

CHAPTER 21

THE SOUTH RIVER CHARACTER AREA



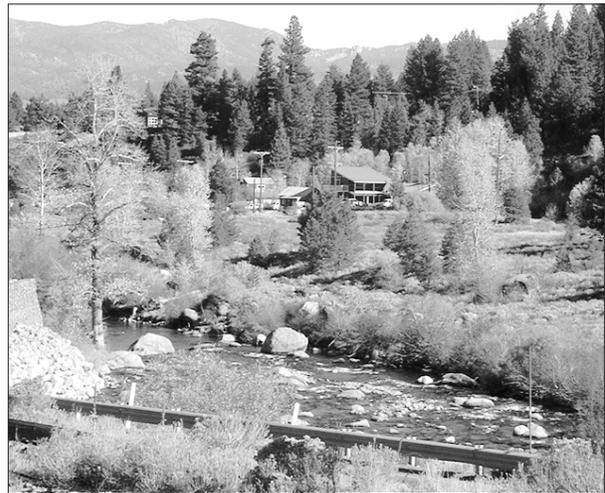
The South River Character Area contains parcels along the portion of South River Street that lies west of Highway 267. This area is visually separated from the other streets along the river and developed with different patterns.

Historic Significance

The South River Character Area has few surviving historic properties. Here many of Truckee's large scale industrial and commercial activities once took place. Truckee's first lumber mill was located in the South River Character Area, as was the Von Fluee dairy. South River also contains the site of the town's last Ice Palace, which was an important community landmark in the early twentieth century.

Historic Character Description

Historically, this area included a mix of building types, including some single-family residences, some larger boarding houses, and even some large industrial operations. However, the area was never very densely built out. There was a fair amount of open space around many of the structures. South River Street was one of the few streets in town, however, that was double-loaded—that is, there were buildings located on both sides of the street, because it was relatively flat.



Today, the site of Truckee's last Ice Palace is open land on the Truckee River.

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- ☞ Please see page 97 (Chapter 13: General Guidelines for New Buildings) for a map that shows this Character Area in its Truckee context.
 - ☞ See also Chapter 18.20.050 - River Protection Overlay District, of the Truckee Municipal Code for development standards along the Truckee River.

Current Character

Although this area had some of the town's largest structures (those associated with the lumber mills), much of the South River Character Area is perceived as open space today. Only one structure survives from the area's historical period of development. The majority of the residences found in the character are contemporary occurrences.

Some key design characteristics of this Character Area include:

- Substantial amounts of open land and lots of grassy areas with native shrubs
- Large lots
- Views across river to Commercial District and buildings on Riverside Drive
- River access on north side
- Some houses are located along river banks
- Front-facing gable
- Wood clad buildings
- Diversity of architecture in new construction; some is contemporary
- Buildings are set back from the street
- Hillside back drop
- Landscaped front and side yards
- Parking in front yards



Only one structure survives from the area's historical period of development, 1890 through 1910.

Design Goals & Policies

The South River Character Area should continue to develop with buildings that relate in mass and scale to the building forms seen historically.

The design goals for the South River Character Area are:

- To emphasize the preservation and restoration of historic structures, when feasible
- To continue the use of traditional building materials
- To maintain traditional building mass, scale and forms
- To maintain the range of building mass and forms that reflect the mix of uses seen historically
- To encourage the use of front porches that face the street
- To encourage detached garages that are subordinate in character and scale to the primary structure
- To give special consideration to the western end of the area, which is where the Ice Palace and ski run out were
- To respect the natural character of the river edge

Design Guidelines for New Buildings

1. Positive Open Space

Open space within any development enhances both the immediate surroundings as well as the town as a whole. Portions of the South River Character Area, such as the site of the last Ice Palace, are presently perceived as open space. This perception should be continued as much as possible even as the area develops. Site plans should be planned to maximize the perception of this open space.

A. Arrange buildings in groups that will maximize shared open space.

- 1) Clustered housing, zero lot lines and other creative planning concepts may be appropriate to create large areas of shared open space.
- 2) Include open spaces with special amenities that encourage use, such as benches and sitting areas.
- 3) Consider clustering parking areas to reduce paved surface areas and allow increased areas of shared open space.
- 4) Plans that include some lots without street frontage may be considered.

B. If several buildings are proposed for the site, the spaces between the buildings should contribute to the overall positive open space of the project and the area.

- 1) Buildings should be positioned on the site in a manner that minimizes the apparent mass and scale and maximizes open space.

C. Connect open spaces among large projects.

- 1) Where many projects abut one another, open spaces should be organized in a manner which maximizes their areas.
- 2) Open spaces also should connect with any trails or other open spaces in the vicinity, especially along the river.

References:

☞ See also Chapter 10: Design Guidelines for Site Features and Chapter 13: General Guidelines for New Buildings.

2. Views

Views of the natural setting of Truckee are some of the community's greatest assets that contribute to the quality of life and value of properties and should be protected and enhanced whenever feasible. Views to the Truckee River, are outstanding and give special identity to this Character Area. These amenities should be protected as much as possible, even as the areas develop. All projects should be planned to reinforce and preserve existing public and private view corridors and to establish new view opportunities. In doing so, consideration should be given to how views from existing projects may be affected by new construction. When feasible, planning for views should be in balance with traditional site layouts and yard spacings.

A. Preserve views to significant features such as the Truckee River.

- 1) Respecting established side yard setbacks will help to maintain the views to the river.
- 2) Balancing view opportunities with traditional setbacks found in older residential neighborhoods is encouraged.
- 3) Although traditional siting on lots that is along conventional platted lines is encouraged, alternative positioning of buildings on the site may be considered when doing so would maintain significant view corridors.
- 4) Site plans for new construction should include consideration of retaining view opportunities for future projects.
- 5) Landscaping is encouraged, and in some situations, may be required in order to mitigate other visual impacts. Such landscaping, when mature, should maintain existing views and solar access corridors.

B. Building forms that respect existing views are encouraged.

- 1) For example, rectangular forms oriented with the long side perpendicular to the street will often provide views through the property.
- 2) Reduced building footprints that increase side yard view corridors are encouraged.



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3. Building Setbacks

Most front facades align at a relatively uniform setback from the street in each block. The rhythm created by the placement of buildings and side yards is an especially important characteristic of the area. This historic development pattern contributes to the visual continuity of the neighborhood and should be preserved.

A. Maintain the alignment of building fronts along the street.

- 1) Setbacks should fall within the established range of setbacks in the block.
- 2) For additions to existing buildings, set them back from the front of the structure such that they do not alter the perceived character of the front. Typically a setback from the building front should be, at a minimum, equal to the width of the facade.

B. Side yards should match the dimensions of historic yards along the street.

- 1) Locate a building so that it does not block views or access to the river.

C. Site a building to complement and enhance views from the street to the river.

- 1) Orient sloping roofs to provide views.
- 2) Also use side yard setbacks as view opportunities.

4. Building Orientation

Traditionally, a building was oriented to the street with its primary entrance also facing the street. These traditional patterns of building orientation should be maintained throughout the community.

A. Orient the primary entrance of a building toward the street.

- 1) Buildings should have a clearly defined primary entrance. For example, provide a porch on a residential structure to define its entry.

5. Plant Materials

With portions of the South River Character Area being more established in their development, it is important for new projects to take advantage of any site features that are existing. Existing stands of vegetation, for example, are important in the history of Truckee and add character to the area as a whole. These features should be retained whenever feasible.

A. Incorporate existing stands of native vegetation in landscape plans.

B. For properties adjacent to the Truckee River, maintain the natural character of the river edge.

C. Preserve and enhance wildlife habitats along the river edge.

6. Mass and Scale

The height, width and depth of a new building should be compatible with historic buildings in the community at large, within the South River Character Area and especially with those structures that are immediately adjacent to the new building. The size of a building also should relate to its lot size and placement on the lot.

A. New construction should appear similar in mass and size to historic structures found in the Character Area.

- 1) Residences in the Character Area range from one to two stories, but are typically one and one-half story.
- 2) The tradition of one- to two-story street facades should be continued.
- 3) Break up the massing of larger buildings into components that reflect this traditional size.

References:

- ☞ See also Truckee Municipal Code Chapter 18.42.080 - Recommended Plant Materials.

7. Building and Roof Form

Traditionally, simple building forms appeared in Truckee. Most were modest rectangular shapes. In some cases, larger masses were achieved by combining two or more simple masses, in which case one of the masses typically appeared to be the "dominant" element, while others appeared to be attached to it. The "integrity" of the dominant form was a distinctive feature. Maintaining this tradition of building is vital to the protection of the character of Truckee and the visual relationship with the River Character Area.

A. Use building forms similar to those seen traditionally in the South River Character Area.

- 1) The overall building form should be similar to historic buildings seen in the area.
- 2) Maintain the traditional proportions (height to width to depth) found in the residential neighborhoods of Truckee.

B. The simple forms of gable, hip and shed roofs are appropriate.

- 1) Dormers should be simple and subordinate to the overall roof form.
- 2) Alternative roof element shapes may be considered in instances where views and solar access are to be protected and preserved.

C. Roofs should be similar in size to those used historically on comparable buildings.

D. Orient major roof elements to protect views.

E. Buildings adjacent to the Truckee River should step down in height toward the river edge of the property.

8. Porches

A majority of the residences in the South River Character Area have front porches. These serve to reinforce the visual continuity of the neighborhood.

A. The use of a porch is strongly encouraged and they should appear similar to those seen traditionally.

- 1) The porch floor and roof height shall appear similar to those seen traditionally on the block.
- 2) Use similar building design elements and materials as those seen traditionally.
- 3) The front porch shall be "functional," in that it is used as a means of access to the entry.

9. Garages

Although not a part of the historic streetscene in Truckee, the automobile and its associated storage is part of contemporary life. Therefore, the visual impacts of parking, which include driveways, garages and garage doors, should be minimized. On-site parking should be subordinate to other uses and the front yards should not appear to be a parking area.

A. A garage should not dominate the street scene.

- 1) A garage should be subordinate to the primary structure on the site.

B. A detached garage is preferred.

- 1) In order to minimize the impact of a garage on the street scene, locate it to the rear of the building. Setting a garage back substantially from the primary building front, may also be considered.
- 2) This will help reduce the perceived mass of the overall development.
- 3) The material and detailing of a detached garage should be utilitarian, to be compatible with other historic accessory structures.