrain by blending the residence and site improvements with the natural desert form, colors, and terrain.
- Incorporate energy efficient and sustainable building practices.
- Protect and enhance the character and quality of single-family residential districts.

### **PURPOSE**

The Single-Family Residential Design Standards and Guidelines are intended to promote designs that are consistent with the community's vision and are responsive to the immediate desert setting. The Standards and Guidelines outline Carefree's expectations for single-family residential design. They are intended to assist future homeowners, architects and designers, residents, town staff, and other decision makers in their review and consideration of single-family residences. The Design Standards and guidelines are to be applied throughout the Town and are structured to respond to varying conditions and constraints inherent to the individual site and contextual setting. Additional Mountainside Standards and Guidelines have been established for properties that contain one or more slopes with a gradient twenty (20) percent or more (a ten foot rise over a distance of fifty feet).

### **GRADING AND DRAINAGE**

In order to maintain the dominance of the upper Sonoran Desert it is critical that a building envelope be designated on each lot. This envelope will illustrate the areas that may be disturbed by the proposed site improvements. When defining the building envelope on a lot, it is important to ensure that its placement minimizes the amount of site grading, does not disturb significant wash or wildlife corridors, and maintains historical views of prominent ridgelines or significant topographical features.

1. All site grading and drainage shall comply with the Zoning Ordinance, [Article IX, Section 9.10](#).
2. Pursuant to the Zoning Ordinance, [Article VI, Section 6.01](#), the total area of grading shall at no time exceed the maximum disturbed area (see table below).
3. In accordance with Carefree's vision, significant stands of indigenous vegetation should be maintained in their natural location to preserve the dominance of native flora and wildlife habitat.
4. The building envelope should be clearly identified on all building plans presented to the

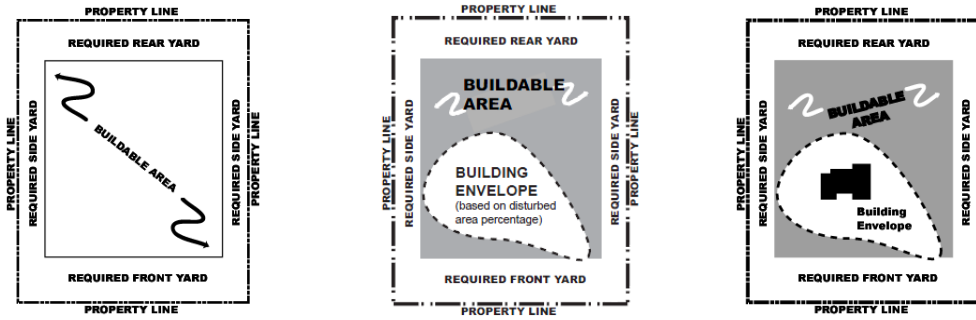
Town. See table of above for the density schedule for each zoning district.

- A. Pursuant to the Zoning Ordinance, [Article IX, Section 9.10 \(3\)](#), the disturbed area shall include the driveway, utilities, courtyards, sport courts, grass areas, and any area enclosed by a solid masonry wall.

<b>DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS</b>										
	Rural-190	Rural-70	Rural-43	R1-35	R1-18	R1-10	R-3	L	GO	C
Maximum Height - Feet	24 (1)	24 (1)	24 (1)	24 (1)	24 (1)	24 (1)	24 (1)	30 (2)	30 (2)	30 (2)
Minimum Front Yard - Feet	60 (3)(6)	60 (3)(6)	40 (3)(6)	40 (3)(6)	30 (3)(6)	20 (3)(6)	25 (3)(6)	25 (3)(6)	40 (6)	10 (3)(6)
Minimum Side Yard - Feet	30 (6)	30 (6)	30 (6)	20 (6)	10 (6)	7 (6)	10 (6)	10 (6)	20 (6)	0 (4)(6)
Minimum Rear Yard - Feet	60 (6)	60 (6)	40 (6)	40 (6)	30 (6)	25 (6)	25 (6)	25 (6)	40 (6)	0 (5)(6)
Minimum Lot Area - Square Feet	190,000	70,000	43,560	35,000	18,000	10,000	43,560	43,560	35,000	6,000
Minimum Lot Width - Feet	300	230	145	145	120	80	145	145	145	60
Minimum Lot Area Per Dwelling Unit - Square Feet	190,000	70,000	43,560	35,000	18,000	10,000	6,000	N/A	N/A	N/A
Maximum Lot Coverage - % (area under roof)	6%(8)	13%(8)	17%(8)	20%(8)	25%(8)	30%(8)	50%(8)	60%(8)	25%(8)	60%(8)
Maximum Disturbed Lot Area - %	18%(7)	39%(7)	51%(7)	60%(7)	75%	100%	100%	100%	75%	100%

- B. The size and shape of building envelopes shall be determined on a lot-by-lot basis but may not be larger than the maximum disturbed area allowed by the Zoning Ordinance (see table above for disturbed area requirements).
- C. In order to better blend the residence and site improvements into the sensitive upper Sonoran Desert, building envelopes should be placed in the least environmentally sensitive area of the property and should take into account views from near and far. In order to maintain community view sheds, the placement of building envelopes on prominent ridgelines is discouraged.

**STRUCTURE OF A LOT**



5. Cut and fill areas should be designed to blend into the natural desert setting. Applying desert varnish to cut material, using native desert stone salvaged from the site to contain fill, and/or giving cuts and fills a more organic form rather than an engineered appearance are methods that may be used to achieve this goal.
6. Pursuant to the Zoning Ordinance, [Article IX, Section 9.11 \(4\)](#), spill slopes adjacent to streets or driveways are prohibited.
7. Pursuant to the Zoning Ordinance, [Article IX, Section 9.10 \(8\)](#), detention/retention basins shall be designed with undulating banks to convey a natural appearance rather than an engineered form.
8. Pursuant to the Zoning Ordinance, [Article IX, Section 9.10 \(4\)](#), washes with a one hundred (100) year capacity of fifty (50) cubic feet per second must be maintained in their natural state. Washes below this threshold may be manipulated; however, the hydraulic properties and historic entrance and/or exit points from the property must remain consistent with pre-construction conditions. Such modifications should incorporate larger boulders and plant material to stabilize the banks and convey a natural appearance.
9. Bridging, rather than a wet crossing for a driveway, of a wash with a one hundred (100) year capacity of fifty (5) cubic feet per second or greater is encouraged.
10. Pursuant to the Zoning Ordinance, [Article IX, Section 9.10 \(6\)](#), any area disturbed in association with the undergrounding of utilities shall be restored to pre-construction conditions.

## **LANDSCAPING**

In order to preserve the indigenous flora and fauna, it is critical that much of the property surrounding the residence is maintained in its natural state. Some pruning of parasitic mistletoe and dead tree limbs may occur outside of the building envelope; however, the clearing or grubbing of native desert areas is not permitted. The decomposition of dead plant material, stabilization of native soils, and seedling establishment in these areas are critical to maintain and balance the sensitive upper Sonoran Desert ecosystem.

1. In accordance with Carefree's vision, the preservation of indigenous vegetation is critical in preserving the character of the community and wildlife habitat. Native vegetation should be preserved in situ in all areas outside of the building envelope.

2. Drought tolerant trees that will not exceed a height of thirty-five (35) feet may be used within courtyards and transitional xeriscape areas around the principal building. Please refer to the Town's Landscape brochure for acceptable trees and plants.
3. All trees should be at a minimum, fifteen (15) gallons in size at the time of planting.
4. Shrubs should have a minimum mature growth height of eighteen (18) inches. No shrubs should be less than one (1) gallon size.
5. Irrigated landscaping shall be provided at the base of the building to anchor the building into the surrounding environment and soften the visual impact of the structure.
6. The use of mature trees is encouraged to provide an immediate impact, especially to buffer adjacent uses. Protected trees outlined in the Zoning Ordinance, [Article IX, Section 9.13 \(D\)](#) that are salvaged from the building envelope may be relocated to buffer adjacent uses.
7. Pursuant to the Zoning Ordinance, [Article IX, Section 9.13 \(J\)](#), proper maintenance and timely replacement of plant material are required.
8. Three distinctive but interrelated plant zones exist within a properly designed landscape plan. These three zones consist of native desert plants along the periphery of the property, a transitional zone containing drought tolerant or xeriscape plants, and a mini-oasis zone within enclosed courtyards, pool areas, or play yards. Please refer to the Town's Landscape brochure for acceptable trees and plants for each landscape zone.

## **BUILDING DESIGN**

**Buildings should convey a sense of being a part of the Sonoran Desert environment and fit seamlessly into their neighborhood and the Carefree community. This will be achieved by avoiding disparate degrees of visual difference with adjacent and nearby buildings in style, massing and /or materials.**

1. A well designed Carefree home uses building materials that harmonize with the muted natural desert colors, tones, textures, and forms, so it will blend with the unique Sonoran Desert environment. Light reflective values should not exceed forty (40) percent for all exterior colors. Finished materials such as railings, window frames, primary entry doors, and fascia may have an accent color with a light reflective value no greater than fifty-five (55) percent.
2. Metals, including painted metal, are allowed if they are not shiny. Shiny metal must be specifically approved by the Development Review Board. Weathered copper is acceptable.
3. In order to maintain the dominance of the upper "Sonoran Desert, the building envelope should be placed in areas of lowest environmental significance, such as on lower slopes, below ridgelines, in areas of sparse vegetation, or in previously disturbed areas.
4. In order to reduce the visually apparent size of a building so that it blends into the desert environment, buildings with a mass greater than one-story should be stair-stepped.
5. Multiple roof forms also reduce the perceived mass and should be used on buildings greater than 1,000 gross square feet in size. Hip roofs are preferred rather than gable

ends.

6. Pursuant to the Zoning Ordinance, [Article IX, Section 9.07](#), all mechanical equipment including heating and cooling equipment located on the ground shall be screened from neighboring properties by a solid masonry wall and native landscaping to blend with the building's architecture.
7. Unsightly cuts on a sloped site can be greatly reduced if the building is stepped down the hill in accordance with the natural grade.
8. Accessory buildings should blend with and compliment the principle building in form, materials, style, and color.
9. In order to create a home that uses passive solar design, consider the orientation of the building, recessed windows (minimum four inches), three dimensional wall faces, and column features. Tinted glass should be incorporated into the design of all windows to minimize glare.
10. Outdoor areas such as pools, yards, play areas, and patios should be designed to be visually connected to the residence through the use of walls or courtyards and should be visually screened from adjacent lots.

## **SOLID MASONRY WALLS, RETAINING WALLS, AND FENCES**

In many cases walls are used to define exterior spaces and limit access. However, in order to maintain the visual dominance of the Sonoran Desert's natural features, flora and fauna, the application of walls, retaining walls, and fences should be confined to areas closest to the main residence.

### **1. SOLID MASONRY WALLS**

- A. The placement of a solid masonry wall shall be in accordance with the provisions established in Article 9, Section 9.09 of the Zoning Ordinance.
- B. In order to maintain the wide-open natural desert spaces enjoyed in Carefree, the use of solid masonry walls is highly discouraged except to enclose courtyards, play yards, swimming pools, sport courts, and for screening mechanical equipment. All areas enclosed by a wall are included in the disturbed area calculations.
- C. All solid masonry walls should be designed to flow with the terrain, preserve existing desert vegetation, provide breaks for washes and wildlife corridors, and blend into the natural desert colors and textures. Light reflective values of colors and finished materials should not exceed forty percent (40%) and blend with the muted colors of the surrounding Sonoran Desert.

### **2. RETAINING WALLS**

- A. The height of retaining walls shall be minimized according to the standards set forth in [Article 9, Section 9.08](#) of the Zoning Ordinance.
- B. Retaining walls should be used to retain fill where slopes cannot be stabilized by use of rip rap, boulders, vegetation, and/or native stone. River rock should not be

used as rip rap.

- C. Landscaping should be used in connection with a retaining wall to further screen the wall and to stabilize the soils/slopes.
- D. Light reflective values of colors and finish materials should not exceed forty percent (40%) and blend with the muted colors of the surrounding Sonoran Desert.

### **3. FENCES**

- A. Fences shall conform to the provisions of the Zoning Ordinance as set forth in [Article 9, Section 9.09](#).
- B. Breaks in fencing should be provided to maintain significant wildlife corridors and washes.
- C. Fencing should consist of high quality material with light reflective values below fifty-five percent (55%) and blend with the muted colors of the surrounding Sonoran Desert.

### **DRIVEWAYS**

**The location and design of the driveway is equally as important as the placement and design of the residence. A properly designed driveway should blend into the site, minimize grading, and preserve significant environmental features such as large boulder outcroppings or saguaros.**

- 1. Driveways shall conform to the provisions in [Article 9, Section 9.11](#) of the Zoning Ordinance.
- 2. The location of the driveway shall be designed to:
  - A. Minimize grades
  - B. Minimize the disruption of the existing landscape.
  - C. Provide for the shortest driveway possible, unless a longer, more undulating design would result in less of a visual impact to the site.
- 3. One driveway will be allowed for each residence unless otherwise approved by the Development Review Board.
- 4. Exposed aggregate, pavers, and/or concrete colorized to emulate the desert floor texture and tones are highly encouraged.

### **SOLAR PANELS AND ASSOCIATED EQUIPMENT**

**The use of solar energy is encouraged from a sustainable energy perspective. However, it is important that the elements associated with the solar equipment are designed into the residence to ensure a seamless and visually unobtrusive result and to protect the dominance of the Sonoran Desert setting.**

- 1. Pursuant to the Zoning Ordinance, [Article IX, Section 9.05](#), roof mounted solar panels shall be at the same slope or parallel to the sloped roof. Solar panels mounted on a flat roof shall be screened from view by a roof parapet. All ground mounted equipment shall



be screened from view by walls and landscaping and shall not exceed a height of six (6) feet above natural grade.

2. Swimming pool solar systems should meet the following design criteria:
  - A. Should be placed towards the rear of the house.
  - B. All associated equipment should be painted to match the surface it lies against.
  - C. Solar panels should be black in color to promote efficiency and prevent fading.