

VISTA REDONDA ARCHITECTURAL COMMITTEE  
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STANDARDS

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**1. SUMMARY OF THIS BOOKLET – CHIEF PURPOSES:**

- 1.1. The Architectural Committee of Vista Redonda has prepared this booklet as a ready reference guide for you and all other property and homeowners in Vista Redonda, and for the present and future Architectural Committees. It is intended to help all of us understand and abide by the restrictions in the Deeds that apply to each and every Vista Redonda property owner. These restrictions apply to land use and to the construction or modification of houses and other structures in Vista Redonda. Their purpose is to help create and maintain high standards and a harmonious environment and to prevent the erection of inharmonious structures that would reduce neighborhood beauty and property values.
- 1.2. This booklet tells you how the Architectural Committee tries to carry out its duties so as to achieve these objectives for you, the property- or homeowner. It tells how and when you will need to submit plans to the Committee for new construction or for modifications to an existing building. It lists the specific details the Committee will need to act on your proposals, and it describes the review process leading to approval.

**2. ABOUT THE ARCHITECTURAL COMMITTEE:**

- 2.1. When Vista Redonda was created beginning in 1969 the developer set up restrictions to ensure that fine homes and a harmonious neighborhood would be created. Every property-owner and homeowner in Vista Redonda is contractually bound by these restrictions, which are spelled out in the ownership documents pertaining to his property. They provide for a Committee, called here the ARCHITECTURAL COMMITTEE, to ensure that proposed new construction or modifications to existing buildings do not violate the restrictions.
- 2.2. The Committee is composed of three members who serve without any kind of compensation. The Committee exists only to serve the property owners of Vista Redonda. It does not schedule regular meetings, but attempts to respond in a timely manner to the needs of each property owner.
- 2.3. The Committee reports to the President of the Vista Redonda Property Owners' Association. New appointments to the Architectural Committee are made by the Board of Directors of the Vista Redonda Property Owners' Association.

**3. SCOPE OF MATTERS COVERED BY THE COMMITTEE—WHAT DO YOU NEED THE COMMITTEE'S APPROVAL FOR?**

- 3.1. The Committee is responsible for reviewing land use, the design of proposed structures, walls, outbuildings, colors and, in the case of existing structures, changes to any elements that already exist. The Architectural Committee is THE authority established by the Deed Restrictions on these matters. Its approval is required, IN WRITING, as set forth in the Deed Restrictions, **prior to any new construction or modification of existing construction on all lots in Vista Redonda.**

3.2. THE COURTS HAVE UPHELD THIS RESPONSIBILITY AND THE AUTHORITY OF THE COMMITTEE BASED UPON THE DEED RESTRICTIONS WHICH GOVERN EACH AND EVERY OWNER WHO HAS PURCHASED PROPERTY IN VISTA REDONDA.

3.3. The Deed Restrictions say: “no building shall be erected, placed or altered” in Vista Redonda until the Committee has approved IN WRITING “complete building plans, specifications, exterior color scheme, together with a plat plan showing the location of the building and any auxiliary buildings, drives or other proposed improvements as to conformity and harmony of external design with existing structures in the subdivision, and as to location of the building with respect to topography and finished ground elevation...”

3.4. In short, written approval is required for ALL exterior work on any new or existing structures. “Structures” includes buildings, walls, fences, drives, pools, tennis courts and any other element that will be visual such as antenna dishes, or that physically alters the environment such as drainage works, elements that obstruct the views, etc. The purpose of the Committee's review and approval is to ensure “...conformity and harmony...” throughout Vista Redonda.

#### **4. REQUIREMENTS AND GUIDELINES:**

The next two sections identify the REQUIREMENTS AND GUIDELINES used by the Architectural Committee as the basis of all reviews. These are set forth in two sections, and it is important that you and your architect be familiar with them before starting the design process. The two sections are:

SECTION 5: LEGAL REQUIREMENTS, as specifically stated in the Deed Restrictions; and

SECTION 6: GUIDELINES, prepared by the Architectural Committee, to assist in understanding the meaning and implications of the Deed Restrictions as they apply to construction in Vista Redonda.

#### **5. LEGAL REQUIREMENTS:**

The Deed Restrictions require the Committee to review and to approve in writing information that is summarized in the following short paragraphs. We suggest that you use this list as a check when submitting plans to the committee. (The numbers in parentheses at the end of each paragraph refer to the corresponding paragraphs in the Deed Restrictions.)

5.1. **SITE PLAN DETAIL:** Complete building plans showing layout of all buildings on the site; the setback of structures from property lines and street; topography and lay of buildings on the land; all drives, walks, auxiliary buildings; and any other proposed improvements or changes, spelled out clearly. (2)

5.2. **EXTERIOR COLOR SCHEME:** Note that the building plans include the proposed exterior color scheme.

5.3. **HARMONY:** The Deed Restrictions require the Committee to approve only those plans that exhibit “conformity and harmony of external design with existing structures in the subdivision, and as to location of the building with respect to topography and finished ground elevation.” (2)

- 5.4. **STYLE:** Your house and other buildings are restricted to “southwestern architecture of pueblo, ranch or Spanish” [style] as approved by the... Committee.”(3)
- 5.5. **EXTERIOR CONSTRUCTION:** “of any dwelling erected on any lot shall be of Stucco, Rammed Earth, Adobe, Stone, Adobe Veneer, Stone Veneer or other approved prefabricated or synthetic materials provided written consent is given by the Committee....Wood siding may be used for the second story, garage and other outhouses may be of frame weather board, **as approved by the Committee.**” (emphasis added). (3)
- 5.6. **BUILDING USE AND SIZE:** Identify the uses and size of buildings. The main house must have at least 1200 square feet of ground floor space, **excluding porches, terraces, garages and outbuildings.** There may be one guesthouse, and it must have at least 240 square feet of heated area. One servant house and a garage are permitted. (5)
- 5.7. **SETBACKS:** Unless specifically noted as an exception in your deed, ALL buildings—main house, guest house, servant quarters, garage, auxiliary buildings, stables (6), even fuel tanks (15)—must be set back at least fifty (50) feet from your property lines. (The rule for above-ground fuel tanks and meters (15) states that “no gas or oil storage tank shall be set nearer the street than the front or side of a dwelling unless the meter is of an underground type,” and since the front and sides of the dwelling must be at least 50 (fifty) feet back from the property line, this rule treats such tanks and meters the same as buildings themselves on the street side.)
- 5.8. **DRIVES:** “All driveways to all lots in this subdivision shall be entered only from streets dedicated in this subdivision and property owners shall provide at least a 15-inch culvert at his driveway [where it joins the street] to meet County specifications.”(4)
- 5.9. **UTILITIES:** ALL UTILITY LINES must be underground, including any that run between buildings (7), (except that oil or gas tanks suitably screened from view of the street or other lots may be above ground if they do not come closer than the front or side of the dwelling. (15) Otherwise, gas meters and storage tanks must be underground. (15)
- 5.10. **FENCES AND WALLS:** “No boundary fence on any lot shall be of barbed wire or chicken wire.” (11)

(Note: we have not considered Paras. 8-16 of the Deed Restrictions which do NOT deal with architectural matters but with the uses of property—keeping animals, commercial activities, etc.—and do not fall within the scope of the Architectural Committee.)

## 6. GUIDELINES ADDED BY THE ARCHITECTURAL COMMITTEE:

The purpose of this section is to show how the Committee interprets some of the provisions set forth in Section 1, above. In this way you, the property owner, and your architect, will be helped to understand more clearly some of the implications of the legal requirements set forth in your Deed Restrictions. This section deals with various aspects of “harmony”, with which the Committee is charged by the Deed Restrictions as a leading criterion of judgment. We also touch on certain items, such as satellite dishes,

that are not explicitly covered in the Deed Restrictions (which were drawn up long before such things existed!).

HARMONY IS BOUND TO BE A MATTER OF JUDGMENT, and the possibility exists that THE COMMITTEE'S JUDGMENT ON SOME MATTERS MAY DIFFER FROM YOURS!! The following comments may help you understand how the Committee approaches the matter of harmony.

- 6.1. **HARMONY AND DESIGN:** Means that all the houses must exhibit features that are shared with the others—that the proposed new house won't seem uniquely different from the others. The Committee urges the property owner who wishes to build a new home or modify an existing one to look around and see the common threads that have developed in Vista Redonda—then make your proposal a welcome and fitting addition.
- 6.2. **HARMONY AND SITING:** Harmony is expressed by the way improvements are located on each site so that they don't interfere with neighbors or cause a physical or visual clash that is felt to be obtrusive.
- 6.3. **HARMONY AND TERRAIN:** Harmony with the land and terrain are important, too. A home that is adapted to the land will be far more harmonious than one that stands out like a billboard, ignoring the contours of the land, the trees and its potential impact on the ridge line.
- 6.4. **HARMONY AND THE HEIGHT OF BUILDINGS:** Southwestern architecture of the sort contemplated in the Deed Restrictions (3) calls for buildings that are not unusually tall. In general the Committee favors lower profiles, buildings that seem to belong to the earth they are built on and that conform to the profiles of lower existing structures in Vista Redonda.

#### **FUNDAMENTALLY INHARMONIOUS ITEMS:**

Modern houses often include satellite dishes, television and f.m. Antennas, panels that are part of active solar systems, butane or propane tanks, etc. All of these **MUST** be built and concealed in ways that will **NOT STAND OUT AS INHARMONIOUS FEATURES**. Some issues that have arisen in connection with such items are:

- 6.5. **SOLAR:** Structures emphasizing solar elements as major architectural features are **NOT** an approved design style. However, approvable styles may incorporate many excellent solar features. The Committee has approved many homes incorporating such solar principles, designed as harmonious elements of a basically approvable style, while it has gone to court to successfully prevent the construction of a “pure” solar building inharmonious with the rest of the homes and with the letter and intent of the Deed Restrictions.
- 6.6. **FREE STANDING SOLAR EQUIPMENT** must be screened from view.
- 6.7. **SATELLITE DISHES** must be screened and camouflaged to the greatest possible extent—they are fundamentally inharmonious!
- 6.8. **T.V. ANTENNAS** should be low and hidden wherever possible behind walls or below parapets. Other items of a similar nature should be treated appropriately. The general intention of the Committee is to maintain a harmonious

neighborhood that graces the magnificent views and landscapes, which are among the most beautiful in the world!

## **7. HOW TO WORK WITH YOUR ARCHITECTURAL COMMITTEE:**

- 7.1. The Committee exists to serve YOU and all other members of the community. We try to make ourselves available as quickly as possible in response to your request for our review of your plans. If you wish to present ideas or plans to the Committee in person, or have your architect do so, we will welcome that, although our final decisions will be rendered after discussion by the Committee in executive session. Our aim is always: to react as well and as promptly as we can. That is why **WE URGE YOU TO COME TO US AT THE START OF YOUR PROJECT.**
- 7.2. Although the Committee will not (and cannot!) give ANYONE final written approval until the working drawings to be used for construction (including revisions, if any) are submitted for approval, **WE STRONGLY RECOMMEND THAT YOU CONTACT THE COMMITTEE AS SOON AS PRELIMINARY SKETCHES OR DRAWINGS ARE AVAILABLE** so that we can assist you right from the start. This can save time and possible redesign. We wish to identify potential problems in the early stages of preliminary design so that we can work with your architect on solutions long before you and he have invested time, money and perhaps emotional attachment to proposals that must be altered.
- 7.3. **WHO TO CONTACT:** The secretary of the Committee is your prime contact. The secretary will schedule review meetings and handle communications with the property owners. In an emergency, or if it is more convenient, you may contact the other members of the Committee. Current members are listed on the website.

## **8. STEPS TO OBTAIN APPROVAL FROM THE ARCHITECTURAL COMMITTEE AND START CONSTRUCTION:**

### **8.1. OBTAIN TENTATIVE APPROVAL:**

- 8.1.1. Submit information on your proposed construction while it is in the formative or preliminary stages. This should include a rough site plan showing existing buildings or other improvements, if any, plus the new construction that you are planning; a floor plan and at least one elevation so that we can see the architectural character of the building or modifications you propose. Be sure to include a statement of the specific architectural style and state how it will harmonize with Vista Redonda architecture. We suggest that you use the list of data specified under STEP 3, below, as a guide when submitting preliminary plans and data in this STEP 1.
- 8.1.2. The Committee will review this information, and discuss it with you or your representative if you so desire. If the proposed construction does not meet the requirements set forth in the Deed Restrictions, we will provide specific comments. Use those comments to refine the Preliminary Design and resubmit them until tentative approval is granted. You are then ready to start STEP 2.

### **8.2. PREPARE WORKING DRAWINGS:**

8.2.1. After STEP 1, with tentative approval from the Committee, you know that your project, UP TO THIS POINT, is headed in the right direction. This means that you stand a good chance of getting Final Approval in writing, as required, PROVIDED that the finished Working Drawings DO NOT DEVIATE from the basics that received our Tentative Approval. You may now proceed with the preparation of Working Drawings (at your own discretion, of course). You are most welcome to check with us during the preparation of Working Drawings. We will review any submittals and help you stay “on track.”

### **8.3. OBTAIN FINAL APPROVAL...IN WRITING:**

8.3.1. For this step we will need comprehensive and finished architectural drawings that clearly show WHAT it is that you want to accomplish and HOW you propose to do it. These plans constitute normal professionally prepared architectural working drawings. They are the same type that are part of a customary relationship between owner, architect and general contractor. The more complete your submittal, the better we can respond and serve you.

8.3.2. Submit the sheets of the FINISHED WORKING DRAWINGS noted below under “DATA TO SUBMIT” to the Architectural Committee for review. (To save time, these plans can be submitted to the Committee while drafting on interiors is still going on.)

8.3.3. We will review your project in detail and contact you if the Committee has questions or concerns. We will specifically note any item that needs to be reworked. This may mean some back-and-forth exchange of ideas and we will be glad to work with you and your architect to achieve final compatibility with the Deed Restrictions and the goals of harmony they mandate. When all is resolved, the Committee will write you a letter giving its FINAL APPROVAL. THEN, AND ONLY THEN, MAY STEP 4...CONSTRUCTION...BE STARTED. Here is the data to be submitted so that you can secure written approval for STEP 3:

#### **8.3.4. DATA TO SUBMIT:**

8.3.4.1. **ARCHITECTURAL STYLE:** Study the styles that exist in Vista Redonda and that are permitted in the Deed Restrictions. State in writing the architectural style of the new work or modifications that you propose so that we can clearly see their conformity with RANCH, PUEBLO or SPANISH architecture AND how they harmonize with the homes existing in Vista Redonda.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> There are a few structures in Vista Redonda which would *not be approved by any current Architectural Committee*. Some were built years ago when the Committee lacked permanence and long-term experience. None of these is to be used as if it established a “precedent” for a structure otherwise unacceptable to the Committee and clearly outside the limits imposed by the Deed Restrictions and their interpretation as set forth herein.

8.3.4.2.**REMODELING:** Clearly show ALL existing buildings and improvements plus the new work. Use a technique that allows us to easily distinguish between existing and new construction.

8.3.4.3.**SITE PLAN:** Show the legal description of the site and the proposed work to be done on it. Include setbacks, contours (existing as well as revised, showing cut and fill), drainage, drives, culverts and main identifying features of the lot. Accurately locate your improvements such as buildings, walls, solar items not on buildings, antenna dishes, utilities, bottled gas or gas tanks, etc.

8.3.4.4.**FLOOR PLANS:** Show portals, utilities, doors, windows, patios, garden walls, walks, drives, etc. that enable the Committee to clearly understand all structural and construction elements on the site. Drawings shall be to scale.

8.3.4.5.**EXTERIOR ELEVATIONS:** Accurately show what the building will look like from all directions and identify the materials. In addition to elevations you may, if you wish, submit models or perspective drawings if you feel that they will help us better understand your project. Drawings shall be to scale.

8.3.4.6.**DETAILS:** Provide information on details that will materially govern the external appearance. Examples are: eaves; fences; major gates; portals; garage doors; and other special elements. Drawings shall be to scale.

8.3.4.7.**COLORS:** Give a clear description of all exterior materials and samples of their colors.

8.3.4.8.**DRAWING SCALE:** We suggest that drawings that are to be in scale be large enough to be clearly read. A good scale for plot plans is 1/20"; for building plans, cross sections and elevations 1/4" works well.

8.3.4.9.**OTHER DRAWINGS:** There is no restriction on the amount of information you submit. We welcome all the information an owner wishes to provide.

8.4. **START CONSTRUCTION:** After Final Approval has been received in writing, construction can begin. Please note the following, an essential limitation contained in the Deed Restrictions:

**NO CONSTRUCTION, INCLUDING SITE CLEARANCE, TREE REMOVAL, ETC., MAY BE STARTED PRIOR TO FINAL WRITTEN APPROVAL.**

## **9. ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS:**

9.1. **DRIVEWAYS:** The County requires a culvert to be installed under the driveway exiting each property to provide drainage along the adjacent roadway. If your driveway slopes TOWARD THE ROAD, it must be arranged to drain into the ditch and not onto the road itself.

**9.2. FLOODLIGHTS, SECURITY LIGHTS, TENNIS COURT LIGHTS:** In keeping with the rural nature of the area, driveway, walkway and exterior house illumination should be of a subdued nature. Architectural approval shall be required for all exterior lighting, whether installed at the time of initial construction or added later. Specifically, all lights on and around your building(s), whether for general illumination, tennis court use, landscape illumination, etc. must be designed and mounted so that they DO NOT SHINE INTO NEIGHBORING PROPERTIES. In some cases, low horizontal illumination lights should be used, but in all cases illumination must not extend more than fifty (50) feet from your building(s), and no fixtures may be installed wherein the illuminating bulb and/or reflector is visible from other properties, EXCEPT FOR security lights USED ONLY IN RARE ALARMS OR EMERGENCIES.

**9.3. METAL ROOFS:** The Committee does not look with favor on metal roofs or roof elements, even though a few houses in Vista Redonda do have them. While it is true that there are many metal roofs in small towns in Northern New Mexico, they are predominately made of galvanized steel sheeting which is NOT a traditional material. Galvanized steel gradually replaced older, traditional materials some 50 years ago. In recent years enameled metal panels have come to the market which are not traditional in form or color, and have nothing in common with galvanized steel except that they, too, are made out of metal. Most important, experience in the last few years in Vista Redonda has shown that these roofs are often quite objectionable for one or more of the following reasons:

9.3.1. They are coated with enamel-like material which is highly reflective regardless of its color. These reflections occur at different times of the day and at different times of the year depending upon the relative position of the roof, the sun and the observer, but in every case they send a bright beam in the direction of a neighbor. The Committee will no longer approve any metal roofs that incorporate a reflective material or coating.

9.3.2. They are inharmonious owing to their design, color or some other aspect. The Committee has, within the past two years, approved a few roof elements that were made of corroding materials (copper is the leading example), were of very modest pitch, did not predominate as a design element, were of a suitable color, etc. However, it will generally look with disfavor on pitched metal roofs that are not concealed by parapets.

9.3.3. Some metal roof elements appear to be available with a virtually non-reflective coating that greatly diminishes objections raised on account of reflections. The Committee has approved one such installation where the siting of the building, the slope of the roof and the configuration of rooflines eliminated the foregoing objections. This case, like all others, was considered on its merits in relation to the particular design, location, siting and material selection, and, like all other plans submitted to the Committee, does not establish a precedent to be followed without regard for the particulars of each proposed plan.

9.3.4. The foregoing remarks apply equally to any other reflective elements, including but not limited to monumental sculptures, antenna dishes, metal doors, etc.



9.3.5. Broadly speaking, the committee opposes sloping metal roofs. Nearly all the houses in Vista Redonda have flat roofs typical of Pueblo style buildings, and this is the style greatly favored by the Committee.

**9.4. BUILDING HEIGHTS:**

9.4.1. While the Deed Restrictions do not specify a particular height limit, the Committee has consistently insisted on low-profile buildings. In some instances the designer has lowered the floor level below much of existing grade so that the over-all profile will be correspondingly lower. In general, a height of fifteen feet from “existing average grade” to parapet will be an absolute MAXIMUM, and heights that are two to three feet less are preferred.<sup>2</sup> “Existing average grade” is defined as the simple average of the highest and lowest natural grades where any wall of a structure meets the ground. The Committee seeks the objectives set forth in the GUIDELINES above, pre-eminently: harmonious design, integration with the terrain and consideration for the neighbors who will view the building and whose view of the distant terrain may be affected by it.

**9.5. BUILDING PROFILES:**

9.5.1. A factor considered by the Committee is the VARIATION in heights as one views the proposed building from different aspects. A variable profile, with differing heights, is generally far superior to one in which a single height predominates.

**9.6. TWO-STORY BUILDINGS:**

9.6.1. There are several two-story buildings in Vista Redonda. Of these, two are nestled into a hillside so that only one story ever appears above the terrain where the house is built. The Committee has approved one of these houses in recent years expressly because the configuration of the terrain virtually required that form of construction.

9.6.2. However, as a general matter, two-story houses are NOT consistent with the Committee's guidelines. The fact that some already exist is NOT taken as a precedent to be followed. The fact that in most parts of Vista Redonda there are NO two-story houses visible from available building sites serves as a more solid basis for the Committee's view that harmony with the surrounding dwellings and the terrain generally argues against tall structures of any kind, whether one- or two-story. Again, integration with the terrain and the appearance above grade are leading considerations.

**9.7. PROPANE/BUTANE TANKS:**

9.7.1. We have found in recent years that some tanks have been installed in full view of roads and neighbors. In the future the Committee will ask you to conceal your tank using a “coyote” fence or equivalent.

**9.8. RETAINING WALLS:**

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<sup>2</sup> In recent years Santa Fe County has introduced and passed a Sustainable Land Development Code which has created underlying requirements for Vista Redonda. One is height limits that are a function of the local terrain. Houses constructed on a “ridgetop” are, for example, limited to a maximum of fourteen feet (14') from natural grade to the top of parapets around the flat roof. Owners and architects can find the full code at [www.santafecountynm.gov/sldc](http://www.santafecountynm.gov/sldc).

9.8.1. At some point a retaining wall may become so extensive and conspicuous that its esthetics become a matter of particular concern to the Committee. Here, too, the basic considerations of harmony and integration with the terrain will apply.

**9.9. YOUR STREET ADDRESS:**

9.9.1. Santa Fe County has assigned an emergency number to every house in Vista Redonda in about the year 2000. The numbers were originally posted by the County. They are white numerals on a red background

9.9.2. The County ruled in the summer of 2003 that these numbers must be used as the address for all residences, including all homes in Vista Redonda.

9.9.3. It should be noted that you can obtain a permit to dump trash at the local collection point **ONLY BY PRESENTING THE COUNTY EMERGENCY NUMBER** when you secure your annual permit at the County Administrative Offices building on Grant Street.

9.9.4. Individuals who receive mail delivered to their post boxes near their property line must now use the County Emergency Number as the U.S. Postal Service recognized street address.

**9.10. YOUR PROPERTY LEGAL IDENTIFICATION NUMBER:** Every property is identified by a designator used for taxation and County record keeping. Thus, your property number may be something like Unit F of Lot 8 the Vista Redonda Subdivision. **YOUR LEGAL PROPERTY IDENTIFICATION NUMBER** is not and was never intended to serve as your street address.

**A NOTE ON “HARMONY”:**

The Committee received a communication from a neighbor which included the following lines:

*“Perhaps the Committee would be interested to know something of the origin of the word “harmony” which is used so frequently in the Deed Restrictions and in your GUIDELINES document.*

*The Indo-European root is AR, which signified a joint. The Greek word means a carpenter's joint. That which fits together well and properly is ‘harmonious.’ We derive art, artisan, artifice, etc. from this root, as well as the words relating directly to joints—articulation, arthritis, and even ARTICULATE (one is ‘articulate’ when words and ideas fit together well).*

*At the risk of boring you, I was reminded of the Committee's task upon reading the essay POETRY AND PLACE by Wendell Berry. To paraphrase: “...the making of ANY human artifact—a garden, a house, a poem—raises inescapable practical questions about where it belongs, what its size should be, how it should be made, how it will fit its surroundings. These are all questions of propriety...[and most poets, builders, industrialists and technologists] have not asked them. The working assumption has been that we are NOT part of, or dependent on, an order superior to ourselves. And the logical extension of that is...the so-called ‘jungle law,’ every man for himself, every poem for itself, the law of industry and the modern age.”*

*A man's house, like what he says, or what he writes, is something he does or causes to be done. It proclaims his view of what is proper and just, of where HE belongs in relation to his inner self, to his neighbors, to the land and sky, to the order of things above, below and around him.*

*Well...may you help us create and sustain a community that reflects worthy values.”*