COMMUNITY APPEARANCE AND DESIGN ELEMENT

PRIMARY GOAL

Ensure a pleasant, healthful, physical and social environment for Rancho Peñasquitos residents by balancing development with the preservation of the community's natural resources and amenities.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

Rancho Peñasquitos is a community physically characterized by a unique system of canyons, hillsides and ridges. As a consequence, most of the neighborhoods in the community possess substantial open space areas, views into canyons, and in some cases views of the Pacific Ocean. A major issue in the community is the preservation of open space and significant environmental resources including major canyon systems, sensitive slopes and tree grove areas. The two most sensitive environmental resources in the community include Black Mountain and its surrounding hillsides, and the Peñasquitos Canyon Preserve and its finger canyons.

ISSUES

Urban design is an important issue to the residents of Rancho Peñasquitos. This design concern is reflected by the community's landscape maintenance district which is responsible for the landscaped medians constructed throughout the community. Other design issues include: design compatibility of grading, landscaping, buildings and developments; sensitive site design of buildings or groups of buildings on individual parcels; flexible design of streets and parking; high-quality design of signs, street furniture, fences and walls; entry treatments; crime preventive design; and architectural design and color of residential, commercial and public buildings.

POLICIES

- All new development should be sensitive to the environment and be designed to avoid incremental contributions to the problems of air and water pollution, natural fire hazards, soil erosion, siltation, slope instability, flooding and severe hillside cutting and scarring.

- Preserve significant natural features and canyons as viable connected open space systems.

- Protect environmental resources that are typically associated with hillsides, preserve significant public views of and from hillsides, and maintain a clear sense of natural hillside topography throughout the Rancho Peñasquitos Community.

- Develop a sense of neighborhood identity by encouraging design diversity between development areas while promoting design integration and compatibility within neighborhood areas.

- The transportation system should be developed to enhance the overall efficiency of pedestrian and vehicular circulation within the community.

- Use high-quality design, materials and workmanship in buildings and developments. Gates and guard houses should not be permitted in new developments because they restrict access for pedestrians, bicyclists, fire and police services and have a negative impact on overall feeling of community.

- All new development should incorporate aesthetics and functional features into the design of fences, signs, street furniture and lighting.

- Crime preventive design and defensible space should be used in all future developments.

RECOMMENDATIONS

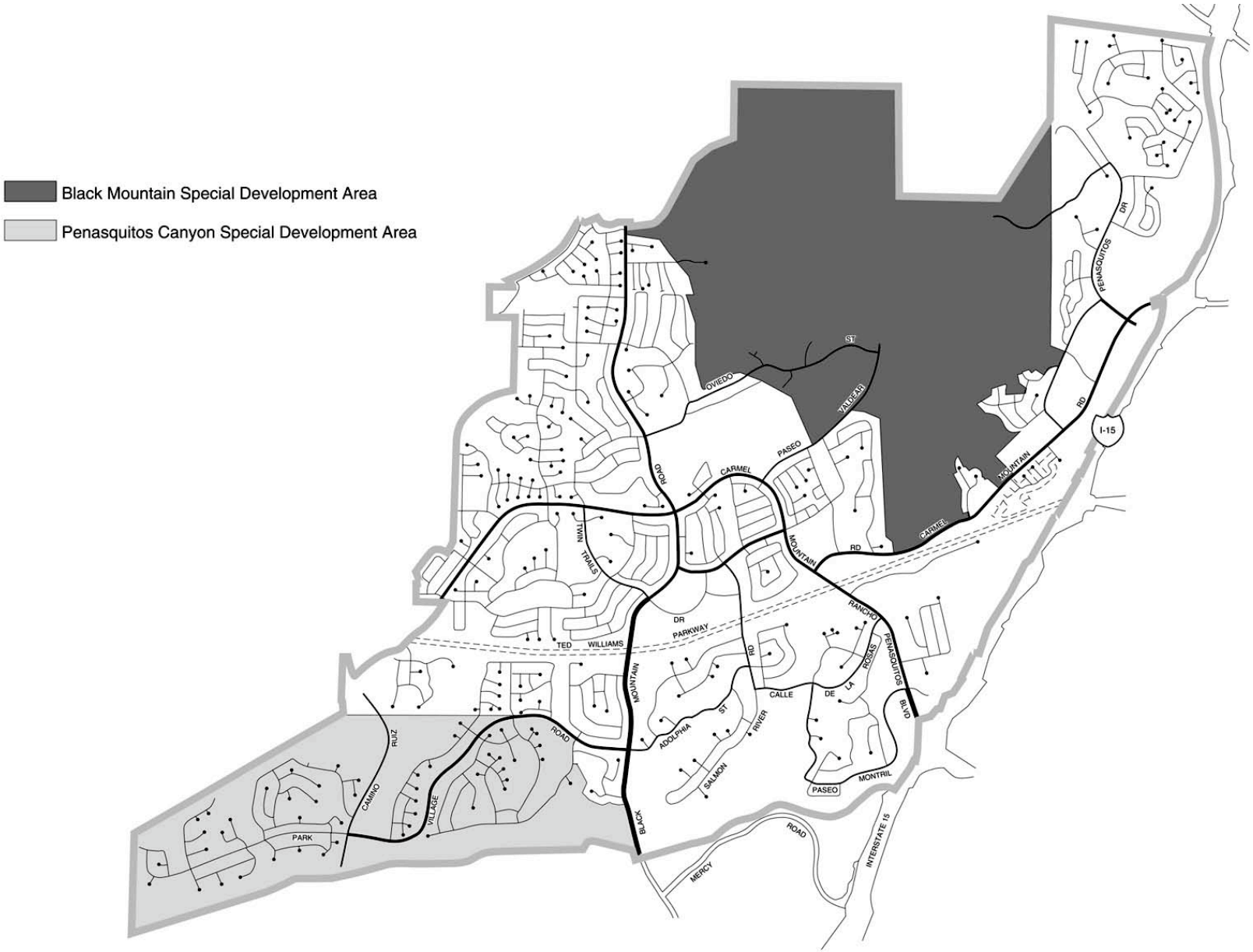
Sensitive design is important in determining whether a particular building, group of buildings or development area will be a functional and aesthetic asset to the community. The following basic guidelines are set forth to aid potential developers, City and other governmental officials, and community members in making site design decisions before land development. The tentative map, hillside review and planned development processes should be used where applicable to ensure sensitive design in all developments, as discussed in the **Implementation and Action Plan** section.

Special Development Areas

While sensitive design is important in the development of the entire community, environmental conditions require that special care be taken in development of two areas of Peñasquitos designated special development areas in **Figure 22**. The Black Mountain Special Development Area encompasses a series of ridges and canyons leading up to Black Mountain peak. The Peñasquitos Canyon Special Development Area includes the area west of the 130-foot water easement and south of proposed SR-56. Development of both areas should consider topography, views, biological resources, drainage and other environmental factors. Portions of this element set forth proposals and standards specifically related to these special development areas.

In addition to these areas, transition zones in both the Black Mountain and Peñasquitos Canyon Special Development Areas are shown in **Figures 23** and **24**. The transition zones are areas where park and open space lands interface with development areas. These zones require particular care in the design, implementation and maintenance of improvements as outlined in this element.

Design compatibility is of particular importance within the special development areas. Developments in these areas will often be visible from each other and from other portions of the community. Care should be taken to develop both the Peñasquitos Canyon and Black Mountain areas in a unified manner, creating an overall atmosphere of moderately scaled residential development in earth tones, complemented by extensive vegetation and open space.



Special Development Areas

Rancho Peñasquitos Community Plan

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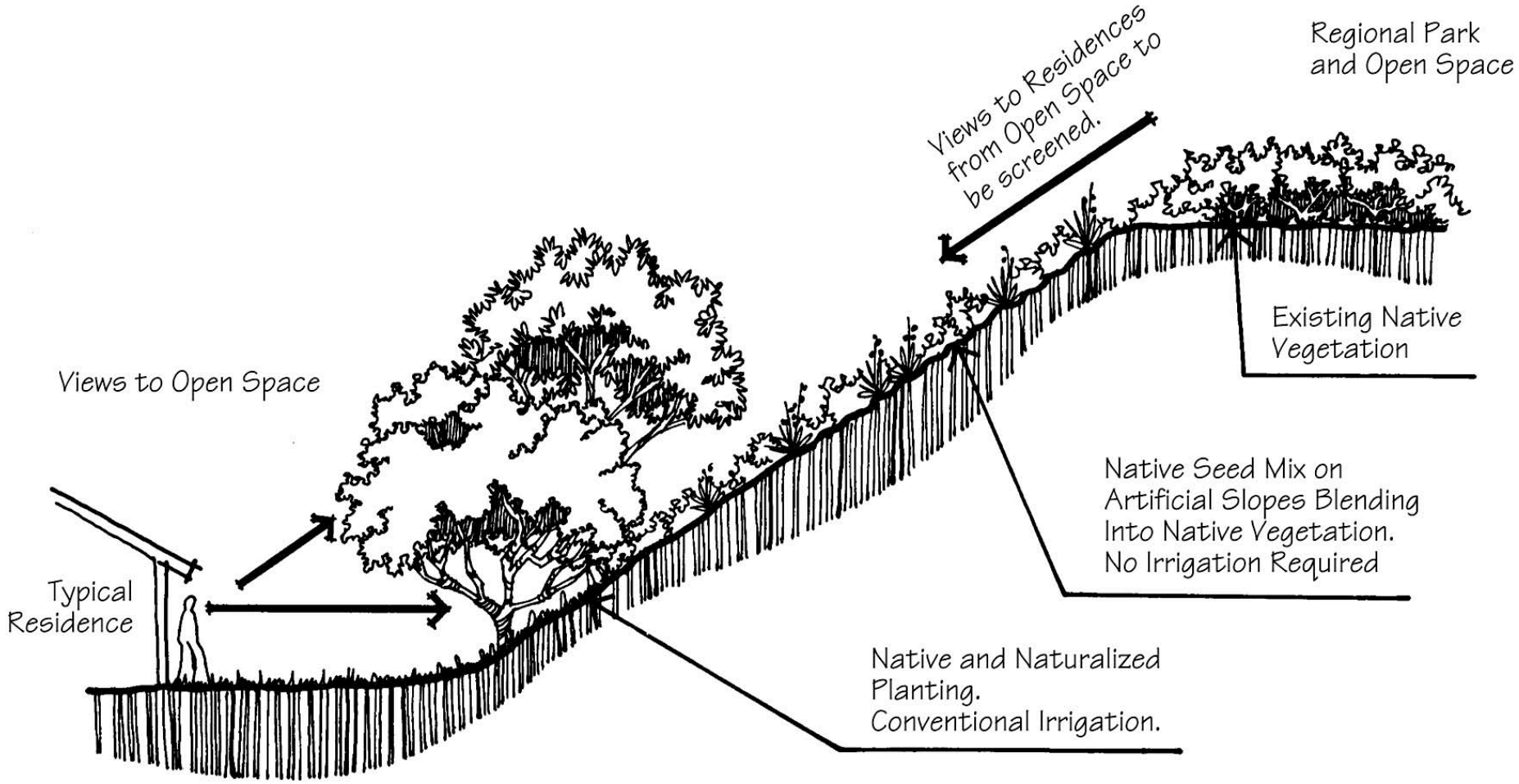
FIGURE



Black Mountain Transition **23 FIGURE**

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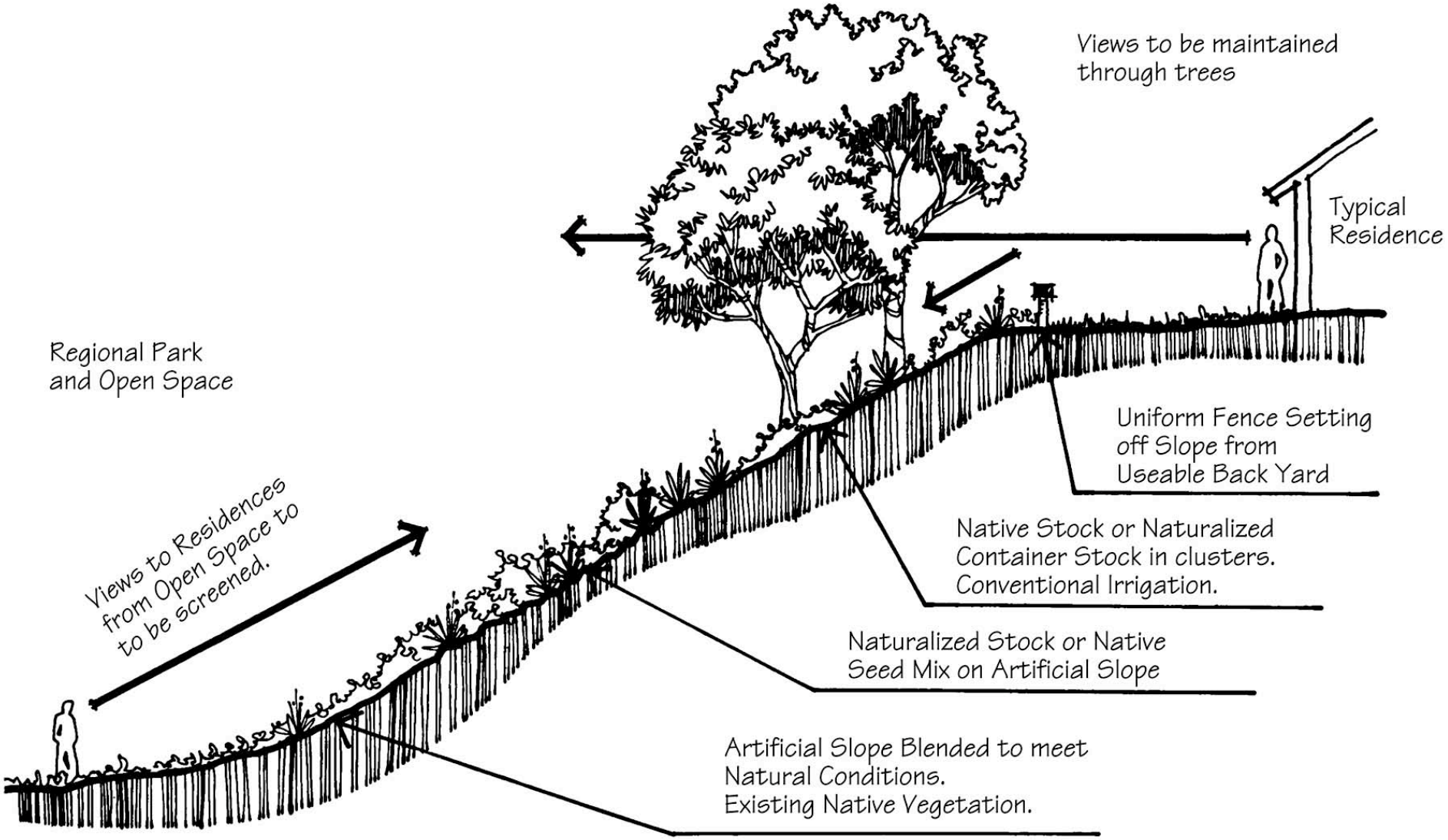


Peñasquitos Canyon Transition

Rancho Peñasquitos Community Plan

24 FIGURE

A further consideration in the special development areas is the location of the HR Overlay Zone. In those cases where the standards and proposals called out in the Plan are more stringent or specific than the HR Overlay Zone, the Plan guidelines should apply. Environmental and design standards for the special development areas shall be enforced through the hillside review process.

Black Mountain Transition Zone

In the transition zones, special treatment of the relationship between park and open space and urbanized developments is required. In the Black Mountain transition zone, a gradual transition using landscaping and moderate horizontal (50 feet) and vertical separations should be used, as shown in **Figure 23**.

Black Mountain Park and adjacent open space should act as a backdrop for the residential developments when viewed from other parts of the ranch and from I-15. The rear yards of residential units should be blended into the natural open space areas.

Wildlife corridors connecting Black Mountain Park to other open space in the community must be maintained. Wildlife must be able to safely move through a continuous, natural habitat system to ensure their survival.

Peñasquitos Canyon Transition Zone

For the Peñasquitos Canyon transition zone, in those areas where residential development backs onto proposed open space, a buffer at least 50 feet wide should be created as shown in **Figure 24**. Layers of the buffer should include the rear yard areas, a single-style fence along the length of the development, clusters of shrubs and trees offsetting the fence line and a rounded slope with the landscaping gradually blended into the natural vegetation where manufactured slopes are necessary. The natural vegetation should be replaced whenever possible, except within the Fire Management Zone.

In those cases where parks or schools front onto the regional park and open space system, care should be taken to develop a sensitive transition between the uses while maintaining pedestrian access to regional park areas from the public facilities. Where Park Village Road lies within the transition zone, both sides of the road should be fully landscaped with native or compatible non-invasive vegetation.

Predator control is an important issue in residential areas adjacent to Peñasquitos Canyon. Dogs and cats should be kept out of the preserve to avoid destruction of wildlife in the canyon.

Urban Design Guidelines

The intent of these proposals is to set out general areas of concern relating to the compatibility of buildings and developments.

- **Compatibility with Existing Development.** The design of any new construction should respect existing development with regard to preservation of views from public rights-of-way where possible, and compatibility of scale, bulk, architectural styles, building materials, color and landscaping.

- **Differential Land Uses.** Particular care should be given to the treatment of different land uses sited side-by-side, such as single-family and multifamily developments located adjacent to each other. Such developments should be compatible in design. Buffers between land uses, such as fencing, landscaping and elevation separations, may be appropriate in order to reduce adverse visual, noise and other impacts.

- **Neighborhoods.** A harmonious appearance within neighborhoods is sought by using compatible design features; architectural styles and colors, lot sizes and setbacks, building heights, landscaping, signs and street furniture.

Landform and Grading

The intent of these proposals is to define and permit reasonable grading for development, while ensuring grading and landscaping which blends into the natural landform and vegetation.

- **Overall Landform.** Site planning should maintain the topographic relief of the existing terrain, minimize cut and fill slopes and preserve significant views from and of development areas. The ridge-canyon relationship should be maintained and not obliterated. While hilltops and valleys may be graded to permit development, the sense of distinctive landform should remain. Special care should be taken to preserve the landform of the ridgetop in the Black Mountain area and the Camino del Sur open space corridor in Peñasquitos Canyon.

- **Artificial Slopes.** In engineering design throughout the community, the heights of manufactured slope banks should be minimized. For artificial slopes over 15 feet in height, slopes should be blended, tops of slope banks should be rounded and contoured or sculptured, grading should be both horizontally and vertically, all artificial slopes should be blended to meet native terrain. The overall effect desired is a natural undulating terrain rather than a manufactured appearance.

- **Special Development Areas.** In the special development areas slopes should have variable ratios: different slopes should have different ratios depending on topographic and design conditions, while the tops and toes of slopes should be rounded and more sloped than the middle portions of the banks. Use of variable slope ratios is especially important in the treatment of slopes in the transition zones, and in slopes over 30 feet in height where the banks should be naturalized by changes in the gradient angle. Overall, slopes should be as gentle as possible, in the 2:1 to 3:1 range.

- **Landscaping.** Areas disturbed by grading should be landscaped expediently, with planting done in sequence with grading rather than on a project-wide basis. On manufactured slopes greater than 30 feet in height in the special development areas, clusters of trees with other plant materials should be planted to visually break up the tall banks.

Site Design

The intent of these proposals is to set forth guidelines for the siting of buildings on individual parcels.

- **Sensitive Site Design and Flexible Siting Techniques.** In site planning, care should be taken in the layout of building sites and streets, in the placement of buildings on lots, and in the treatment of yards, slopes and canyons. Flexible siting techniques should consider major topographic and other natural features as well as relationships with other buildings. The use of variable side, back and front setbacks is recommended. Siting of buildings along canyon rims should consider citywide Brush Management requirements. Minimum setbacks from top of slope ranging from 20 to 50 feet (depending on fire severity rating) should be required in order to reduce the potentially significant environmental impacts associated with the brush management. Residential developments should be required to step down hillsides and leave open space areas, instead of massive grading and flattening large areas for development. Views should be a major consideration in siting residential units.

- **Clustered Housing.** In some parts of the community, clustered housing may provide a better solution to problems posed by topography and other environmental concerns than conventional subdivision lot patterns. Clustered housing may be recommended in this case, as long as it is developed as a PRD and retains a density consistent with the community plan density designated for that area.

- **Variable Lot Sizes and Lot Widths.** Variable lot sizes should be considered in residential development. Estate-type or large-lot development is appropriate in areas where exceptional topography and natural features warrant. In large-lot development, emphasis should be placed on retaining substantial portions of parcels as open space and siting and designing buildings to minimize damage to the site. For these areas, the width of the lot should be increased to be more consistent with the estate-type character of the area.

- **Alternative Foundations.** In residential development, particularly in the special development areas and estate lots, alternatives to flat pad development should be considered, such as split-level units, cantilevered homes, pole houses, bridge or open span dwellings and other alternatives to standard slab foundations.

- **Building Coverage.** Building coverage should take into account the quality and intensity of site vegetation, geology, topography and other environmental resources. A mix of one- and two-story dwellings should be considered, permitting a variety of responses to site features.

- **Building Drainage.** In the siting of buildings, water flows and the natural drainage patterns should be considered. Efforts to limit the amount of hard-surfaced ground (land covered by impervious surfaces such as foundations, driveways, patios, etc.) should be made in order to support the natural system of drainage.

- **Slope Drainage Systems.** Provision for the collection of sediment and control of erosion on manufactured slopes shall be the responsibility of the developer for two years following construction. Access to drainage systems should be provided such that cleaning and maintenance are facilitated. Drainage outletting to the Peñasquitos Canyon floor should be nonerosive. Drains should extend to the natural drainage bottom. All drains leading to Los Peñasquitos Canyon Preserve or Black Mountain Park open spaces should be publicly-owned to ensure proper maintenance.

- **Roadway Design.** Design should take into account the special conditions of hillside areas, which may mean deviation from City or other engineering standards, as long as public safety is assured. Design possibilities include variable location of the road within the right-of-way; pop-outs for emergency parking and viewpoints; landscaping of median strips, adjacent slope banks or road side pockets (see **Figure 25**); and split-level roadways.

  - Black Mountain Road and Camino del Sur should be sited to retain major adjacent open spaces, rather than fragmenting open spaces into smaller areas. Adequate pedestrian and bicycle crossings should be provided. Landscaping should be used as a transition from roadways to open space areas.

  - Portions of Park Village Road lying within the Peñasquitos Canyon transition zone should be sensitively designed and fully landscaped on the regional park side with a mix of trees, shrubs and groundcover. Trees and large shrubs should be artistically clustered to achieve a natural effect, rather than planted symmetrically or at even intervals along the road. A specifically designed crossing connecting the regional park to the Camino del Sur open space corridor should be constructed to permit safe passage of pedestrians across Park Village Road. The crossing should be designed and constructed by the developer. Maintenance of the crossing should be the responsibility of the landscape maintenance district.

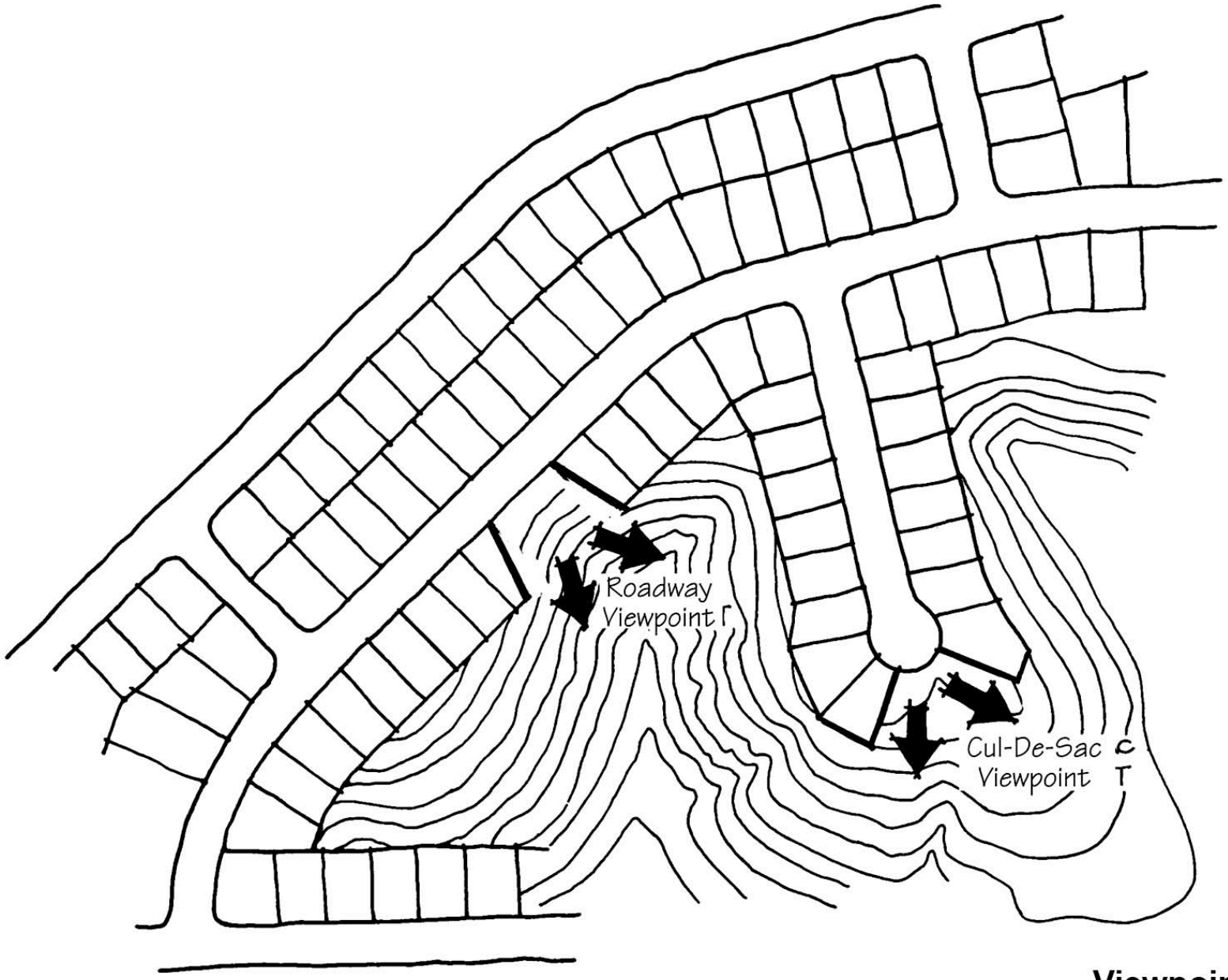
Building Design

The intent of these proposals is to require high-quality design and construction of buildings and groups of buildings.

- **Building Compatibility.** In order to preserve existing landform, building design should reflect split-level, hillside development techniques. Structures within a development should possess similar architectural styles but also provide visual variety. Earth tones, textured materials and California ranch house and Spanish mission styles are considered appropriate in residential construction in Rancho Peñasquitos.

- **Massing.** Special care should be taken in the massing of buildings. In the special development areas, dwellings should be low-scale in design.

- **Shadow Relief.** All buildings should have shadow relief where pop-outs, offsetting planes, overhangs and recesses are used to produce effective visual interest. Large unbroken expanses of wall should usually be avoided.



Viewpoints **25 FIGURE**

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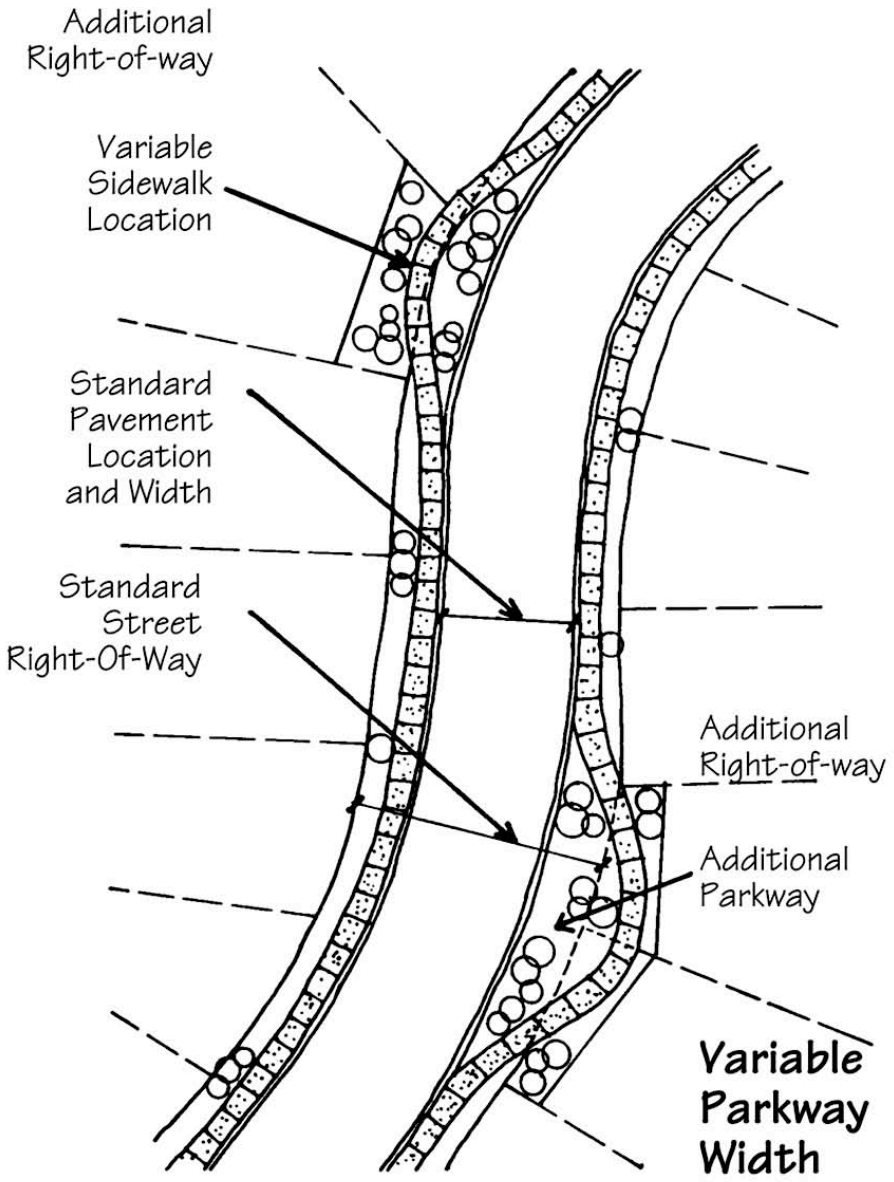

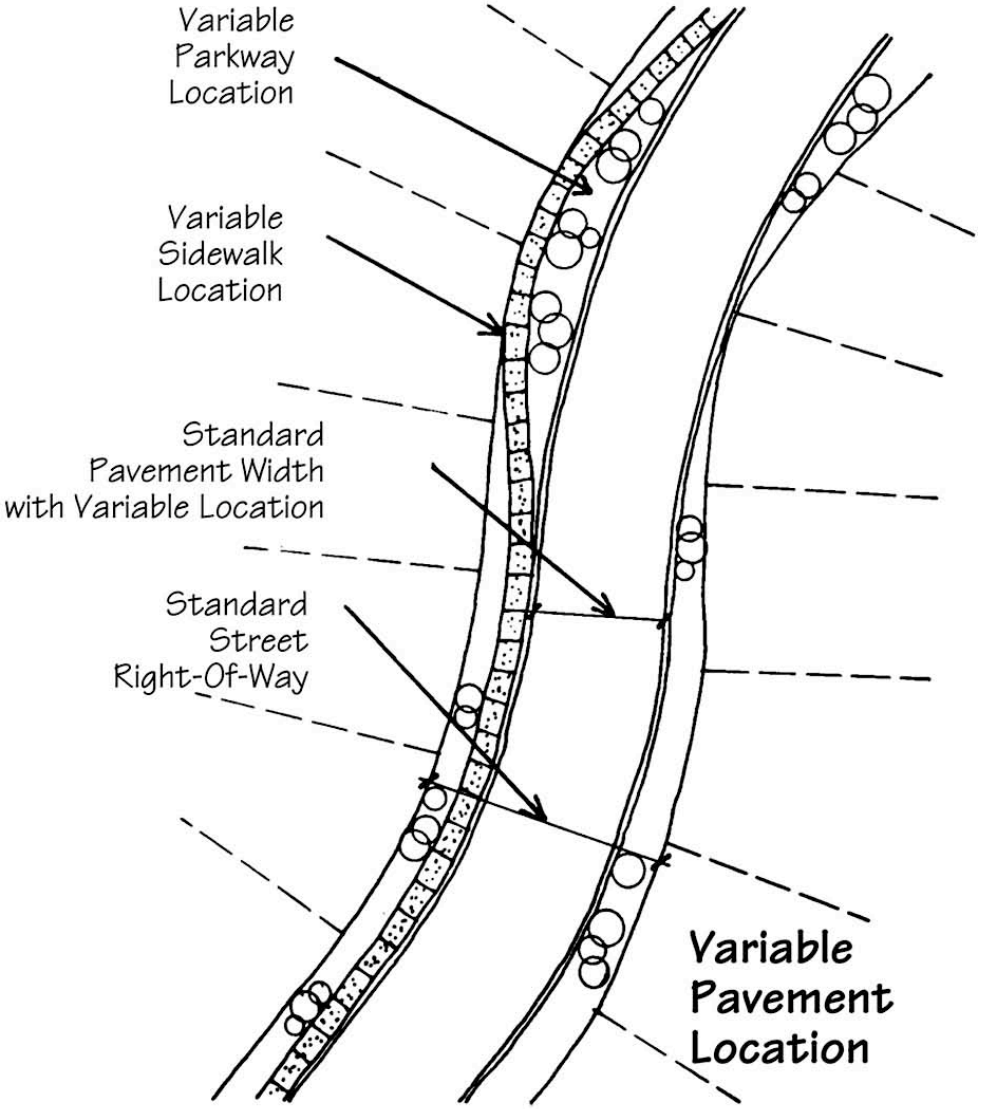

Landscaping Pockets

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FIGURE

- **Rear Elevations.** The rear elevations of buildings facing into canyons or visible from streets should be as well-detailed and visually interesting as front elevations.

- **Roofs.** Special care should be taken in roof design and selection of roofing materials in hillside areas because of roof visibility. Roofs should be constructed of shake or Spanish tile.

Landscaping and Urban Design

These proposals call for careful design of lighting, signs, street furniture, fences and walls and landscaping. Although these proposals specifically treat residential areas, the same general concerns apply to other developments and projects as well.

- **Function and Aesthetics.** Landscaping and urban design features should enhance residential developments aesthetically, while meeting functional requirements such as screened outdoor living areas, sufficient night lighting and adequate signage.

- **Climate.** Landscaping and building materials should be durable, easy to maintain and appropriate to the local climate. Use of drought-resistant plant materials is recommended.

- **Street Lighting.** Low-intensity, shielded light standards should be used in all areas of the community.

- **Slope Banks.** Appropriate measures should be taken to maintain highly visible slope banks and fences both within private lots and abutting residential development areas. Homeowners' associations, for example, may take responsibility for grounds maintenance for their areas.

- **Transition Zones.** Fences should be constructed of wood, masonry or a wood-masonry combination. Fences directly abutting the regional park and open space areas in the Peñasquitos Canyon transition zone should be planted with intermittent landscape clusters as shown in **Figure 24**. In the Black Mountain transition zone, landscape materials should be blended into native species on slope banks.

Crime Preventive Design

The principles of crime preventive design and defensible space should be used in the design of all developments. In residential developments, this includes design which permits ease in police patrolling, maintains views into yards and buildings to aid in the detection of vandals and thieves, and encourages mutual aid among neighbors in protecting their homes.