

ART JURY CORNER

Height and Bulk

The Art Jury's greatest challenge is to review and approve projects while ensuring that the overall look of the Ranch will still be characterized by trees, shrubs and rural vistas and not be dominated by views of homes or have homes looming over their neighbors. Our duty to this challenge is spelled out in the Protective Covenant's Preamble which speaks about "*preserving, continuing and maintaining this character of community and rare landscape features and of upholding the quality of all future architecture and improvements; and of restricting the use, height and bulk of buildings;*" (emphasis added). The framers of the Covenant were far sighted in 1928 to realize that restrictions on "*height and bulk*" were necessary. Since 1928 the size of a new home within the Covenant has grown significantly so the need for the Art Jury's careful review of "*height and bulk*" is more important than ever.

The Art Jury's restrictions on "*height and bulk*" keep the scale of buildings proportional to the natural features of the community: the trees, shrubs, groves, hills and canyons which are the source of Rancho Santa Fe's character. Restricting the height of a home reduces its prominence and also allows it to be visually screened by landscaping within a reasonable period of time. Large bulky buildings require excessive grading which can obliterate the natural features of the site.

A building's "*bulk*" or mass, is its appearance when viewed as a whole. Two buildings of the same square footage can have very different apparent masses. Consider two separate building designs, the first building design proposes a uniformly rectangular structure built along one long axis, the second building design consists of a home with various building wings at different angles. All things being equal, the first structure will seem much more massive – the entire building will be visible when viewed as a whole. The second building with its various wings can never be completely seen from any one perspective. Thus the view from the street will expose only part of the building, the view from one of the neighbors will reveal only another portion, and so on. The overall "*bulk*" of the building has been broken up. This type of building is normally less prominent when seen from various locations and can be adapted to site topography and landscaping.

As illustrated in the above example, reducing the "*bulk*" of a building does not necessarily mean that the square footage must be reduced. A building's mass may be broken up in various ways: the structure may consist of different wings, the roof heights can be varied, the floor levels can be stepped to coincide with the topography, and projections can be incorporated into building walls. Breaking up the mass leads to a more interesting design and often creates a more appealing floor plan as well as interesting courtyards around the house.

The Art Jury's review of height and bulk leads to the construction of less prominent homes that blend with the Ranch's "*rare landscape features*" mentioned in the Covenant. These less conspicuous homes maintain the character of the community while still allowing for a diversity of design and individual expression.