

Figure 19. Recommended Commercial Development

COMMERCIAL

EXISTING CONDITIONS

Existing commercial development in the community is located in three different areas: strip commercial development along El Cajon Boulevard, the major commercial area in the community; small-scale, student-oriented retail development along College Avenue, north of Montezuma Road; and medical offices along Alvarado Road, east and west of Reservoir Drive (see **Figure 19**). With the exception of the medical offices, which are newer development projects specifically oriented around Alvarado Hospital, commercial development is generally older, auto-oriented, strip development interspersed with newer, small-scale auto-oriented shopping centers. Landscaping and off-street parking are minimal, structures are one or two stories tall with no continuity of architectural style.

A major change in commercial development will come with implementation of the College Community Redevelopment Project. In addition to creating a mixed-use commercial area along portions of College Avenue and Montezuma Roads, local-serving commercial uses will develop within the residential portions of the Core Subarea, and a new visitor commercial area (the Lot A Subarea) is designated at the southwest intersection of I-8 and College Avenue. A hotel and conference facility serving the university is planned for this site.

El Cajon Boulevard is the community commercial area in the community. Commercial development along this corridor was at one time of regional importance. However, with the completion of I-8 in the late 1950s and the consequent shift of east-west traffic from El Cajon Boulevard to the freeway, the commercial attraction of the street has diminished. Development is primarily retail, with motels interspersed, on small lots. Two large shopping centers are located on the south side of the street at College Avenue and at 63rd Street. Much of the development is declining in both quality and quantity. Orientation is towards the automobile with parking lots located between the building facades and sidewalks and with many curb cuts in each block.

In recent years, crime has been a problem along this street. Prostitution, drugs, rapes and burglaries have contributed to the deterioration of the area. While such “social” problems cannot be adequately addressed by “land use” solutions, economic revitalization usually contributes to social improvements in an area. As revitalization occurs consistent with the recommendations outlined in the **Urban Design Element** and the regulations of the Central Urbanized Planned District, the economic vitality and improved appearance of the area should help reduce crime along the street.

The Central Urbanized Planned District and the recommendations outlined in the **Urban Design Element** are intended to provide development regulations which will improve the quality of development along El Cajon Boulevard. The regulations encourage high-intensity, pedestrian-oriented development at node areas (the intersections of El Cajon Boulevard with 54th Street, College Avenue and 70th Street) and lower intensity areas which are both pedestrian and auto-oriented connecting the node areas. Mixed-use and multiple use projects

are encouraged through commercial floor area ratio bonuses, but solely commercial or residential projects are permitted. New development must be buffered from adjacent residential development. The planned district regulations address a range of issues including but not limited to: parking, auto and pedestrian access, setbacks, height, floor area ratio and land use.

As part of the effort to revitalize El Cajon Boulevard, the El Cajon Boulevard Business Association was formed by property owners in the area. This business improvement association works together to coordinate private revitalization efforts to help ensure conformity with the planned district regulations and continuity among different projects in the same areas. At this time, the Association has formed three Business Improvement Districts along El Cajon Boulevard. The third district encompasses the area from Dayton Street east to the City limits within the College Area community plan area. These districts will facilitate raising funds to pay for improvements which are of much benefit to all members. Such improvements may include landscaping along the public right-of-way, street furniture, area identification signs and promotional campaigns. These funds are collected as assessments attached to business licenses.

The student-oriented commercial development at the southeast corner of the university campus consists of restaurants, a bookstore, a quick-copy facility and a variety of other university-serving retail and retail service establishments. College Avenue splits the commercial area. Most of the development is older with the exception of some newer restaurants on the east side of College Avenue. Development is generally pedestrian-oriented with limited automobile access from College Avenue and little off-street or on-street parking available. A pedestrian bridge crosses College Avenue immediately to the north of the commercial area, but the heavy traffic on College Avenue makes pedestrian access between the two sides of the street difficult except at the bridge. The high volume of traffic also makes the sidewalk areas on College Avenue unpleasant for the pedestrian.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Development along the north side of El Cajon Boulevard should occur in accordance with the following:
 - a. Permit pedestrian-oriented development and encourage mixed and multiple use development in the three recommended commercial node areas, specifically the intersections of El Cajon Boulevard with 54th Street, College Avenue and 70th Street.
 - Permit a wide range of general commercial uses to provide full commercial service to the community and to facilitate redevelopment by permitting a multiplicity of commercial redevelopment opportunities.
 - Permit residential uses as part of multiple use projects at densities of 45-110 dwelling units per acre. Residential development should be located above, behind, or next to commercial uses. Residential uses will help to upgrade the area by turning it into a place where people are present 24 hours a day and a place where people live as well as shop.

- Development should be pedestrian oriented. Commercial uses must be located on ground floors to increase activity along the sidewalk and in and out of structures along the sidewalks. Parking must be located to the rear or sides of structures and there is a required minimum portion of the structure which must be located near the street. Parking should not adversely impact adjacent single-family neighborhoods either by the development of visually obtrusive parking areas or by increasing on-street parking.
 - Structures must be designed to provide visual interest to pedestrians and motorists alike.
 - Development abutting residentially zoned property must be buffered through the use of rear yard setbacks, landscaping, fencing or buildings with floors stepped back as height increases. From College Avenue to Collwood Boulevard, a narrow band of multifamily zoning, in place prior to the adoption of this plan update provides a buffer between single-family neighborhoods and commercially zoned El Cajon Boulevard.
- b. Permit auto-oriented and pedestrian-oriented strip development and encourage residential development in the linear commercial development areas connecting the commercial nodes.
- Permit a wide range of general commercial uses to provide full commercial service to the community and to facilitate redevelopment by permitting a multiplicity of commercial redevelopment opportunities.
 - Permit commercial development alone, residential development alone, or mixed or multiple use development. Development regulations of the planned district encourage residential development alone by limiting commercial floor area ratios.
 - Permit residential development at densities of 45 to 110 dwelling units per acre.
 - Permit commercial development to be auto-oriented. Since commercial node areas are intended to be high intensity pedestrian oriented use areas, the linear commercial areas are permitted to develop with lower intensity auto-oriented projects.
 - Permit structures to provide visual interest to pedestrians and motorists alike.
 - Development abutting residential property must be buffered by setbacks, landscaping fences or buildings with floors stepped back as height increases. Transitional zoning is discussed in recommendation number one above.
- c. The Business Improvement District should contribute to the revitalization of El Cajon Boulevard by coordinating marketing efforts and physical improvements of businesses in the District. These activities should include, but need not be limited to the following:

- Joint advertising programs
 - Coordinated holiday decoration
 - Street fairs and parades
 - Landscaping
 - Street furniture and street lighting improvements
 - Campaigns to attract new and varied business
2. The student-oriented commercial area should be rezoned to a pedestrian oriented commercial zone as shown on **Figure 19**, which permits the variety and intensity of uses necessary in a multiple or mixed-use development.

This commercial area is located predominantly on the west side of College Avenue, closer to the university and not separated from the university by College Avenue, as shown in **Figure 19**. Without College Avenue dividing the commercial area, future development will be more accessible to students and will develop in a functionally and physically unified manner. Development in this area must be regulated to limit allowable commercial uses to those which serve the surrounding residential neighborhoods rather than more general commercial use. The zone should provide development regulations regarding setbacks, off-street parking and limiting hours of operation. The pedestrian oriented commercial zone should limit permitted uses to commercial facilities which serve students and residents rather than general commercial uses. The pedestrian oriented commercial zone should allow residential uses above the ground floor at a density of 75-110 dwelling units per net residential acre.

3. Development in the commercial student-oriented area should:
- a. Continue to offer a range of commercial uses oriented toward students.
 - b. Not include any drive-thru establishments.
 - c. Locate retail and retail service development principally on the ground floor and along sidewalks and streets, with offices and residential development above and/or behind the retail and retail service development. Residential development may occur at densities up to 109 dwelling units per acre as part of a mixed-use project.
 - d. Maintain a strong pedestrian link with the university campus and within the Core Subarea.
 - e. Upgrade the pedestrian environment through landscaping, building facade enhancement, provision of street furniture, public art and a high level of maintenance of both private property and adjacent sidewalk areas.
 - f. Locate parking areas within the commercial structures or behind them, with auto access taken from alleys. Auto access from College Avenue is to be highly restricted.