

Tips from the Ranch

“Hope Ranch Architectural Review Board Process”

If you are thinking about building or remodeling your home in Hope Ranch, this month's article is about what happens after you or your architect/contractor contact the building administrator regarding your plans. This month's article is also about how neighbors can convey their thoughts and considerations in regards to a new development as well. The mechanism that brings Hope Ranch together to address these concerns and develop good direction for a project as it moves on to the County level of review is called the Hope Ranch Park Homes Association Architectural Review Board. Not all projects require ABR approval as some can be approved at the Staff level here at the ranch, but this article is about those projects that will require Architectural Review Board consideration.

Some background on the development of the **Architectural Review Board (ABR)** into its current formation: On June 26th of 1924, The “Articles of Incorporation of Hope Ranch Park Homes Association” were written in to record as a voluntary association for the purpose of establishing a non-profit co-operative corporation. One of the articles of this incorporation is Article 11, which briefly addresses the review process for construction projects within the ranch. As early as 1961, there are “Building Guidelines” established in the CC & R's to govern any building within the ranch. These were later developed in to a separate document entitled “BUILDING GUIDELINES with Procedures for Application and Issuance of Building Permits and Property Maintenance Guidelines” of which the most recent edition was published in April 2003. New homeowners in the Ranch are given a “Welcome Packet of Information” of which the CC & R's and the Building Guidelines are included. For those of you who are not in possession of these documents – they are free to Hope Ranch homeowners, available at the Ranch office

Our current Architectural Review Board consists of four licensed architects and two licensed landscape architects appointed by the Board of Directors for an indefinite term. Currently the licensed architect members of the ABR are: Richard Johnson, Robert Senn, Amy Taylor and Bill Wolfe; and the licensed landscape architects are: Kris Kimpel and Sam Maphis. They donate their time to review Hope Ranch projects for compliance with our CC&R's; County code compliance; compatibility with the neighborhood and neighbors and appropriateness of sitting/proposed plantings on the property. Additional issues include: aesthetics, form, massing, construction details and protection of private views versus screening. One of their most difficult tasks involves the protection of “private views”. By private views we mean “primary view” that historically you had when you purchased the property. Primary view relates to a 90-degree vista from a primary living area of the home. The County only protects public views but Hope Ranch attempts to do the impossible which is address private views as well.

From the perspective of the Hope Ranch ABR, the longest serving board member of this group, Richard Johnson, has the following to say about the process:

“Keep in mind, we are a volunteer group...for about 100 hours a year. We attempt to achieve solutions best for the owner and the whole Ranch atmosphere and quality of it's environment – respecting owners' and neighbors' rights and concerns. We are not obstructionists – we work with the owner and their designers and contractors to reach good decisions that work. We respect their wishes/dreams/desires/budgets and work with them to achieve the “Best” results for the project, often providing new, free design ideas as well. Most applicants say they appreciate the Board's input. We aim to help the owner accomplish their project goals and still maintain the Hope Ranch Standards.”

ABR meets every first and third Thursday of the month from 3 PM to 5:30 PM at the Board Room at 695 Via Tranquilla office of HRPFA. One case at a time appears before this Board for review. Neighbors are welcome to attend and voice their considerations at that time. However, the only noticing of a project coming up for review is that it will appear in the Ranch Ramblings under “Construction Projects - Projects Under Review”.

You might notice “storey poles” on a project site and that might be your first visible “Notice” of any changes going on with a property. Storey poles may be required, by the ABR, for a building should the impact to the neighborhood of this proposed building deem to be questionable. These are signs

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that you should contact the Building Administrator’s office to further discuss what plans may be available for your review and the issues regarding the development of the property. The only other “noticing” of a development project will come from the County when the project has been submitted for their review. They are required mail a “notice” to neighbors within a 300’ radius of the project telling them of the time and place where the project will be reviewed.

The ABR’s decision regarding a property’s development are based on “findings” that the project substantially complies with “The Hope Ranch Building Guidelines with Procedures for Application and Issuance of Building Permits and Property Maintenance Guidelines” published April 2003 and the CC & R’s latest adoption of 1995.

Based on these “findings”, a judgment/recommendation will be passed or not passed. At each recommendation of judgment from the ABR, The Hope Ranch Board of Directors will then review the ABR decision and decide whether to approve this recommendation or make their own decision or requests regarding the project. Once the Board of Directors has ruled at each phase, the project is then sent back to the ABR for further review except at the “Final Approval Stage”. The recommendation phases and the required submittals to meet these recommendations can be found on pages 4-10 “Article III” of the Hope Ranch Building Guidelines”. There are three phases to the Architectural Review process both within the Ranch and within Santa Barbara County.

1. Conceptual – informal review to discuss the projects overall direction and neighbor considerations. If a project receives a conceptual review conditioned on storey poles – the project has only Conceptual approval if the storey poles are approved.
2. Preliminary Approval
3. Final. Final approval is recommended by the ABR.

When the findings are incomplete or there is still a dispute requiring resolution, a project is given a Continuance. In response to that Continuance, a project may be redesigned in which case, the project may reappear before the Board for a “Revised” Conceptual, Preliminary or Final. These discussions that occur at each meeting of the ABR are recorded by the Building Administrator and available for public review to discern what the Architectural Review Board is concerned about versus what your issues are with the project. Any neighbor concern is also recorded into these minutes. In any case, the role of the Building Administrator in this arena is comparable to the County’s “assigned case planner” and during the meeting the Building Administrator will act in the role of “supervising planner/secretary” at the meetings.

The following developments are exempt from BAR review (both County and Hope Ranch) – meaning they can receive a permit and approval at Hope Ranch staff level:

1. Fences of 6 feet or less (in some cases)
2. Gate posts of 8’ or less (in some cases)
3. Solar Panels
4. Swimming pools, hot tubs or spas
5. interior alterations not affecting exterior walls.
6. Decks
7. Structures not visible from any road or neighboring property.

If you have concerns about your property or the development of a property adjacent to your home– please do not hesitate to drop by our office. We keep most current plans of your home on file and would be happy to review any concerns or questions you might have. It is a service we provide to you at no cost.

Remember: Review “The Ranch Ramblings” section entitled “Construction Projects for a list of projects coming up for ABR review. These projects are open for public comment regarding impacts of the proposed development.

Next month’s issue will discuss differences between our “Guidelines” and Santa Barbara County Zoning Codes to shed some light on this dual review process. .