HILLSIDES

Hillsides are geological features on the landscape whose slope and soils are in a balance with vegetation, underlying geology and the amount of precipitation. Maintaining this equilibrium reduces the danger to public health and safety posed by unstable hillsides. Development affects this equilibrium. Disturbance of hillsides can result in the loss of slope and soil stability, increased run-off, and intensified erosion; it can also destroy a community's aesthetic resources. The southern slopes of Mission Valley mark the community's boundary and provide an attractive and distinctive setting.

The open space areas shown in the General Plan and Progress Guide for the City of San Diego are predominantly comprised of steep hillsides and small-undeveloped canyons. The southern slopes of Mission Valley are identified as part of that open space system. The major portions of the slopes are currently zoned for low-density residential development, and are further regulated as Environmentally Sensitive Lands, the Hillside Review Overlay Zone. As demand for land increases, these hillsides are more likely to face development pressure. Due to the impact hillside development can have on the community's health and safety, and on land, water, economic, and visual resources, it is apparent that if they are developed it must be in a manner compatible with hillside ecology. Whereas the southern slopes have been maintained in close to their natural state, the northern hillsides have been extensively modified and disturbed by extraction and building activities. Development oriented toward the Valley and accessed by roads from the Valley floor should not extend above the 150-foot elevation contour.

OBJECTIVE

- Preserve as open space those hillsides characterized by steep slopes or geological instability in order to control urban form, insure public safety, provide aesthetic enjoyment, and protect biological resources.

PROPOSALS

- Designate the hillsides and canyons which have any of the following characteristics as open space in the community:

  a. Contain rare or endangered species of vegetation or animal life.
  b. Contain unstable soils.
  c. Contain the primary course of a natural drainage pattern.
  d. Located above the 150-foot elevation contour.

- Permit only low intensity developments to occur on remaining hillsides exceeding 25 percent slope within the HR Zone located below the 150-foot elevation contour.

- Open Space easements should be required for those lots or portions of lots in the HR Zone.

- Lot splits should not be permitted on hillsides exceeding 25 percent slope except to separate that portion of a lot exceeding 25 percent slope from that portion not exceeding 25 percent slope for purposes of obtaining open space easements.

- Development intensity should not be determined based upon land located exceeding 25 percent slope.

- Encourage the use of Planned Developments to cluster development and retain as much open space area as possible.

- Preserve the linear greenbelt and natural form of the southern hillsides.

- Rehabilitate the northern hillsides and incorporate them into future development.

DEVELOPMENT GUIDELINES

- Grading required to accommodate any new development should disturb only minimally the natural terrain. This can be achieved by:

  a. Contouring as naturally as possible to maintain the overall landform.

  b. Blending graded features into remaining natural terrain.

  c. Replanting with native, drought resistant plants to restore natural appearance and prevent erosion.

  d. Adapting buildings and parking areas to the natural terrain (i.e., tucking into hillsides, utilizing small pad areas, utilizing compatible site design).

- Development constructed on natural hillsides should preserve and enhance the beauty of the landscape by encouraging the maximum retention of natural topographic features such as drainage swales, streams, slopes, ridgelines, rock outcroppings, vistas, natural plant formations, and trees.

  a. Orient new development along natural drainage courses which can provide natural amenity for the project, provided drainage is not impeded.

  b. Use pedestrian bridges and walkways to link various elements of developments separated by drainage courses or subsidiary canyons or gullies.

- Design roads serving hillside and canyon developments carefully and sensitively.

  a. Roads serving residential development near the upper ridge of the south rim of the Valley should be cul-de-sacs or loops extending from existing upland streets. These extensions should be "single loaded" (with structures on one side only) and of minimum width.

  b. Roads serving Valley development (office, educational, commercial-recreation, commercial-retail) at the base of the hillsides should consist of short side streets branching off Camino Del Rio South or Hotel Circle South. These side streets should provide primary access to projects in preference to collector streets.

c. Access roads should not intrude into the designated open space areas.

- Access roads should follow the natural topography, whenever possible, to minimize cutting and grading. Where roads have to cross the natural gradient, bridges should be used rather than fill in order to maintain the natural drainage patterns.

- Wherever possible, preserve and incorporate mature trees and other established vegetation into the overall project design.

- Improve the appearance of the understructures of buildings and parking areas visible from below by:

  a. Providing sensitive site and structural design.

  b. Incorporating structures into the existing hillsides.

  c. Use appropriate screening materials (including landscaping).

- Large-scale development (commercial, office, or commercial-recreation) at the base of the slopes should not cut or grade, nor extend above the 150-foot elevation contour on the southern slopes.

- As part of the implementation process, height limits and site design regulations should be formulated in order to prevent the obscuring of views of the natural hillsides.

- All that portion of the Mission Valley Community Plan area located south of Interstate 8 should be incorporated into a South Mission Valley Height Limitation Zone, which establishes a height limitation for a new or altered buildings of 40 to 65 feet.

- The hillsides should provide a clear area of demarcation between the Mission Valley Community Plan area and the communities on the mesas above Mission Valley.

- Development at the base of the slopes should utilize the following design principles:

  a. Emphasize a horizontal rather than a vertical orientation for building shape.

  b. Step back each successive floor of the structure to follow the natural line of the slope.

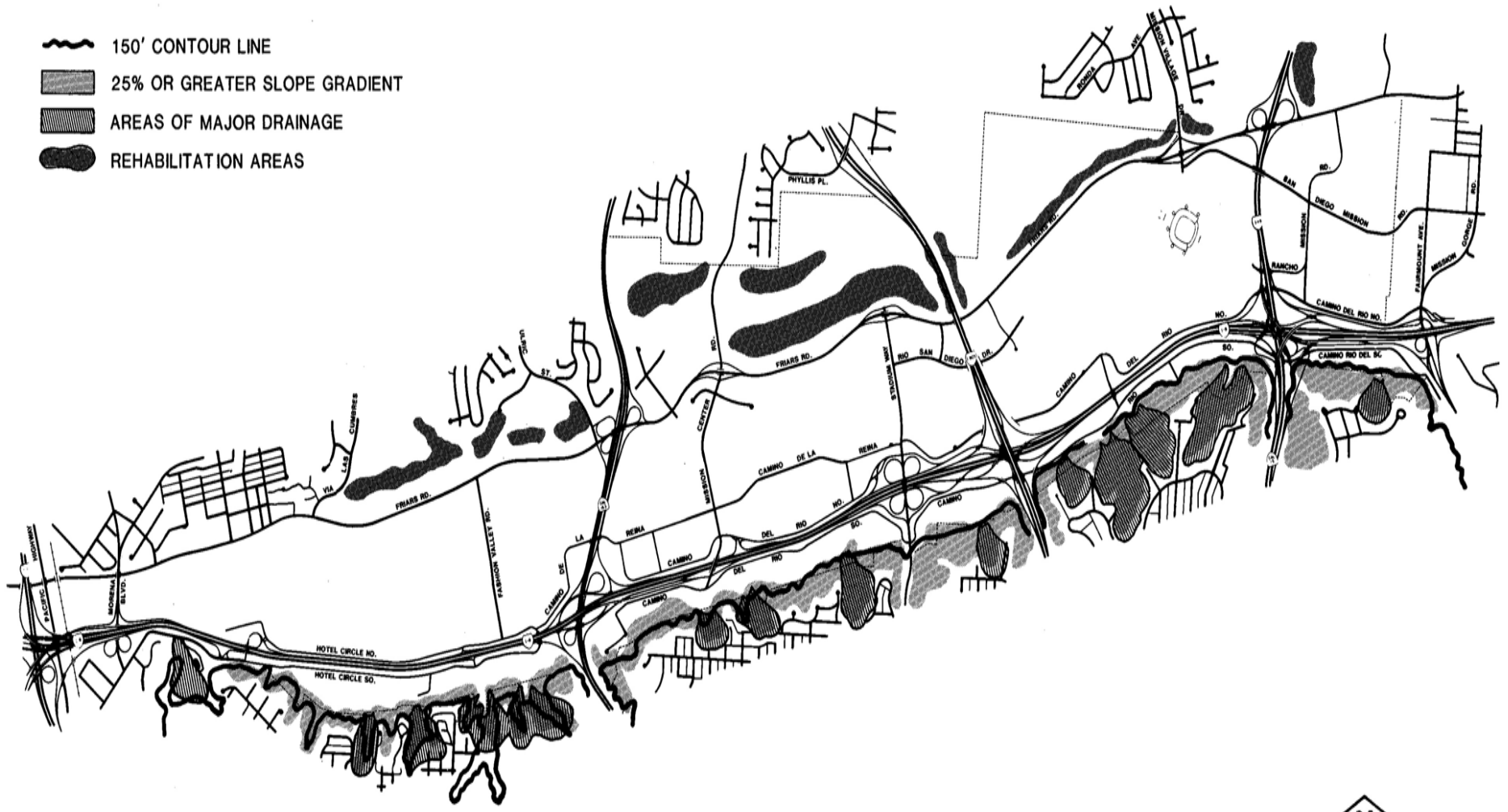
  c. Set the rear of the structure into the slope to help blend the structure into the site.

  d. Utilize building materials and colors that are of earth tones, particularly dark hues.

  e. Utilize landscape materials compatible with the natural hillside vegetation.

  f. Design roof areas to minimize disruption of views from the crest of the hillsides. Sloped or landscaped roofs and enclosed mechanical equipment can help to achieve this effect.

The north facing hillsides in the West Mission Valley area



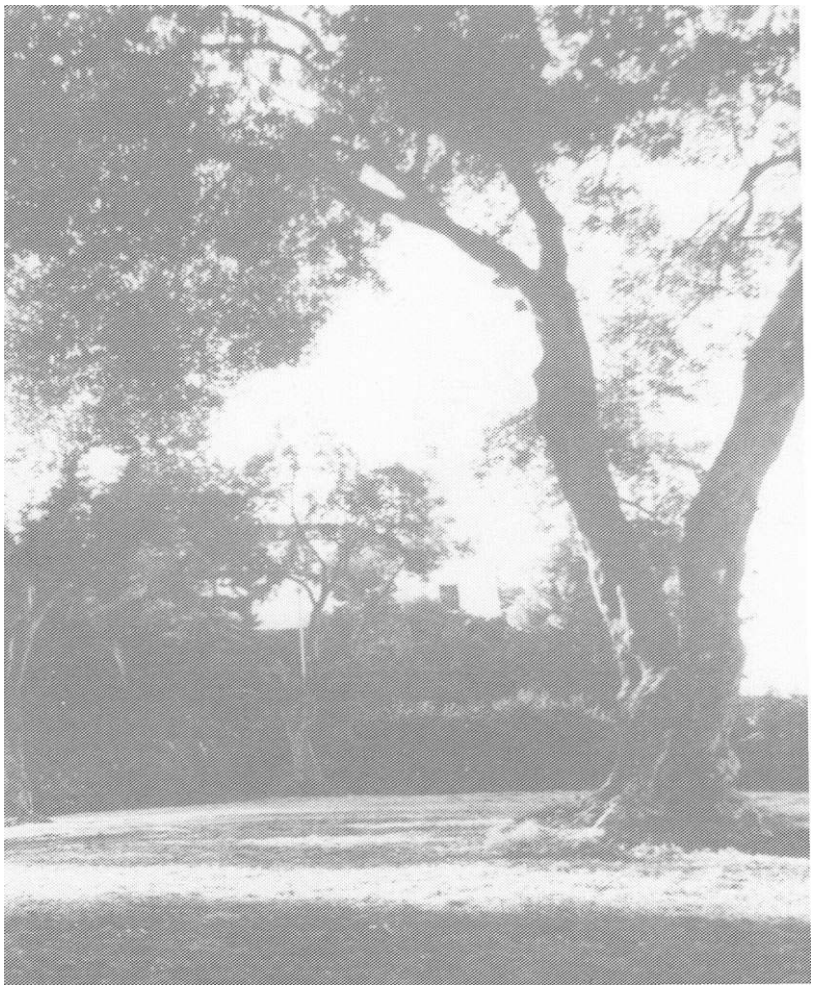
CITY OF SAN DIEGO
PLANNING DEPARTMENT

HILLSIDES

MISSION VALLEY COMMUNITY PLAN

FIGURE 25

A primary recreational opportunity in Mission Valley is the golf course.



Presidio park provides passive recreational opportunities in the adjacent community of Old Town.

PARKS AND RECREATION

Mission Valley primarily an urbanized commercial center. As such, there are no public parks currently located within the community. Two resource-based parks border the community and are readily accessible by automobile and bicycle. These are Presidio Park, located in Old San Diego at the western end of the Valley, and Mission Bay Park, also located just west of the Valley. A third resource-based park, Mission Trails Regional Park, is located northeast of the Valley, accessible through Mission Gorge.

The City of San Diego leases out land for two recreational facilities. One is Sefton Little League Field, located at 2505 Hotel Circle Place. The other is the outdoor sports facility abutting the Qualcomm Stadium parking lot. The latter facility is made available to other sports organizations.

The greenbelt formed by the San Diego River corridor provides both visual and physical relief from the existing urban development.

The major concentrations of residential development in the community are located at the western and eastern ends of the Valley. A YMCA (Young Men's Christian Association) facility at the western end of the Valley on Friars Road (developed on leased city-owned land) provides both indoor and outdoor recreational opportunities in a park-like setting along the river. A private health club provides indoor recreational facilities at the eastern end of the Valley, on Rancho Mission Road near the river. Another private health club provides similar facilities in the western end of the valley, on Hotel Circle South. The need for active and passive recreational opportunities will increase as residential development increases in the Valley.

The projected residential population indicates a need for active recreational park facilities in addition to what is currently provided by the YMCA, Sefton Little League Field, and the bicycle and pedestrian paths proposed along the river. Each residential project developer in the community shall be responsible for the provision of private recreational facilities (neighborhood parks) in accordance with the standards of the Progress Guide and General Plan for the use of the project residents and their guests. These facilities may include any of an extensive inventory of facilities including tennis courts, pools, Jacuzzi, picnic/barbecue areas, and lawns and landscaped areas. This will permit flexible development of recreational facilities and activity centers in keeping with the needs and interests of various groups in different areas. This concept applies to all residential unit developers within the community planning area to ensure that each resident has adequate recreational facilities. The provision and maintenance of these private recreational facilities should be assured through deed restriction on each individual dwelling unit, Conditions, Covenants, and Restrictions (CC&R) agreement, or other similar means.

Two park-like facilities will be provided on city-owned land in Mission Valley. One site will be located in the vicinity of San Diego Jack Murphy Stadium. The other will be located in the western area in the vicinity of the existing YMCA. A pedestrian connection will be available between the two facilities through the open space linkage system to be established along the river corridor.

OBJECTIVE:

- Provide adequate park and recreation areas for the use of Mission Valley residents in accordance with the *Progress Guide and General Plan* for the City of San Diego

PROPOSALS:

- Utilize the San Diego River corridor for passive recreation.

- Coordinate with private recreational facilities and commercial interests so that the private facilities complement and supplement the public recreational system.

- Neighborhood parks should be provided within, and as part of, new residential projects.

- Provide a community park in the vicinity of San Diego Jack Murphy Qualcomm Stadium. Because of the potential expense of land purchase at this site, it will be necessary to find means of financing the facility with other than the standard park fee program, which in its present form cannot guarantee the minimum funding for such a facility. It should be developed as an active park, oriented to organized sports.

- Provide a neighborhood park in the vicinity of the YMCA development in the western portion of the valley. This park development must comply with requirements of the wetlands management plan. Primary consideration for park development, including playing fields, should be given to the City property south of the YMCA currently being used by the Presidio Little League, known as Sefton Field.

- Expand the existing sports facility abutting the stadium parking lot.

- Utilize a variety of methods to finance the development of a community park in the vicinity of the San Diego Jack Murphy Stadium. The specific financing method should be established in conjunction with the land use implementation ordinance and public facilities implementation package to follow the approval of this plan. Methods to assess as part of this implementation program include: increase in park fees, incorporation into a valley-wide public facilities assessment district, establishment of a separate park improvements assessment district, incorporation into a facility benefit financing program (FBA), financing as a condition of approval of any San Diego Jack Murphy Stadium reuse program; and/or other means found feasible during the implementation studies.

- Utilize a variety of methods to finance the development of a neighborhood park in the western area of the San Diego River floodway in conjunction with YMCA improvements. A joint use facility should be pursued at this site. Such facility would provide additional playground area at the YMCA site. The YMCA should manage and maintain the site as part of a joint use program. Improvements on this facility are minimal and could probably be funded through a combination of existing community park funds, the YMCA, assessment districts, (FBA), and any other method identified during the implement-studies of this plan.

- An agreement should be reached between the San Diego City School District and the developers of residential projects regarding the provision of private funds for school facilities and for access to existing facilities. If considered necessary by the school district, it should be a condition of approval of future subdivision maps. Access could mean the provision of transportation to schools on the part of individual residential development projects.

- Maximize the use of school facilities should be maximized by encouraging use of the recreational facilities, sports fields, libraries and meeting rooms for a variety of activities by the community at large.

DEVELOPMENT GUIDELINES:

- Combine appropriate passive recreational use of wildlife and/or wetland conservation areas and water resources.

- Develop a continuous pedestrian walkway and bikeway along the river in accordance with the guidelines of the Wetlands

- Develop all park and recreational facilities in accordance with the guidelines included in the Progress Guide and general plan.

- Provide the necessary neighborhood park facilities through private development.

OPEN SPACE LINKAGE SYSTEM

The three previously discussed sub-elements (San Diego River, Hillsides, Park and Recreation) provide important components of the Open Space Element. However, it is equally important that a relationship be established between these sub-elements. This relationship can be established through the open space linkage system which is a summation of the other sub-elements. In essence, the San Diego River, the hillsides, and the public and private recreational facilities create a physical and visual open space element and the open space linkage system binds them together.

OBJECTIVE

- Link the various sub-elements of the San Diego system into a visually and physically cohesive unit.

PROPOSALS

- Utilize the San Diego River corridor as the focal “point” or spine of the open space linkage system.

- Provide visual access to the San Diego River and the hillsides in order to preserve a sense of openness in the valley. .

- Provide physical linkages in the form of pedestrian paths and bike-ways between the recreational facilities of new and existing developments and the San Diego River corridor.

DEVELOPMENT GUIDELINES

- Utilize specific plans and planned developments to ensure that opportunities for physical linkages to the open space system are realized.

- Utilize malls, pedestrian paths, bikeways, and landscaped streets as integral parts of the open space linkage system.

Within the San Diego River, in Mission Valley, there are presently some pedestrian pathways which can become the base for an expanded open space linkage system