INTRODUCTION

Urban design addresses a wide range of issues, including the visual impact of new development, the compatibility of new development with the existing community and the natural landscape, and perceptions of image, identity and character within a community. Other elements within this Plan address the location, timing, and sequence of development and facilities. The **Urban Design Element** is vital to the cohesiveness between the other elements of the Plan because it deals with the quality and form that new development will take.

PRIMARY URBAN DESIGN GOAL

Enhance the community's image through improvements to the visual and physical character of the community.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

Skyline Paradise Hills is a predominantly urbanized community although the development of remaining vacant parcels, as well as the redevelopment of existing properties, has the potential to affect the quality of the community.

The landforms of the area consist of rolling hills and canyons with views of Coronado, San Diego Bay, the Pacific Ocean, mountains to the east of the City and hillsides and canyons within the community. Development has been relatively responsive to topography and has produced neighborhoods of winding streets with structures oriented to take advantage of views into canyons, open space and to points outside of the community. Streets, especially in the western portion of the community, provide view corridors to the west. In many areas throughout the community, backyards and side yards consist of or abut canyons and hillsides. These steeper areas have remained free of development and provide smaller open space systems which, although not physically accessible to the general public, do provide visual open space to surrounding residents. Some of the newer residential development is repetitive, however, and has left much of the land absent of vegetation. Barren hillsides and sparse street tree planting are characteristic of many new neighborhoods.

Commercial development in the community is primarily older, small-scale and neighborhood-oriented, with the exception of the shopping center at Woodman Street and Alta View Drive. Many of the sites could be more fully utilized and improved with coordinated design and landscaping. Because of the lack of additional commercial land available, revitalization of these older commercial areas is essential to providing adequate commercial services for the community.

Project First Class was established in 1984 as a comprehensive program of design guidelines, landscape improvements, code enforcement and business development for the Fourth Council District. The proposals presented in the Project First Class Urban Design Program have been incorporated into the design guidelines of this Plan.

OBJECTIVES

1. Ensure that new development is compatible with existing neighborhoods in terms of bulk, scale and design, and that it is sensitive to existing topography.

2. Improve the quality of design of new residential development.

3. Improve the appearance of existing commercial facilities to revitalize existing businesses and stimulate the development of new business.

4. Orient development to encourage interest at the pedestrian scale in order to stimulate pedestrian circulation.

5. Improve the streetscape in the vicinity of parks and recreation centers, public buildings, and high visibility streets in order to provide a sense of identity to activity centers and the routes leading to them.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following urban design guidelines are intended to be applied to all new development and rehabilitation of residential and commercial sites in the Skyline-Paradise Hills community.

RESIDENTIAL GUIDELINES

Building Scale

Height, bulk and scale of buildings are factors which contribute to continuity within development and adaptability to the surrounding environment. If a community is to exhibit physical character and identity, its development must occur with some consideration for how development fits together and works with existing development and landforms.

- New development should be compatible with the scale and character of the surrounding development. Building scale should be related to the prevailing height, bulk and intensity of use in the area, and to the wider effects upon the neighborhood, views and topography.

- The transitions and visual relationships between new and older buildings should be harmonious. A conscious effort to achieve balance and compatibility in design between buildings is needed. This can be accomplished by repeating existing building lines and surface treatment and by gradual transitions in height, bulk and density. Abrupt differences in scale should be avoided.

- Where new buildings are larger than existing structures, large surfaces should be articulated and textured to reduce their apparent size and to reflect the pattern of existing buildings.

- Where lot consolidation takes place, special consideration should be given to adjacent parcels to ensure that new development does not visually overwhelm neighboring areas.

- Building bulk should be controlled through the use of ground level and upper level setbacks, facade variation and architectural features recessed entryways, porches, balconies, bay windows) which serve to break up building facades into smaller-scale visual components. Long continuous building masses that create a wall effect shall be avoided.

- Small courtyard and cluster residences of 15-25 dwelling units are recommended for multifamily residential development.

- Any new development in the R-3000 zone should be low-scale with particular attention paid to the bulk and scale of surrounding development, and to potential view blockage.

Site and Building Design

- In new developments, repetitious use of identical style and type of dwellings should be avoided. Larger projects in particular result in greater visual prominence of development. Using a variety of structures can result in a more interesting appearance, and can also produce a wider range of housing costs. Use of staggered setbacks, varied building heights, widths, shapes, orientations and colors should be incorporated. Protected courtyards, verandas, facades and porches are also encouraged to promote building variety.

- New residential development should be integrated with existing street and sidewalk patterns rather than being designed as an enclave or complex apart from the neighborhood. Sidewalks should be provided along at least one side of all private streets and should link in a clear manner to existing pedestrian and bicycle ways. Sidewalks should be provided between important shared facilities and to important off-site designations such as transit stops.

- The site's design should provide clear, direct relationships between the buildings, streets and the pedestrian circulation system. Buildings should be oriented toward the public street, and each dwelling should visibly relate to the street. Units hidden on the back portion of the site or behind another building should be avoided. Visible street entrances or street-facing courtyards with dwellings entered from the courtyard are encouraged.

- Usable open space should be provided for each unit. This may be in the form of a garden, courtyard, terrace, or roof deck or other space which allows residents to have their own territory outdoors.

- When located on ground level, private open space should be screened from public view by landscaping or privacy fencing.

- Private open space should be oriented to receive good sun penetration and to provide shade in the warm months.

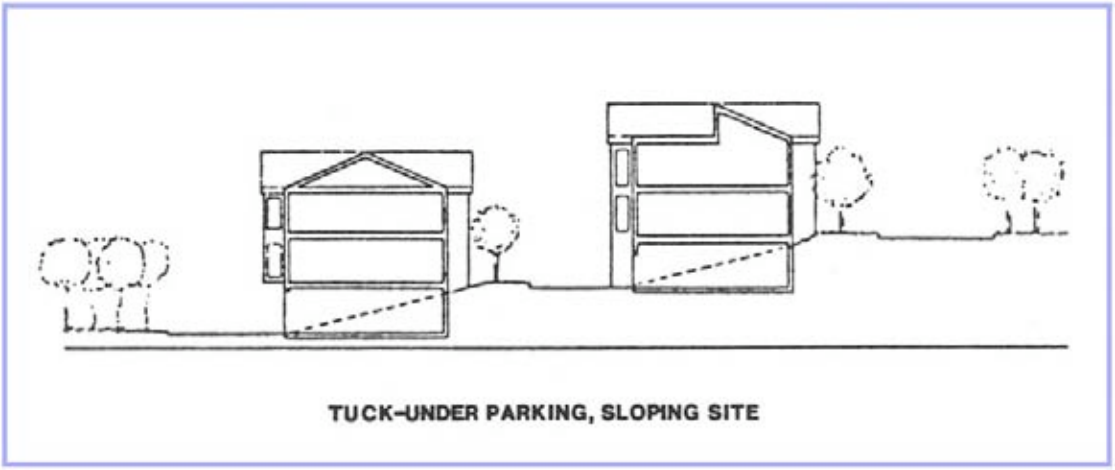
Parking Areas for Residential Development

- Off-street parking areas should be placed in unobtrusive locations and should be designed to minimize their visual impact on the site and the surrounding neighborhood.

- Parking lots should not be placed between the front of a residential building and the street. Consideration should be given to prohibiting parking in the required front and side yard areas.

- For multifamily developments, a portion of the parking area should be enclosed by garages, carports, or trellises. These areas should relate in design and scale to the residential units and should not significantly block views from the street into the development.

- Where appropriate, and subject to design review, parking spaces should be incorporated into the building design using tuck-under parking.



TUCK-UNDER PARKING, SLOPING SITE

- Several small parking areas are preferable to a few large lots.

- Tandem parking spaces (8.5 feet by 35 feet) may be used to reduce the size of paved parking areas and increase open space.

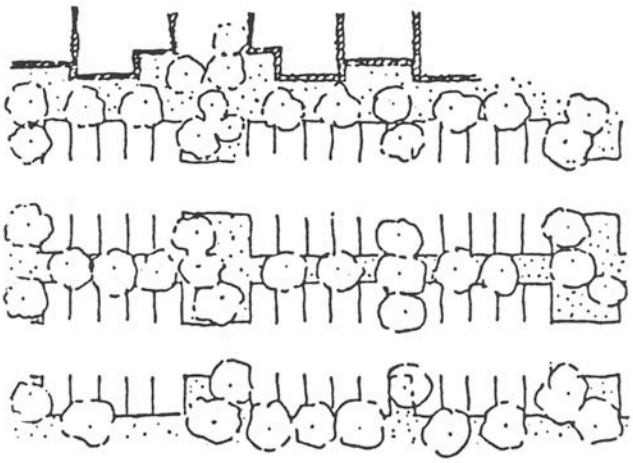
- Trash facilities should be easily accessible and designed to be an integral part of the project.

- Special areas for bicycle parking should be considered.

- Parking lots should not directly abut the building. A landscape and walkway area should be provided between all parking areas and the building.

- Landscaping islands should be provided at regular intervals in parking areas. Tree canopies and patterned paving are encouraged to soften large areas of paving.

- Landscaping should be used to screen parking areas from the street and nearby residences. To allow opportunities for surveillance of parking areas, shrub planting or low walls may be used to partially screen parking while still allowing a line of site into the area.



LANDSCAPED BREAKS IN PARKING AREAS

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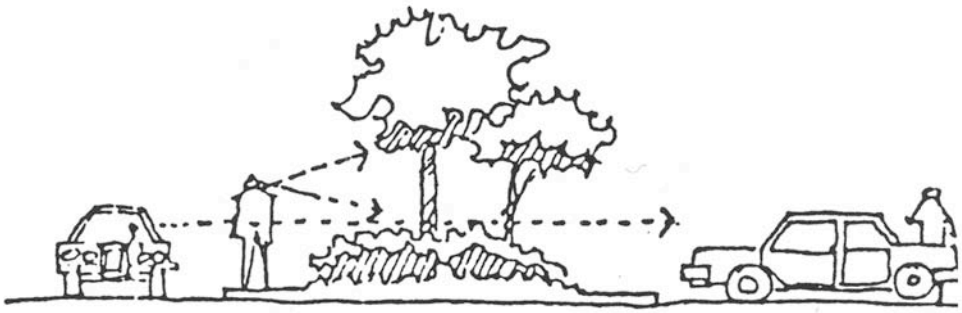


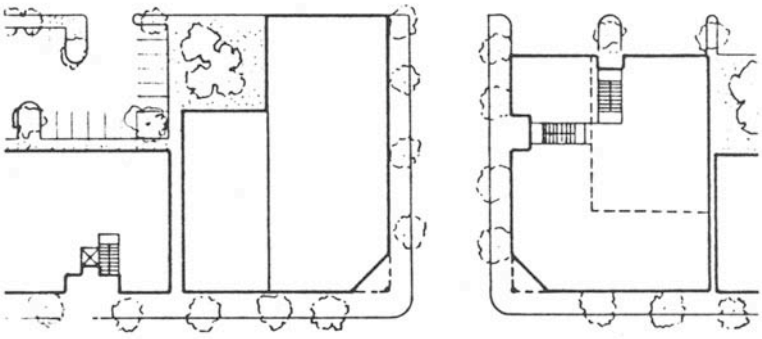
USE SHRUB PLANTING, LOW WALLS, EARTH BERMS AND TREE PLANTINGS TO GIVE EYE LEVEL RELIEF AT PARKING AREAS.

COMMERCIAL GUIDELINES

Site Design and Parking

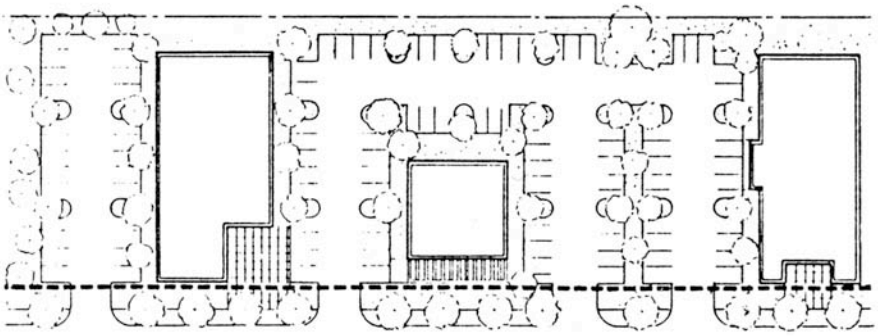
1. In older commercial areas where existing buildings are close to the property line, the following guidelines shall apply.

   a. Buildings should be placed within ten feet of the property line to maintain a consistent street setback pattern and to enhance pedestrian activity.



BUILDINGS AT PROPERTY LINE, PARKING IN REAR

   b. If buildings are set back from the property line, the area between the building and the public right-of-way should be fully landscaped, interrupted only by permitted driveways. Decorative paving may be used to meet a portion of the landscaping requirement.



BUILDINGS SET BACK FROM PROPERTY LINE, PARKING AT SIDES & REAR

   c. Parking lots at the sides or rear of the building should not directly abut buildings. An intervening area of at least five feet should be used for planting or a pedestrian walkway of a different finish material than the parking lot.

d. Where parcels are served by an alley, curb cuts should be limited and the alley should be used for access. This will increase the opportunity for on-street parking, pedestrian circulation and landscaping.

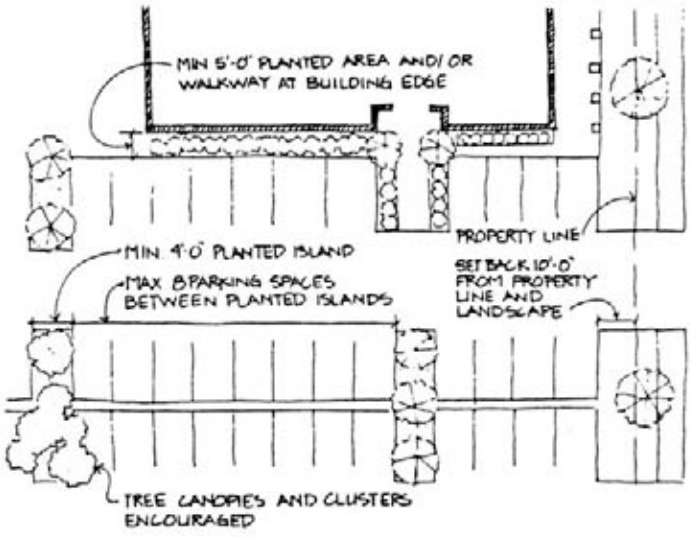
e. Parking lots at the sides of the building should be set back from the public right-of-way at least ten feet with this area fully landscaped.

f. Rows of parking spaces should not be continuous. Landscaped islands should be provided at a minimum of every eight spaces.

g. New development or redevelopment should be pedestrian-oriented. Buildings on shopping streets should develop a transparency with the pedestrian environment of the sidewalk. This will help to avoid blank and solid walls at the sidewalk. Transparency can be accomplished by the use of glass or other transparent materials.

h. Streetscape elements, including widened sidewalks, kiosks, street furniture, street lighting and signage, should be used to enhance the appearance and function of commercial developments. These elements should be compatible with the materials, color and design of the structures and should be planned as a unifying element of the commercial area.

i. Landscaped buffer areas should be provided between commercial and residential uses.



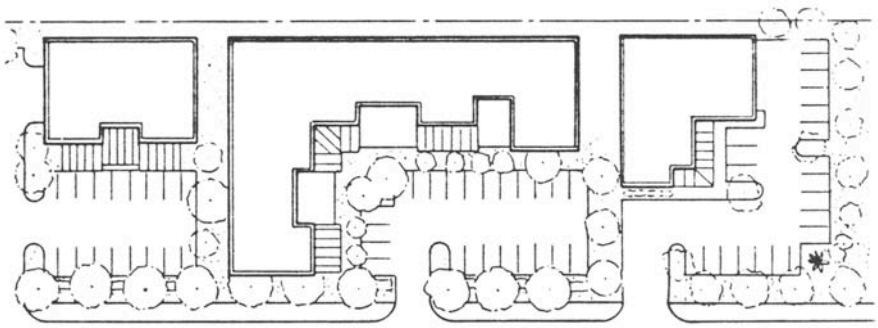
LANDSCAPE GUIDELINES—ALL COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT

2. In larger scale or auto-oriented commercial centers, the following guidelines shall apply:

   a. Parking areas should be set back at least ten feet from the property line and the intervening area fully landscaped.

   b. Any walls or fences should be set back from the property line to permit landscaping between the right-of-way and the wall or fence.

   c. Parking lots should not directly abut the buildings. An intervening area of at least five feet should be used for planting or a pedestrian walkway of a different finish than the parking lot.



AUTO–ORIENTED CENTER, PARKING IN FRONT

   d. Rows of parking spaces should not be continuous. Landscaped islands at least four feet wide should be provided at a minimum interval of every eight spaces.

   e. Streetscape elements including kiosks, walkways, seating areas, lighting and signage should be used to enhance the appearance and function of commercial developments. These elements should be compatible with the materials, color and design of the structures and should be planned as a unifying element of the commercial area.

   f. Landscaped buffer areas should be provided between commercial and residential uses.

GENERAL GUIDELINES

Pedestrian Activity

- Streets should be designed and developed as pleasant places to walk as well as drive. Pedestrian areas should be emphasized through the use of wider sidewalks, benches, pedestrian scale signs, paving materials and landscaping.

- Projects should front on the public street and provide identifiable pedestrian access from the street into the project, even in areas where parking lots are located between the street and the project.

- All pedestrian pathways shall have adequate lighting and signing to provide for the safety of the users.

- Pedestrian linkages should be provided as appropriate between public activity areas including schools, libraries, parks and open space areas, shopping areas and transit stops. Such linkages could be in the form of linear parks, landscaped sidewalks or separate pathways.

Streetscape

- Landscaping should be used to tie buildings and site developments to existing streets and sidewalks, visually anchoring buildings to the larger environment of the neighborhood.

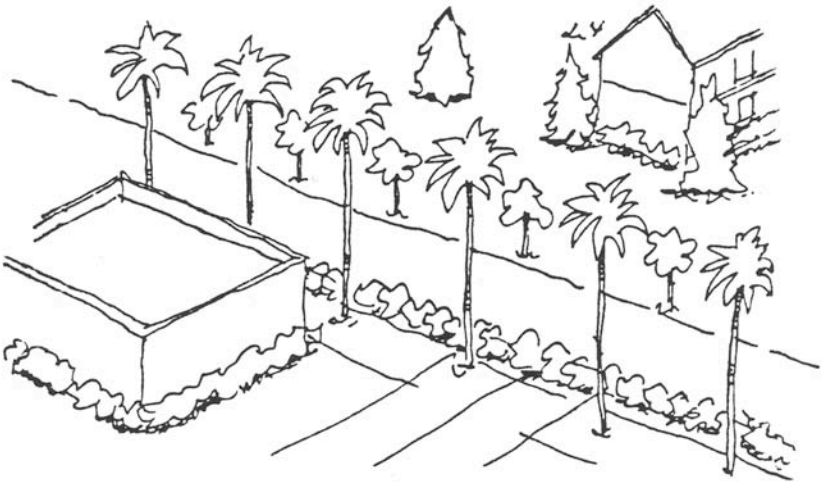
- Landscaping which de-emphasizes turf areas and utilizes native and drought resistant plant materials is encouraged.

- Street development should provide for trees and shrubs along sidewalks as well as median strips and should utilize native or drought resistant plants where possible. Landscaping should be placed in the median strips of streets wherever feasible.

- Curb cuts should be minimized to allow more landscaping and parking along the streets.

- Taller trees or other type of specialized planting program should be used to mark major intersections and to add focus.

- A strong sense of edge along public streets and private streets within planned developments should be developed to spatially define streets. This can be accomplished by the arrangement of street trees near the public right-of-way in a linear pattern. In commercial areas, consistent building setbacks also help define the street.



DEVELOP A STRONG EDGE ALONG MAJOR STREETS

- The five-foot strip between sidewalks and private property lines often creates a maintenance problem, particularly where residences back up to major streets such as Paradise Valley Road. Landscaping and maintenance of these strips will do a great deal to improve the visual quality of the community. A possible funding source for street tree planting in this strip is the Project First Class landscaping program, however, maintenance of the landscaping must be assured by a maintenance district or some other assessment district.

- Leftover small parcels along major streets and freeways should be conveyed to adjacent owners with deed restrictions or some other mechanism to ensure they are maintained as open space.

- All street widenings and related improvements should have quality design standards. The Planning Department should review all CIP projects and a landscape architect should be consulted on an as-needed basis to improve the aesthetic quality and cohesiveness of street improvements.

- Fencing along streets that is used to screen or to enclose private yards should avoid "walling off" the street. Shrubbery, trees, and architectural detailing should be used to add visual interest.

Project First Class Landscape Improvement Program

A comprehensive landscape improvement program for neighborhoods and important street corridors was initiated as part of the Project First Class Urban Design Program (Gerald Gast, AIA, Tectonics, Kercheval and Associates, Inc., and Garrett Eckbo, FASLA, 1985). The program was designed as a joint effort between the City and property owners. An investment of $1,200,000 in Project First Class funds has been targeted for planting improvements in centers of community activity—parks and recreation centers, public buildings and high visibility streets—throughout Council District Four.

The City-funded landscape program is the initial step. It will require the cooperation of private property owners to accomplish a long-range program. Citizens are encouraged to continue the landscape effort with a neighborhood planting program. The establishment of Landscape Maintenance Districts is recommended as a means of funding neighborhood planting. A relatively small tax on property owners has the potential to provide substantial benefits including higher property values as the neighborhood environment appreciates. An alternative to the maintenance district would be owner participation agreements with adjacent owners to assure the maintenance of landscaping placed in the right-of-way.

As part of the landscape program, planting guides should be established for neighborhood areas and important street corridors. Appropriate plant species for each area should be selected based on existing site conditions, existing plant materials and based on the existing or desired character of each area. These species would be recommended for street tree planting to establish landscaping themes providing an element of identification and continuity within the neighborhood areas.

- Centers of community activity such as community parks, libraries and schools should be given priority for special landscaping programs.

- The following streets should be given the highest priority for street planting improvements:

    - Skyline Drive
    - Paradise Valley Road
    - Reo Drive
    - Imperial Avenue

- A community nursery is recommended as an element of the landscape program. The nursery would be a source of plant material for community residents to purchase for their homes. It would be managed for community benefit, employ local youth and enlist volunteer help and retired persons. The nursery could also serve an educational function by developing an arboretum illustrating gardening principles to community members. A joint project with the Park and Recreation Department should be considered. The Department already maintains a large nursery and could administer a community self-serve project, perhaps as a pilot to be used in other areas.

Lighting

- Street lighting should be of different illumination levels to reinforce circulation hierarchy (public roads, private roads, parking areas, pedestrian walkways). Lighting should be designed and located so as to not shine on adjacent properties.

- Where low-level lighting is used, fixtures should be placed so that they do not produce glare. Shatter-proof coverings should be used for all low-level lighting fixtures.

- In addition to walkway lighting, peripheral lighting should be provided for multifamily developments. Peripheral lighting provides security for surveillance of the units and allows residents and visitors to see into their surroundings and determine if passage through an area is safe.

Sign Standards

- Signs should be designed for compatibility with the architecture of surrounding development. Signs should not dominate the streetscape, but blend with it while providing an element of interest.

- Building mounted signs should not project above the roofline.

- Multiple signs within a development should have a standardized format and design for uniformity.

- Freestanding signs should be pedestrian scale. These signs should be appropriately landscaped and lit.

Screening

- Trash receptacles should be screened. Refuse collection areas should be surrounded by a solid wall or fence with a minimum height of four feet or the height of the container, whichever height is greater. A six-foot solid wall or fence should be constructed between the container and any adjoining residentially zoned property. Wherever possible, refuse collection areas shall be directly accessible from alleys. All enclosures should be constructed with finishes and colors that are harmonious to the architectural theme of the primary buildings.

- Service areas and loading docks should be screened. These areas should be located so that they do not create visual clutter or problems with vehicular/pedestrian circulation.

- Berms, bushes or low fencing should be used to screen parking lots that front roadways. If fencing is used, walls should not be continuous; variation of surface relief, materials or posts at regular intervals should be used and fencing should not be over four feet in height to allow for protective surveillance.

- Rooftop mechanical equipment should be screened to protect existing and future views from hillside developments.

Designing for Defensible Space

The concept of territorial and defensible space should be considered in designing public and private improvements. This is accomplished without the building of fortresses and is successful when a potential offender perceives that he is intruding on the domain of another, and that he will be noticed if he intrudes. He is then more likely to be deterred from criminal behavior. The neighborhood watch program successfully uses this premise.

- Buildings and grounds should be designed to be self-policing so that residents may participate in its security.

- Smaller-scale courtyard developments are encouraged, as they are easier to self-police than large complexes.

- Windows should be positioned to allow residents to easily watch public spaces, parking areas and entrances to dwellings.

- Common open spaces and entryways should be visible from the street allowing clear vision by neighbors and law enforcement officers.

- Sidewalks or paths should be located between parking areas and residences, and between the street and residences to allow natural surveillance over the entire path.

- Night lighting along walkways, streets and at parking lots should be provided by using fixtures that will shape and deflect light into a layer close to the ground. This will place light where it is needed most and reduce interference with windows.

- Parking areas may be buffered from the street with planting while allowing for surveillance if low shrubs and ground covers are used.

- Residences should be separated, by physical barriers or distance, from possible crime generators such as bars, adult entertainment establishments, etc.

- Residences should be separated, by physical barriers or distance, from region-serving facilities which generate large volumes of pedestrian and vehicle traffic, such as post offices, regional high schools, shopping centers, hospitals, health clinics and community park and recreation centers.

- If security fencing is used, attention should be given to its design. Fencing should be an attractive architectural feature of a project and should be graffiti-resistant, such as in the use of wrought iron fences integrated into the overall design of the project.

- For buildings fronting a public street, two means of providing a street entrance are encouraged:

    1. Through a street-facing courtyard, with dwelling units entered from the courtyard.

    2. Through visible street entrances.

Both configurations have proven to be the best means of providing security to sidewalks and building entrances through natural surveillance opportunities.

Hillside and Slope Development

- The community's natural base of hillsides, canyons, ravines, streams and vegetation is an important set of assets that should be protected in new development. Site plans should utilize existing topography and preserve existing vegetation, ravines, watercourses and topographic features.

- Due to the high visibility of sloping sites, views of the slopes from surrounding neighborhoods and public rights-of-way should be given strong consideration. Buildings located near hillside rims should be sited in a staggered arrangement and screened with planting to avoid a wall effect. Large expanses of flat areas such as parking lots should be avoided. Multiple small parking lots are preferable.

- The treatment of rooftops should be varied on sloping sites, rather than consisting of extended horizontal lines. Rooflines should be used to emphasize the variety in shape and flowing character of the hillside instead of masking it.

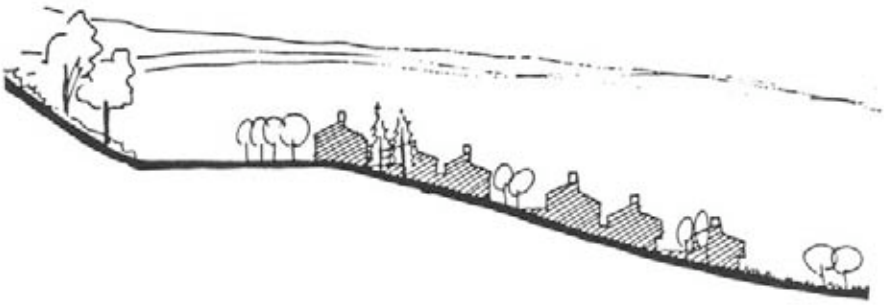
- Planned residential development permits are recommended in areas where the natural slope is 25 percent or greater.

- As has already been done in many of the neighborhoods of Skyline-Paradise Hills, housing should be designed to fit into the hillside, complementing the land's natural character, rather than altering the hillside to fit the structure.

- The need for excessive level areas should be minimized through the use of multi-level structures and split-level roads.

SPLIT LEVEL ROADS CAN REDUCE SITE DISTURBANCE

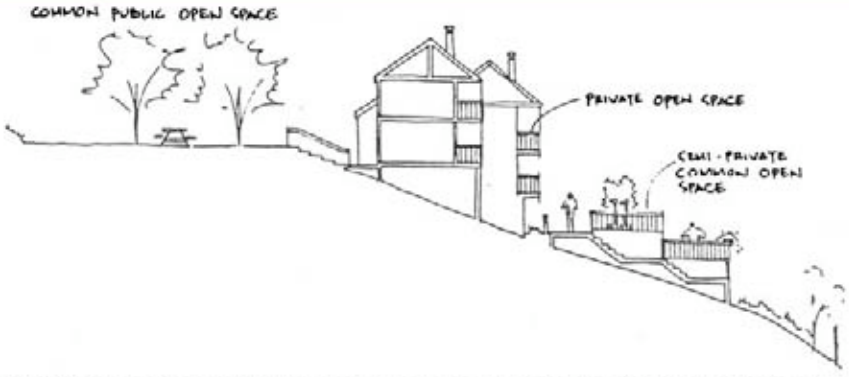
- Street alignments should follow existing natural contours. Street width should be kept to a minimum to avoid wide graded areas. Curvilinear designs, split-level roadways and one-way streets may be employed to minimize disturbance of the site.



PRESERVE THE INHERENT CHARACTERISTICS OF SLOPING SITES

- Graded slopes should be shaped to conform to existing landforms. Building sites should be graded so that they appear to emerge from the slope. Slopes with a gradient of 25 percent or more should minimize flat areas. If slab-on-grade construction is necessary, building floor elevations should be staggered.

- Building and architectural techniques other than preparation of standard pads or cut and fill grading should be used on sloping sites. Buildings should be sited to minimize the requirement for high retaining walls or extensive cut and fill. Structures should minimize the use of continuous footings and follow the natural slope of the land. Buildings on sloped sites of ten percent or more should step with the grade at regular intervals.



SLOPING SITES OFFER SPECIAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR OUTDOOR LIVING SPACES

- Site design should adapt to the existing natural drainage system and should not alter surface runoff and water table conditions. It should not impose drainage problems on neighboring properties, nor should it increase the potential for soil erosion.

- Existing vegetation should be preserved as much as possible. Areas that have been disturbed by construction should be revegetated with drought tolerant plant materials. New landscaping should employ species similar in scale at maturity to adjacent landscaping and natural vegetation. Landscaping adjacent to natural canyons or open areas should be selected to be fire retardant while still being sensitive to impacts on active vegetation.