



City of Malibu

Planning Department

Effective Date: July 1, 2012

Story Pole Policy

Story poles are placed to demonstrate height, bulk and location of a proposed project that may potentially impact public and/or private views. The placement of story poles shall be required for all Coastal Development Permits and for certain discretionary requests associated with Administrative Plan Review applications (i.e., all projects reviewed by the Planning Director and/or the Planning Commission).

Purpose

During review of certain discretionary projects, story poles are installed to demonstrate the height and location of proposed development. Review of the story poles ensures that permitted development is sited and designed to protect public views to and along the ocean and scenic coastal areas consistent with the Malibu Local Coastal Program (LCP) and to protect private primary views in accordance with Malibu Municipal Code (M.M.C.) Section 17.40.040(A)(17).

Waiver of Requirement

In some cases, the story poles requirement may be waived by the Planning Director where it is determined through onsite investigation, evaluation of topographic maps, photographic evidence, or by other means that there is no possibility that the proposed development will create or contribute to adverse impacts upon scenic areas.

Procedure

Prior to installation of story poles, the applicant shall consult with the case planner to prepare the story pole plan. The plan shall be on a minimum of an 8.5-inch by 11-inch reduction of the roof plan showing all locations at which story poles will be placed. The story pole plan shall be approved by the case planner prior to story pole placement.

Typically, story poles may not be placed at a property until the case planner confirms that all reviewing departments have completed their reviews. In some cases, the case planner may allow early installation of story poles if view issues are anticipated.

Prior to notification of a public hearing, or 10 days prior to the mailing of the public notice of application (for those projects not requiring a hearing), story poles shall be placed on the site unless waived by the Planning Director.

Location

The number of story poles required will vary with each specific project. The case planner shall review proposed story pole location to ensure that the plan adequately demonstrates the proposed height, mass, and bulk of the portion of the project under review. Story poles showing roof overhangs, eaves, chimneys, balconies, decks, patios, and accessory structures may be required. The plan should be kept as simple as possible to accurately reflect the proposal and to minimize visual clutter in potential view areas.

Materials

The material of the story pole shall be indicated on the story pole plan. Story poles shall be constructed of 2-inch by 4-inch lumber or other sturdy building material (PVC pipe is not acceptable). Story poles should be braced at the base by use of guy wires or supporting beams to ensure that they will withstand weather and will remain correctly positioned. The guy wires should be flagged for safety purposes.

Story Pole Plan Requirements

The story pole plan is subject to the following criteria:

Plan Scale – The story pole plan shall be at the same scale as the roof plan.

Indication of Story Pole Height – The elevations of the height of each story pole and the natural and finished grades shall be indicated on the plans. If requested by the case planner, the applicant shall also provide a detail on the plans showing the elevation of a typical story pole.

Markings – The story pole plan shall include the following plan note:

“The top one foot of the story poles shall be painted with a clearly visible black paint. Markings shall also be made at 18 feet above finished or natural grade, whichever results in a lower building height, and at one foot increments above 18 feet. Bright orange construction mesh approximately one foot in width shall be placed connecting poles to show all proposed roof and ridgelines.”

Safety Provisions – All story poles shall be placed to ensure the health, safety and general welfare of the public. The story pole plan shall include the following plan note:

“If at any time the story poles become unsafe, they shall be repaired and reset immediately. The story poles shall be removed immediately if determined by the City to be a public safety risk.”

Waiver of Risk – The applicant must sign and submit a waiver absolving the City of any liability associated with construction of, or damage by the story poles. This waiver will be provided by the case planner and shall be copied on the story pole plan. The applicant shall not install the story poles until the waiver form is submitted to the City.

Certification

For projects including construction of a new, single-family residence, a new commercial building, projects with a primary view issue, or those which are located in a scenic area; certification of the story poles is required. Once the story poles are placed, a licensed surveyor, civil engineer, or architect¹ must certify that the story poles have been placed in accordance with the approved story pole plan. The property owner may not certify the story pole height or position. After receiving the certification, the case planner will visit the site to verify and photograph the story poles. Public notification shall not begin until certification is complete and the case planner verifies the placement of the story poles.

Removal

The story poles shall be removed immediately if determined by the City to be a public safety risk or at the discretion of the Planning Director. Story poles shall remain in place for the duration of the approval process and shall be removed within seven (7) calendar days after the final appeal period expires, unless other arrangements are made with the Planning Department.

¹ Story poles certified by an engineer or an architect may require a follow-up certification by a licensed surveyor if the placement of the poles is challenged.