

**CITY OF MILLBRAE**  
**COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT**

621 Magnolia Avenue Millbrae, CA 94030 (650) 259-2341



**Story Pole Instructions**

**PURPOSE:** Story poles are used to depict the elevations and silhouette of a proposed structure or an addition to an existing structure, and are required when deemed necessary to assist neighbors, staff and decision makers in the evaluation of a project requiring Planning Commission approval. The primary benefit of story poles is the early identification and resolution of potential view blockage upon neighboring properties, though story poles may also be required to help evaluate sunlight blockage and basic building design. To do this, the height and bulk of the building or addition must be accurately depicted through careful measurement, placement, and connection of each story pole so that the resulting "3 dimensional "diagram" of the proposed project is as precise as possible. Once installed, the story poles provide the project applicant, neighbors, City staff, and the Planning Commission the ability to view the size and shape of the proposed structure in order to objectively assess the project's basic appearance and physical impacts. When used in groups and strategically placed upon land or the roof of an existing structure, story poles can accurately portray the outline of a new building or building addition before it is constructed. Story poles are provided by the applicant or developer.

**LOCATION:** Story poles must be located at the outermost corners of the proposed structure as well as at any other key points along new walls or roof lines. Separate poles for chimneys, balconies, and accessory buildings may also be required. When the center of the structure is higher than its corners (as is usually the case), one or more additional story poles must be installed to indicate the ridgeline of the roof.

**INSTALLATION:** Story poles should be cut to the exact height of the structure being depicted, rather than marking the height on an oversized pole. All poles should be constructed of materials strong enough to withstand wind and weather - *2 x 4 lumber is recommended*. Guy wires and support bases should be used as needed to anchor the poles. Netting at least 2 feet wide and made of "international orange" plastic fencing shall be used to represent the walls of the proposed structure by placing the netting around the top and bottom of the shape formed by the story poles. Again, guy wires, stakes, and other forms of support should be used to bolster the netting so it accurately frames the structure. Use bright red ribbon or tape to connect the top of each story pole to simulate the shape of the proposed roof structure.

**SAFETY:** All story poles must be securely fastened so as not to pose a safety hazard to persons or property. If at any time, any pole becomes unsafe, it must be repaired or removed immediately. *It is strongly recommended that you hire a licensed contractor* to install your story poles so as to reduce your liability in the event that any personal injury or property damage occurs. The property owner, or their representative, must provide notice to the Planning Division when the story poles are in place.

The property owner shall sign a waiver holding the City of Millbrae harmless of any liability associated with the construction of, or damage by, the story poles. The poles shall not be erected until the waiver is submitted and accepted by the Planning Division.

**TIMING:** City staff will determine the need for story poles. When story poles are required, they shall be installed to Staff's satisfaction prior to advertising the project for public hearing or study session. Public notices will not be mailed until story pole installation has been verified by staff. *Failure to comply may result in your application being deemed incomplete or rescheduled for a later meeting.* Story poles shall not be removed until 10 days after the Commission has taken a final action on the project in order to allow for the 10-day appeal period required by law. If no appeal is filed during that time, the story poles may be removed. If an appeal is filed, the story poles must remain in place until the appeal process has been completed.

Story poles associated with a formal application that has been inactive for 90 days shall be removed until the application review returns to "active" status. Informal story poles may be installed as part of a pre-application "evaluation phase", and may be in place for a maximum of 30 days. All story poles not part of a pre-application shall be removed no later than thirty (30) days from the final action decision. If the story poles are not removed within 30 days of final action, the poles will be deemed a nuisance in violation of the City Municipal Code, and Code Enforcement action will be taken.

### **Detailed Story Pole Installation Requirements**

1. Story poles shall be constructed of materials strong enough to withstand wind and weather. Most people use 2 x 4 lumber, plastic PVC piping, or similar materials.
2. One pole on each elevation must be clearly marked and labeled in 5-foot increments measured from existing or finished grade, whichever is consistent with the plans on file in the Community Development Department. Ridge support poles shall be painted with 12" high alternating black and white stripes, to assist with visual verification of indicated height above grade.
3. Netting at least two feet wide and made of international orange plastic fencing must be erected to represent the roof line and walls of the proposed structure or addition. Story poles must be stable enough to support the netting, and accurately maintain the outline and height shown on the design plans. Staking and support wires may be used to help support the netting.
4. Story poles must be erected at the furthest extents of the structure and its roof ridge lines. Story poles may also be required at Staff's discretion for roof overhangs, eaves, chimneys, balconies and accessory buildings.
5. The height of the story poles must indicate the final height of the building, taking final graded building pad elevation into consideration.
6. All story poles must be erected safely and without putting the public at risk. If at any time, the story poles become unsafe, they shall be repaired or removed immediately. Unsafe poles shall be removed immediately if determined by the City to be a risk to public safety. The applicant shall provide notice to the City when the story poles are in place.
7. Story Pole Plan: Within five days after installation of story poles, eight copies of a story pole plan must be provided to Planning Division staff. The plan may be based on the roof plan for the project, with inclusion of the following additional information:
  - a) Note the locations of each story pole, as well as the height of each pole. Story pole site plans shall be at least 1/8" = 1' scale. Please indicate distances between poles and nearest property lines.
  - b) Provide a numbering system for the poles.
  - c) Photos of the erected story poles and netting from a minimum of 4 view angles.
  - d) For all projects (except owner-builder projects), a signed statement by a licensed architect, engineer, surveyor on the story pole site plans, stating that the location and height of the poles are true and accurate is required.
8. All trees or bushes being affected by the addition or new structures shall be marked with yellow tape.
9. Applicant / Developer shall sign a waiver holding the City of Millbrae and its agents harmless of any liability associated with the construction of, or damage by, the story poles. Applicant shall not erect the story poles until the waiver is submitted and accepted by the Planning Division.

**CITY OF MILLBRAE**  
**STORY POLE CERTIFICATION**



*Instructions: The story pole certification must be performed by a registered land surveyor, civil engineer, or licensed architect other than the project architect. Please attach a copy of the roof plan with the surveyed roof ridge elevations labeled.*

I, \_\_\_\_\_ have surveyed the story poles located at \_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Surveyor Project Address

on \_\_\_\_\_, which is based on design plans submitted to the City of Millbrae by  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_. The survey was taken from the following benchmark:  
Name of Applicant / Developer

\_\_\_\_\_ at an elevation of \_\_\_\_\_  
Description of Benchmark

\_\_\_\_\_. The ridge elevations silhouetted are indicated on the attached plans.  
Elevation Information

I have surveyed the building envelope, setbacks, and ridge elevations of the story poles and silhouette described above, and certify that all dimensions, locations, and elevations are accurate within 0.25 ft. (3 in.) of the design plans submitted to the City.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name - Please Print

Please sign and stamp below:

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

X \_\_\_\_\_

Address, City, State, Zip \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Fax # \_\_\_\_\_

License Number \_\_\_\_\_ Expiration Date \_\_\_\_\_

Received by Planning Division Staff: \_\_\_\_\_ on date: \_\_\_\_\_