

Architectural Guidelines for The Lakes at Mercer Island

Architectural Narrative

The Lakes at Mercer Island is a community of 100 homes that was built in 1985. The vision of home builder John Buchan, it was designed to be a unique neighborhood built around five lakes, with connecting creeks and waterfalls. The Lakes is unique to Mercer Island in that it is flat and covers approximately 40 acres. All the homes have a consistent architectural language that allows distinction for each home. Trees of many species complete the serene feel of the neighborhood. The trees all add value and are in areas that provide shade, privacy, and surprise.

The homes are rather large and closely knitted but key design features are used to downscale proximity of the adjacent homes. Sightlines play a critical design element and experience for first time visitors and long-term residents. The facades facing the street or adjacent neighboring homes are traditionally screened and have limited views to prevent sightlines into the home from the public ways. It appears the building lot lines and orientations are purposely skewed from one another to provide privacy.

Rooflines are typically hipped and have slight variations to allow a multitude of height changes, inclusion of dormers and other features to break down the scale of the home. The scale of the homes' massing typically leads from the lowest height at the periphery of the home to the highest element, typically towards the center of the home. A one-story end component is retained and blended into the central two-story home beyond as the hipped rooflines intersect in a logical manner. This allows for true two-story living areas at the rear, hidden from the street, and adequate first and second floors that have wonderful views to the rear yard. Building materials further support these design goals as shingles or shakes are consistently found on the roofs and the facades vary from native stone, brick, stucco, and wood.

The architectural style is distinct but plays off some elements of the residential Saltbox, Cape Cod or Shingle design, styles that feature sharply sloping roofs that often plunge from two stories to a single story. This design feature was used for windbreaks but appears to be a key design feature at The Lakes to maintain a sense of scale that is enchanting and complimentary to the neighboring homes.

Introduction

These guidelines are intended to assist the Architectural Control Committee when evaluating the coherence of proposed construction with the existing architecture of The Lakes. As guidelines, they are not intended to be strictly enforced in their entirety, but deviations should be justified based on special attributes of a particular property. For example, homes in The Lakes are not oriented "single file" and the orientation of rear or side façades to their neighbors vary from what would be expected in a "single file" orientation. These differences may result in greater or lesser impacts on neighbors and the street-facing view and therefore may justify a modified approach to these guidelines. Similarly, these guidelines cannot contemplate every situation and the ACC retains its overarching authority to modify these guidelines and to evaluate any proposal based on its overall effect, novel design elements or harmony with The Lakes architecture.

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Design Considerations or Key Design Features

Height

- Height restriction of the garage on the front facade should be limited to 1.5 stories and must blend in with the main roof structure. A 1.5 story means that the wall height is vertical to the second floor, but the roof slope (gutter and eave line) starts at the mid-point of the second floor to minimize a two-story element. See additional guidance below regarding façade setbacks.
- Side facades are encouraged to have 1.5 story design elements.
- Building height shall be limited to two (2) stories, excluding basements and walkouts.

Roofs

- Hip roofs are typically used. This helps create a sense of natural hierarchy as the building roof lines gracefully get lower in height as they get closer to adjacent homes or the pedestrian friendly streetscape. Expansive flat or minimally pitched roof areas are prohibited.
- Rooflines should create interest and help break down the building scale as the building gets closer to the streetscape or neighboring homes.
- The use of dormers and steeply pitched roofs are encouraged at the front and side facades. A key design feature is having the lowest points of the roof lines at the front and sides of the homes.

Facades

- Dormers are also encouraged to obtain additional useable second floor square footage.
- Street-facing second story facades must be set back from the underlying first story. Recessed walls or slight protrusions are encouraged to help break up long linear façade elements that otherwise would not provide visual interest.
- Front-facing facades are allowed to have 1.5 story design elements. A guiding principle is that up to 50% of the façade length can be 1.5 stories. Dormers are not considered in the percentage.
- Side-facing facades are allowed to have two (2) story design elements. A guiding principle is that up to 25% of the façade length can be two (2) stories.

Overall Design/Impression

- The exterior elevations shall incorporate quality elements of design such as balance, depth, repetition, and contrast with special attention to shade and shadow impact on neighboring properties.
- The homes massing must be composed of multiple masses with each mass scaling lower as it moves closer to the street, adjacent homes, or property lines. One side of the home should retain a one-story construction. Special attention is required to preserve privacy of existing homeowners' windows, sightlines, and natural light.

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Final Approval

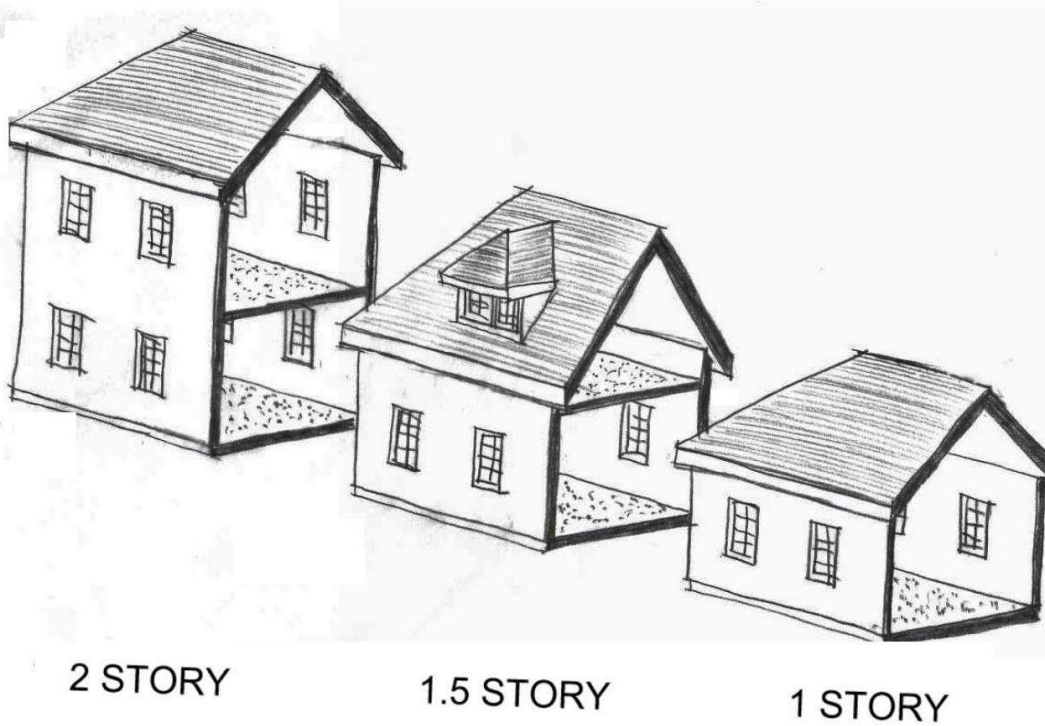
Final approval by the ACC of any remodel proposal is conditioned on delivering to the ACC a copy of the engineering blueprints that have been approved by the City of Mercer Island. This is an important step as these blueprints may reveal differences between what the ACC understood from preliminary drawings and the final concept approved by the City. The ACC reserves the right to require modifications if, in its view, the final concept has element(s) that it does not believe adhere to these Guidelines without justification. In addition, it is the applicant's responsibility to submit to the ACC for review any modifications to the City-approved blueprints that affect any portion of the remodel that is subject to ACC review.

Adopted October 2021

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ARCHITECTURAL EXAMPLES

BUILDING HEIGHTS



Example of 2 Story Elevation (stacked floor plan – cannot be street-visible; rarely acceptable on a side; allowed in the rear), 1.5 Story Elevation (acceptable solution; dormers are acceptable) and 1 Story Elevation.

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ROOFS

Roofs have varied heights and complexity, massing to a central location. A one-story portion of the house preserved.



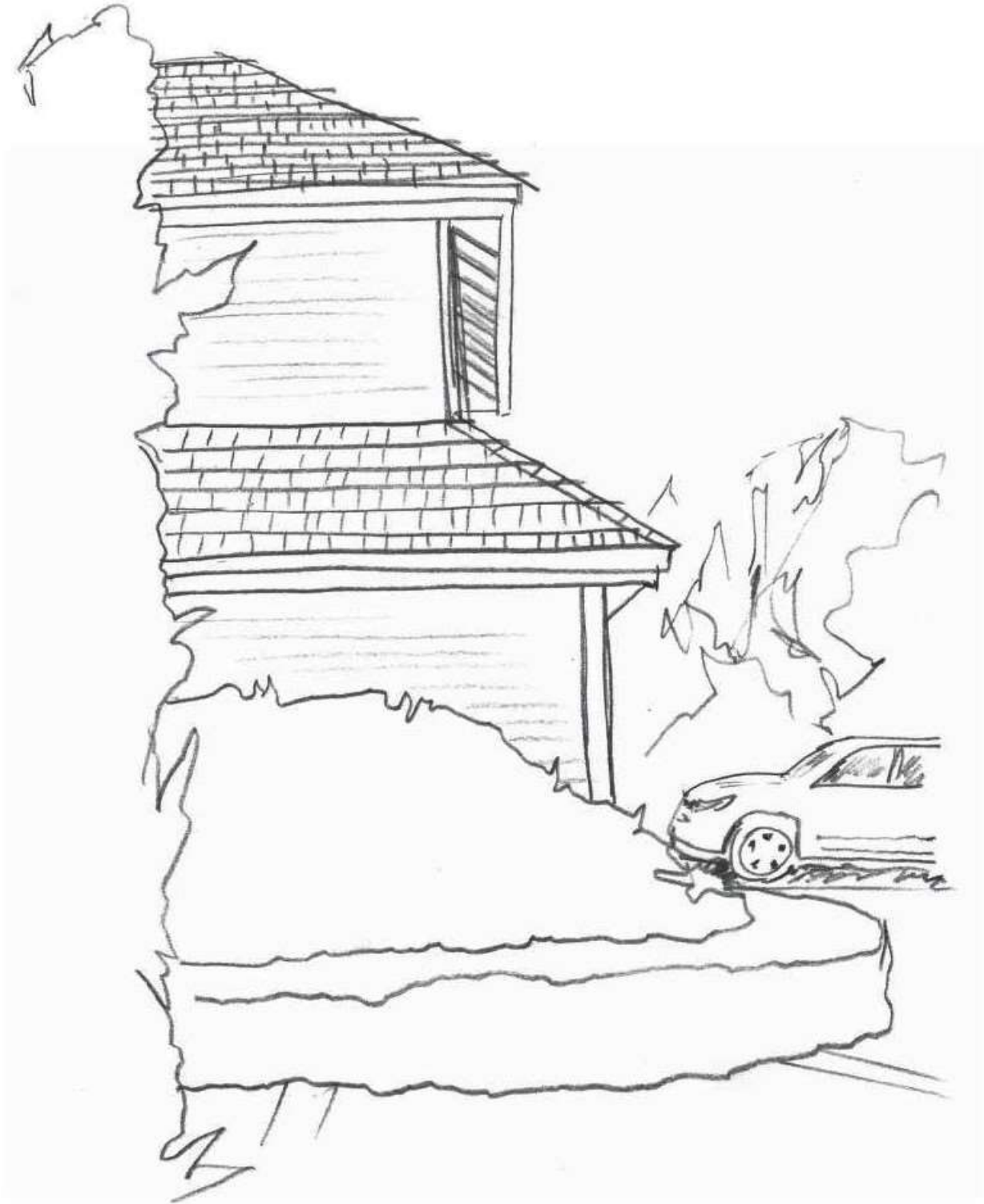
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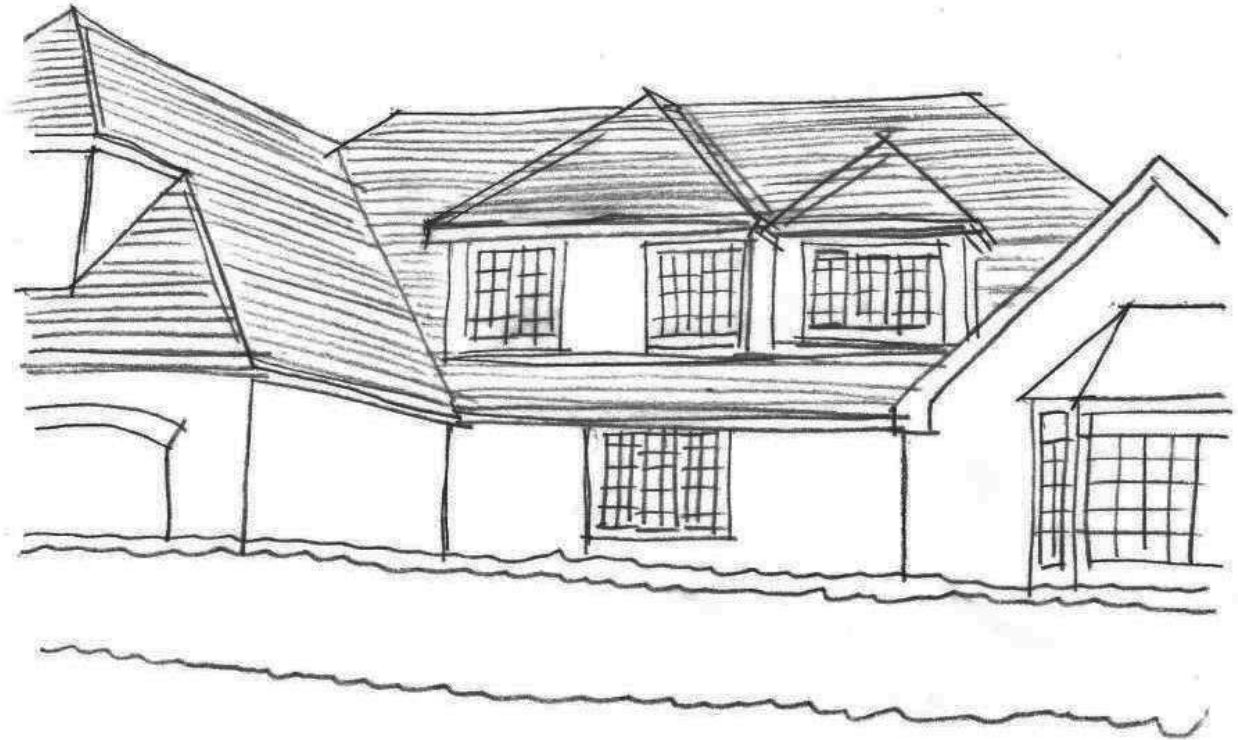
FACADES

Second story is set back from the first story and hipped roof covers the second story.



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Dormers used to create additional space in the second story.



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