

Your Estes Park Home in the Mountains

An important neighbor to Rocky Mountain National Park

Compiled by
The League of Women Voters of Estes Park
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Living in the mountains is different from living anywhere else. There is a natural beauty in the mountains and homes should reflect that beauty.

Most of the members of the League of Women Voters of Estes Park have moved here from other areas. The splendid views and the friendly atmosphere made this a logical choice when it was time to change lifestyles or retire. The choices, the problems of building a home, or renovating an existing one here in the mountains, were common threads among conversations. We hope that you will find some helpful ideas that we wish we had known when we moved here.

The question of how to accommodate growth in population and an expanding economy while retaining the unique charm of Estes Park is important. Dwellings that blend into the natural environment best protect our scenic beauty and property values.

The guidelines in this brochure suggest the choice of materials and colors, as well as the use of native plants and trees, that will protect the natural beauty and scenic vistas. These objectives are critical to having a community that residents and tourists alike will value and enjoy, now and for years to come.

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DESIGNING IN HARMONY WITH NATURE

Rocky Mountain National Park, one of the most beautiful national parks in the United States, is your neighbor. You have an important investment in your home and the space you choose for its location. Plan your home and its landscape carefully to ensure that the natural surroundings, the wildlife and the scenic vistas remain for others to enjoy. You can preserve the harmony of this natural environment by design practices that follow nature's lead.

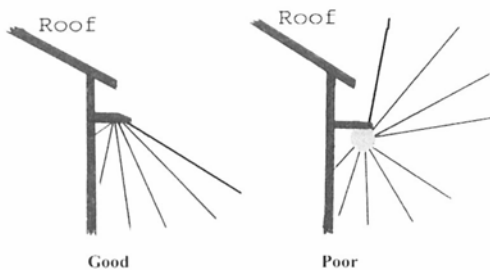
While urban homes are designed to be attractive and objects of interest in themselves, in the Estes Park area the goal is for the house to blend with the mountain setting and to be in harmony with its environment. The house should not intrude on the site but conform to it, making use of natural landforms and existing vegetation. Your house should look as though it belongs on the site.

It is always a temptation to bring our past with us instead of being open to a new environment with different opportunities and different constraints. We may want to build our dream house here, or to reproduce a favorite house from the past. Unfortunately, that house may really belong in the big city, in a seaside resort, or in the desert. In choosing a mountain home look at houses which seem to belong in a mountain setting and identify the features that make them appealing.

- Homes can best fit the lot by following the general slope and by minimizing height. Tuck your house into the land.
- Exterior siding that reflects the natural setting will tie the house to the land. Native materials such as stone and wood blend well with our environment and reflect the character and image of a mountain village. Many new siding materials are low maintenance, non-combustible and available in earth tone colors.
- Earth tones and muted colors in shades of brown, blue-gray or soft, dark green that harmonize with the natural background are desirable. White, light, and shiny colors which are bright against the mountain landscape are visible for great distances in our clear air and bright sunshine.
- Roofing choices are critical because they may be the most visible aspect of your house. Use fire resistant material such as asphalt, tile, or non-reflective metal in earth tones.
- Rooflines should be broken up with offsets and variations to be more compatible with our mountain setting. The visual variety mimics natural patterns and is aesthetically pleasing.
- Driveways should follow natural contours, avoiding long, straight lines that conflict with the informal environment.
- Disturbed areas should be replanted as soon as possible to minimize water erosion and weed invasion.
- Fences, although not necessary for boundaries, should be of earth tone colors and have an open appearance. Deer and elk are prevalent so your fences need to be sturdy and low to avoid endangering wildlife. Barbed wire is illegal within the town limits and should not be used throughout the valley.
- Underground lines for utilities are required in new subdivisions and are preferable for individual lots.
- Views are a special asset in this mountain valley. You will want to maximize views of significant features for yourself but avoid obscuring views of others. Place your home below the ridgeline and you will have a natural backdrop for the house and protection from high winds. Remember Estes Valley is part of the view shed of Rocky Mountain National Park. Efforts to blend with the natural terrain will make development less intrusive as viewed from the park.

- Open space is increasingly important as development continues in the valley. The Estes Valley Land Trust (556-52911) helps individuals preserve open space through conservation easements
- Protective covenants, enforced by your neighborhood property owners association, help protect your home's value. Covenants usually address home design, color, lighting, fencing, landscaping, roof materials, number of pets and their control, as well as other topics that affect quality of life. The covenants must be enforced to have any legal validity, so work through your association to ensure they are actively enforced.

LIGHT POLLUTION IN ESTES PARK



Residents of Estes Park will discover the joys of the stars and the Milky Way which are so clearly visible here these views are in danger. Light pollution is not just an issue with large communities. It is also a growing problem in small ones like the Estes Park area. Three measures should be incorporated into your home's outdoor lighting system

- Make all light from outdoor lighting fixtures shine onto the ground. Specially constructed fixtures (called full-cutoff fixtures) ensure that all the light hits the ground. Poorly designed light fixtures send a large percentage of light into the sky and this obscures the stars. Bouncing the light off the ground first, will reflect only about 10% of the light into the sky.
- Avoid light-trespass onto a neighbor's property. Light trespass occurs when the light from your fixtures shines into your neighbor's property or house, reducing their privacy (and spoiling neighborly relationships).
- Use adjustable motion detectors to control outdoor lighting. Motion detectors on your outdoor fixtures ensure that lights are on only when someone moves outside. Passing animals will alert you to their presence by turning the lights on. You will discover all kinds of visitors you never knew you had.

Many studies have shown that outdoor lights do not increase your security or deter burglars. These lights may even help burglars find their way more easily.

Resources:

www.darksdky.org/fixtures/res/html

www.members.aol.com/ctstarwchr (Light Pollution Awareness)

<http://skyandtelescope.com/resources/darksdky/>

CAN YOU GARDEN IN ESTES PARK? YOU BET!

Estes Park area receives an average of only 15 inches of precipitation per year. Some watering will be necessary. Conserve water by grouping plants into areas of similar water need and monitor them. Investigate Xeriseape.

Keep in mind that deer, elk, or rabbits will eat anything. Your fertilized, watered plants are especially delectable. Consider “elk proof” fencing for areas that need special protection.

Landscaping Suggestions

- Perennials do especially well here because of our summer days of intense sun followed by cool nights. Choose native perennials with minimum water requirements for the backbone of your garden such as:
Yarrow, Penstemon, Wild Geranium, Aster Bee Balm, Coneflower, Gallardia, Veronica, Flax, Mexican Hat, Columbine, Ball Cactus, Snow-in-Summer, Sedum, and Campanula.
- Some shrubs will tolerate our cold, windy, dry winters. Watering several times during winter warm spells (daytime temperature over forty degrees) helps support these suggested shrubs:
Potentilla, Mountain Mohogany, Rabbit Brush, Ninebark, Juniper, Hardy Shrub roses, Holly Grape, Big Western Sage.
- Trees provide privacy and windbreaks. Aspen, ponderosa pines and spruce are favorites. Limber pines are perfectly suited for wind and are among the easiest pines to establish. Minimize use of evergreens within 30 feet of your buildings because they are not fire-resistant.

The Larimer County Extension Service will help you get in touch with a local Master Gardener who can give you advice on plants and their care.

Resources:

Larimer County Cooperative Extension, 498-6000. (CSU) Fact sheets are available.
www.larimer.org/ext

NOXIOUS WEEDS

Even our paradise has noxious weeds! Noxious weeds are non-native, invasive plants restricted by law. These plants were introduced to this area without their natural predators and grew out of control, disrupting the ecosystem by displacing native plants. Wildlife is affected because animals often find weeds unpalatable. The flowers may be pretty, but when these weeds overrun your land both aesthetic and property values suffer.

Some noxious weeds in Estes Park area are:

- Creeping perennials - Dalmatian and yellow toadflax, Canada thistle, Russian knapweed and leafy spurge
- Winter annual or biennial - musk thistle

- Biennial or short-lived perennial - spotted knapweed
- Annual, biennial, or short-lived perennial - diffuse knapweed, cheat grass

Noxious weeds have few natural controls and are difficult to eradicate. Prevention is best, but if noxious weeds are on your property try these controls:

- Mechanical - includes putting, mowing and cutting, usually more than once a year. This is most effective with annuals and biennials.
- Cultural - plant and encourage desirable vegetation. A healthy plant community makes it harder for weeds to grow, but to be effective weeds must have been at least partially destroyed.
- Biological - introduce weeds' natural enemies such as certain insects and animals.
- Chemical - varies by type of weed and chemical. Read the label!

Buy only native or non-invasive plants for outdoor use.

The Larimer County Weed District offers a variety of services during the growing season including site inspections, chemicals and selling native grasses. Estes Valley Improvement Association has weed flyers with descriptions, pictures and control information.

Resources:

Estes Valley Improvement Assoc. (EVIA),
1140-A Manford Ave., Estes Park; 586-9519. Pamphlets available.
Larimer County Weed District; 498-5768. Pamphlets available.
www.larimer.org/publicworks/weeds/district.htm

FIRE SAFETY FOR YOUR HOME

In case of fire, you need to have help as quickly as possible. Each minute that you are waiting seems like an eternity.

Plan ahead - help emergency responders find you.

- Use reflective home numbers big enough to be easily seen.
- Be accessible. Design a driveway that is easy to maintain in all types of weather. Be sure your driveway is wide enough and provides a sufficient turnaround area for emergency vehicles

Estes Park has a Volunteer Fire Departments which will respond to your emergency as fast as it can, but it will take them a couple of minutes to get to the fire station to respond with equipment. The Fire Department will furnish and install smoke detectors (some restrictions apply).

Estes Park sells an emergency beacon that, under normal circumstances is an ordinary light bulb. In an emergency, turn your light switch off-and-on twice and your outdoor

light becomes a flashing signal. Purchase bulbs at the Finance and Utilities Office, Municipal Building.

For emergencies, Call 911

Non-emergency phone numbers

Estes Park Police - 586-4000

Larimer County Sheriff - 577-3790

Estes Park Medical Center (hospital) - 586-2317

Emergency Medical Service is provided by Estes Park Medical Center

Fire and Rescue services provided by the Estes Park Volunteer Fire Department

Police protection is provided by the Estes Park Police Department and Larimer County Sheriff's Department

WILDFIRE AND LIGHTNING

Guard against wildfire

- Thin tree and brush cover.
- Dispose of slash and debris left from thinning.
- Remove dead limbs, leaves and other debris.
- Stack wood 30 ft. from the house
- Maintain a green belt around the house.
- Mow dried grasses and weeds.
- Prune branches to 10 ft above the ground.
- Trim branches.
- Clean roof and gutters.
- Reduce density of surrounding forest.

Lightning

The Rocky Mountains have the second largest number of lightning strikes in the United States, so high quality surge protectors are worthwhile. Hardware stores carry a variety of high quality outlet surge protectors and the Estes Park Light and Power Department sells and installs a meter surge protector. Combine outlet protectors with a meter protector for optimum protection.

Resources:

For site specific questions call the Larimer County Wildfire Office, 498-7718.

Pamphlets are available at www.larimer.org/wildfire

WILDLIFE

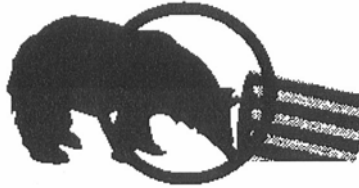
Wildlife is one of our delights, yet our wildlife can become a nuisance, cause damage and even death. We need to learn how to live with wildlife in our backyards.

- Don't feed wildlife with the exception of birds. Place bird feeders where they are inaccessible to other wildlife or at least bring feeders in at night. Remember bird seed and hummingbird nectar are very attractive to bears.
- Buy bear proof trash containers, or keep your trash in a tightly covered receptacle inside a closed shed or garage and put outside only when scheduled for pick up. Freeze food waste that cannot be put down the disposal, then add to your trash on collection day.
- Protect your pets. Keep pets indoors, or in a high fenced pet enclosure (covered if possible). Always walk pets on a leash. Dogs as well as coyotes have killed small pets even when in their own yards. The Town of Estes Park requires picking up after dogs.
- Always keep your dog under control when outside. State law has stiff penalties for dogs that harass deer and elk.
- Be cautious around wild animals especially at spring birthing season. Female elk are particularly protective and aggressive at that time. In the fall the bull elk and buck deer are very aggressive.

Keep wildlife wild!

Resources:

Colorado Division of Wildlife, 472-4300. Pamphlets available at www.wildlife.state.co.us



THINGS TO CONSIDER WHEN BUILDING A HOME IN ESTES PARK

Acquaint yourself with the covenants, building codes and other related requirements. Plan your home so your view and your neighbors views are not blocked Anticipate future construction on nearby lots.

Place your driveway so it is sensitive to the contour of the land and is accessible by an emergency vehicle.

Choose an outside color to your home to blend with the setting.

Choose a roof that is fire resistant, non-reflective and earth tone in color

Bury utility lines to preserve the view.

Buy surge protectors.

Make sure you have space in your garage for trash.

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT WHEN BUYING A HOME IN ESTES PARK

- Is your lot in Estes Park town limits or in Larimer County?
- Does the home you have decided to buy have a view you like? Will it be affected by development of adjoining property?
- Does the color of the home blend into the mountain setting?
- Is the roof non-reflective, fire resistant and earth tone in color?
- Does the outside lighting face down to protect the night sky?
- Is the landscaping appropriate for Estes Valley?
- Are the power lines underground?
- Is there space for trash in the garage?
- Have you read the neighborhood association covenants?
- If you find your favorite home and it does not have the above features, could you make the necessary changes?