

Blanket Approvals
For Standard Neighborhood Projects

OVERVIEW: One of the primary goals of the Hills HOA is to promote and maintain a neighborhood that is agreeable and acceptable to all residents. Article VIII, Section 19 of “The Declaration of Covenants, Conditions and Restrictions for the Hills at Firewheel Estates” (Declaration of Covenants) assigns responsibilities to an Architectural Control Committee (ACC) to uphold neighborhood standards by considering and reviewing exterior alterations including, but not limited to, any “building, structure, fence, wall or improvement of any kind or nature.”

BLANKET APPROVALS: Our neighborhood’s governing documents mandate that exterior changes require an Architectural Request Form submission. However, as a matter of practicality, the ACC and Hills HOA board have agreed that many projects are relatively routine and can be handled efficiently under the Blanket Approval guidelines below without requiring a formal submission. Note that if your project **DOES NOT** conform exactly to the blanket guidelines as stated, or if there are variances planned, you must submit an Architectural Request Form for consideration and for your own protection.

NOTE: These “Blanket Approvals” also describe and provide basic guidelines for what the HOA, in its judgment, deems acceptable conditions conforming to Neighborhood Standards.

Fences. The Hills HOA has adopted the following “Blanket Approval” for fence replacements. As long as you meet **ALL of the requirements below**, you do not need to submit a request for fences:

1. You must communicate your intended fence project with your neighbors and they must be in agreement with what you plan to do.
2. The fence must be wood and opaque (no gaps). This includes 4-inch or 6-inch wide and 6-foot to 8-foot tall pickets laid vertically either edge-to-edge or overlapped. Unless a retaining wall or other factor requires otherwise, posts must not be visible from the street (visible in the alley is OK).
3. The ACC strongly recommends metal posts to prevent warping and to extend fence longevity.
4. Metal fence replacement requires submission. **Any work on brick fences must be done in collaboration with the HOA.**
5. If you stain the fence, it should be a common brownish color. Other colors may be acceptable, but will require a formal request for approval from the HOA. Painting of fences is not allowed.
6. The maximum fence height is 8 feet from the ground. This includes kickboards, but not retaining walls -- the distance from the ground to the top of the fence must be equal to or less than 8 feet on one side of the fence. The other side (with a retaining wall) can be greater than 8 feet.
7. The fence line cannot be moved from its present location without submitting a request.
8. Lots that have special fence requirements on their deeds, such as the homes near the pond, must always submit a formal HOA request for approval for any fence projects.
9. **In addition to ACC approval**, a City of Garland fence permit is required any time (i) a fence is being replaced or installed on a corner lot; (ii) if you have a swimming pool in the rear yard; (iii) if you are changing the height of the fence; (iv) if you are changing the location of the fence; (v) if you are changing the materials of the fence (example: going from steel to wood or from wood to wrought iron, etc.); or (vi) if you are installing a fence where one has never existed before.
10. Fence materials of chain link, plastic, hardy plank, or other such materials are **NOT acceptable**.

Paint. Consistent with Neighborhood Standards, the Hills HOA has adopted a “Blanket Approval” for paint. If you meet **all of the following requirements**, you do not need to submit a paint request:

1. If you are changing paint colors (either the primary or trim color), you will need to submit a formal request for approval from the HOA. Exterior paint colors are limited to the range of colors used by the original home builders which are, in general, neutral earth tones. An exception may be granted in some instances for accent colors used on doors and shutters.
2. Brick may not be painted. Brick is low maintenance until you paint it. You and all future owners would be committed to maintaining the paint. Since there will most likely be future owners, the HOA cannot allow brick to be painted. Driveways and sidewalks may not be painted and fences may be stained, but not painted.

Roofs. The Hills HOA has adopted a “Blanket Approval” for roof replacements. As long as you are installing asphalt shingles and meet **all of the following requirements**, you do not need to submit a roof request. **If you plan to install materials other than asphalt (as permitted), an approval submission IS REQUIRED.**

1. All homes in the neighborhood were built to a standard that includes closed valleys covered with shingles. Open valleys where sheet metal is in the valley and visible are NOT permitted.
2. All homes in the neighborhood were built with upgraded Architectural/Dimensional shingles and shall remain that way. No three tab shingles are allowed.
3. The color must be in the original builder color palette, which is generally a neutral shade such as beige, sand, slate, etc. No excessively light or dark colors will be allowed. Light grays (or other neutral colors), but not white are acceptable for the purpose of energy efficiency. If in doubt about shingle color, submit an Architectural Request, or consult with the HOA before work begins.
4. Certain materials other than asphalt are permitted by Texas Property Code Sec. 202.011 to resist wind and hail, provide heating/cooling efficiencies, or generate solar energy. **Using alternate materials requires an Architectural Request Form**, and they are required to resemble other approved shingles in the neighborhood and match the aesthetics of surrounding properties.
5. Whenever possible, roof fittings (attic vents, plumbing stacks, chimneys, etc.) shall be on the side(s) of the roof least visible from the street.
6. City Permits are not required unless you are replacing 25% or more of the decking. The City of Garland allows two (2) layers of shingles.

Window Solar Screens. The Hills HOA has adopted a “Blanket Approval” for solar screens. As long as you meet **all of the following requirements**, you do not need to submit a request for solar screens:

1. You are installing black or dark brown screens uniformly to all windows.

Window Tint. As a practical matter and to promote energy efficiency, tasteful tinting has been deemed acceptable by the Hills HOA. A “Blanket Approval” is granted for window tinting, and as long as the following requirements are met, you do not need to submit a request for window tint:

1. Gray/Smoke tint are the only acceptable colors.
2. No reflective or mirrored tinting is permitted.
3. Tint can be no darker than 75% of visible light.

Window Replacement. The Hills HOA has adopted a “Blanket Approval” for window replacement. As long as you meet **all of the following requirements**, you do not need to submit a request for window replacement:

1. No reflective or mirrored glass will be allowed under any circumstances.
2. Frame and grid color (if used) is to be white or a neutral color in the original builder color palette to match home trim.
3. These guidelines also apply to glass doors, where applicable.

Landscaping. The Hills HOA has adopted a “Blanket Approval” for landscaping improvements, which conforms to Neighborhood Standards. As long as you meet **all of the following requirements**, you do not need to submit a request for landscaping improvements:

1. The HOA asks that you always use good judgment and consider your neighbors when planning landscaping projects. In general, if you do not see existing landscaping similar to your planned project at several homes in the Hills, a formal request must be made. For example, if you want to conserve water usage by installing a rock/desert yard with no grass, that sort of alteration will require special HOA consideration and a formal request must be made.
2. Any new additions require an ACC form submission.
3. Masonry work also requires an ACC submission. Note that masonry or stonework borders and tree rings are generally discouraged because they tend to sag, tilt, or collapse over time as they are displaced by soil settling and root system growth. If such materials are used, it is suggested that a reinforced concrete footing of sufficient depth be installed and mortared into place.

Rain Barrels. The use of a rain barrel as a rain harvesting system is permissible and does not require an Architectural Request Form, as long as you meet **the following requirements**:

- The HOA asks that each property limit the number of rain barrels or other rain harvesting devices to two (2) maximum.
- A rain barrel must not be visible from the front or side of the home to be considered approved under our Blanket Approvals – if visible, a Request Form must be submitted and approved.

- Rain barrel color must conform to neighborhood standards and NO signage or excessive display language is included (except minimal labeling provided by the manufacturer).
- Rain barrels must conform to accepted industry design practices, including fine mesh screening and covers to prevent stagnant, standing water that can be a health hazard and breed mosquitoes.

Solar Panels: Solar panels are not covered by Blanket Approval guidelines and require a formal request for approval from the HOA. The language regarding solar panels in Texas Property Code Sec 202.010 will serve as a guideline for the HOA. **Some of the primary factors that will be considered include:**

- Installing solar panels (collectors) safely in an inconspicuous area on the back of homes inside the fence line; conforming to the slope of the roof and parallel to, but not overhanging the roofline; and not visible from the street (the latter condition conforms to the intent of the Hills Declaration of Covenants).
- In circumstances where a home faces in a direction where solar benefits are significantly diminished, special consideration may be made for alternate placement. These circumstances generally require that the estimated annual energy would be increased by more than 10%, and will be evaluated on an individual basis.
- If solar panels are installed in the yard, they should not be taller than the fence line (or visible outside the fence.)
- Solar panels and their framing must be in conformance with neighborhood color standards.

PROJECTS THAT REQUIRE APPROVALS: If you plan ANY exterior changes to your home not covered by the Blanket Approvals above, or your plans are outside of what is permitted in these Blanket Approvals, you ARE STILL required to submit an Architectural Request Form. **The list below includes some (but not all) examples of exterior change projects that require a formal HOA request for approval,** and in many cases also require a City permit. The homeowner (or their contractor) is responsible for obtaining any permits that are needed.

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General Construction • Home Additions • Decks • Storage Sheds • Pools | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Solar Panels (see guidelines above) • Patio Covers (Note: If your project includes a roof-type covering, if shingles are used, they must exactly match the house) |
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For additional information about acceptable projects and materials, see:

- Article VIII of The Declaration of Covenants
- The Hills Neighborhood Standards Guidelines

Both documents are located on the Hills HOA web site at hillshoa.com. If you have additional questions or need clarification, see the web site for board member contact information.

Note that ACC Request Forms must be submitted AND approved BEFORE the project begins. ACC Request Forms are available on the Hills web site at hillshoa.com.

You can also submit projects through the Excel Assoc. Management site at: <http://www.excelam.com>. Click "Excel Association Mgmt." in left column, then see the "Residence Resources" column (center page), and click the "Architectural Request" link. For additional assistance, call Excel at 972-881-7488.