

ART JURY CORNER

Tennis Courts

Year-round, outdoor recreation is one of the advantages of living in this region. A walk or horseback ride on the Covenant's trail system, a round of golf at the course or a game of tennis at the tennis club are all pleasures that can be enjoyed right here, within the borders of Rancho Santa Fe. It's only natural that everyone would want to be as close as possible to these recreational amenities and thus some tennis enthusiasts like having a tennis court on their own property. From a community standpoint, the Art Jury looks to make sure that the property can easily accommodate the court without it being "squeezed in" or requiring a lot of disruption to the natural topography or neighbors.

The construction of tennis courts is regulated by the *Protective Covenant* as well as the *Rancho Santa Fe Regulatory Code*. The Preamble of the Covenant states that "...*Rancho Santa Fe is unusually attractive and valuable as a high class place of residence because of the rare quality of its landscape, trees and shrubs...*". The Covenant further goes on to state that "...*property owners are most desirous of preserving, continuing and maintaining this character of community and rare landscape features...*". The above-cited Covenant language stresses the importance of maintaining the natural landscape and the character of the community. In its role of enforcing the Covenant, the Art Jury cannot approve a tennis court that is constructed in such a way that it does not fit a site and thus does not maintain the character of the community.

The *Regulatory Code*, in addition to limiting tennis courts to lots larger than two acres, also stipulates specific review criteria for the Art Jury to consider, including "*setbacks, topography, proposed grading, distance from adjacent residences, existing site development, landscaping*" and "*the cumulative number of accessory uses located on the property...*".

The evaluation of a tennis court's prominence and impact on landforms is no different than the evaluation that the Art Jury must perform for other types of development such as homes and guest houses. It has been the Art Jury's experience that tennis courts are one of the hardest uses to successfully integrate into a site. The reason for this is that there is little flexibility with the design of a court. Tennis courts are big (over 7000 square feet); and perfectly flat; the dimensions are absolutely fixed; they are surrounded by ten-foot tall fencing with semi-opaque windscreen material; and for the best playing conditions usually follow a strict, north-south orientation. Tennis courts can also be a source of noise for neighbors if located too close to the property line. Homes, guest houses and even swimming pools can be altered in size and shape to blend with the topography of a site. Horse pastures can occupy a lot of room, but horses can be kept on sloping terrain. Tennis courts on the other hand, must be perfectly flat and be of a certain length and width; either they fit, or they don't. Trying to make a tennis court fit on a smaller hillside site often results in the destruction of the natural character of the site. The grading of huge, flat pads on the side of a hill is contrary to the Covenant and the Residential Design Guidelines. The suitability of a property for a tennis court is not determined by the sheer size of the lot; some properties that are quite large in terms of overall acreage may not be able to accommodate a tennis court because the entire property is composed of steep slopes and there simply isn't an acceptable area for a large, flat pad.

The Art Jury also takes into account the impact of the combination of a large paved area (the court) with the other buildings on the site to ensure that the structures blend into the natural surroundings of Rancho Santa Fe which everyone loves.