

3. Urban Form

3.1 LANDFORM AND NATURAL FEATURES

Landform and natural features largely characterize Mission Valley and contribute to a sense of place. As shown in Figure 3-1, Mission Valley is characterized by steep hills located on the north and south edges of the Planning Area. These hills slope toward the San Diego River, which flows from east to west through the center of the Planning Area, before it empties into the Pacific Ocean. The San Diego River's full potential as a natural linkage for the community, a recreational and open space corridor, and a pedestrian and bicycle connection, has not yet been fully realized.



The San Diego River flows from east to west through Mission Valley before it empties into the Pacific Ocean. It is a distinctive feature of the Planning Area.

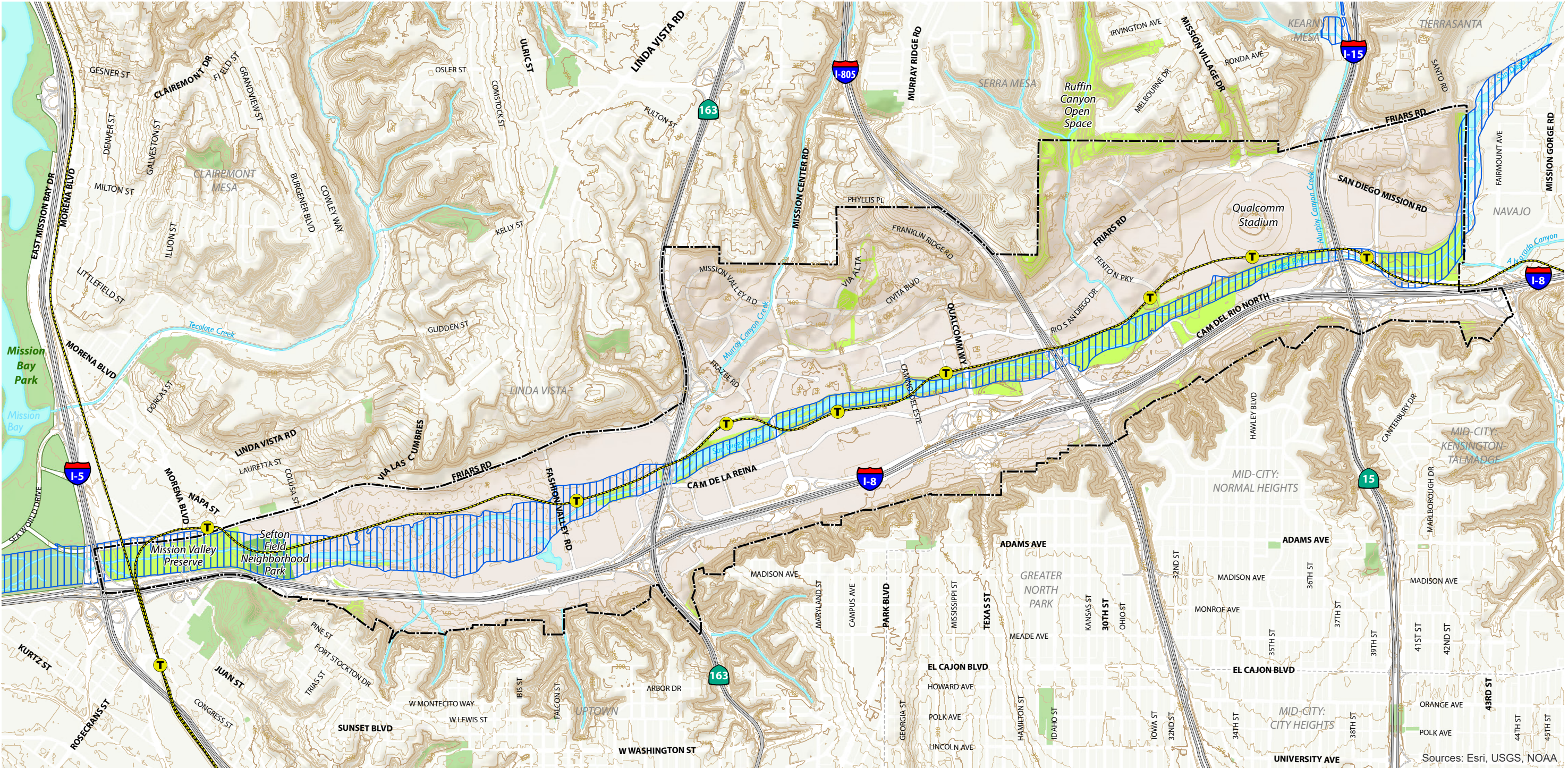


As this view of Mission Valley illustrates, the Planning Area is characterized by its topography.



Steep hills on the southern edge of the Planning Area.

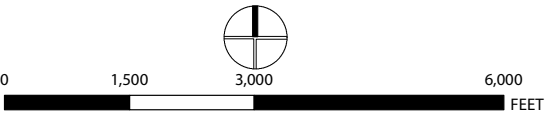
Figure 3-1: Topography and Natural Features



- | | | | |
|---------------|----------------------|-----------------------------------|--|
| Trolley Stops | 50 ft Contours | Floodways | Mission Valley Community Plan Boundary |
| Light Rail | 10 ft Contours | Existing Neighborhood Park | Community Planning Areas |
| Freeways | River, Creek, Stream | Existing Open Space/Natural Areas | |
| Ramps | Lakes/Ponds/Bays | | |

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3.2 STREETS, BLOCKS, AND LOTS

Streets and Highways

Highways

Several highways cross Mission Valley and shape its urban form, as shown in Figure 3-2. They are, from west to east, as follows:

- I-5;
- I-8;
- SR 163, also known as the Cabrillo Highway;
- I-805; and
- I-15.

Other than I-805, which travels over Mission Valley on the Mission Valley Viaduct, these highways present significant obstacles to connectivity in the Planning Area. Moreover, Interstates 5, 15, 805 and State Road 163, despite their north-south alignment, do not provide significant north-south connections within the Planning Area.

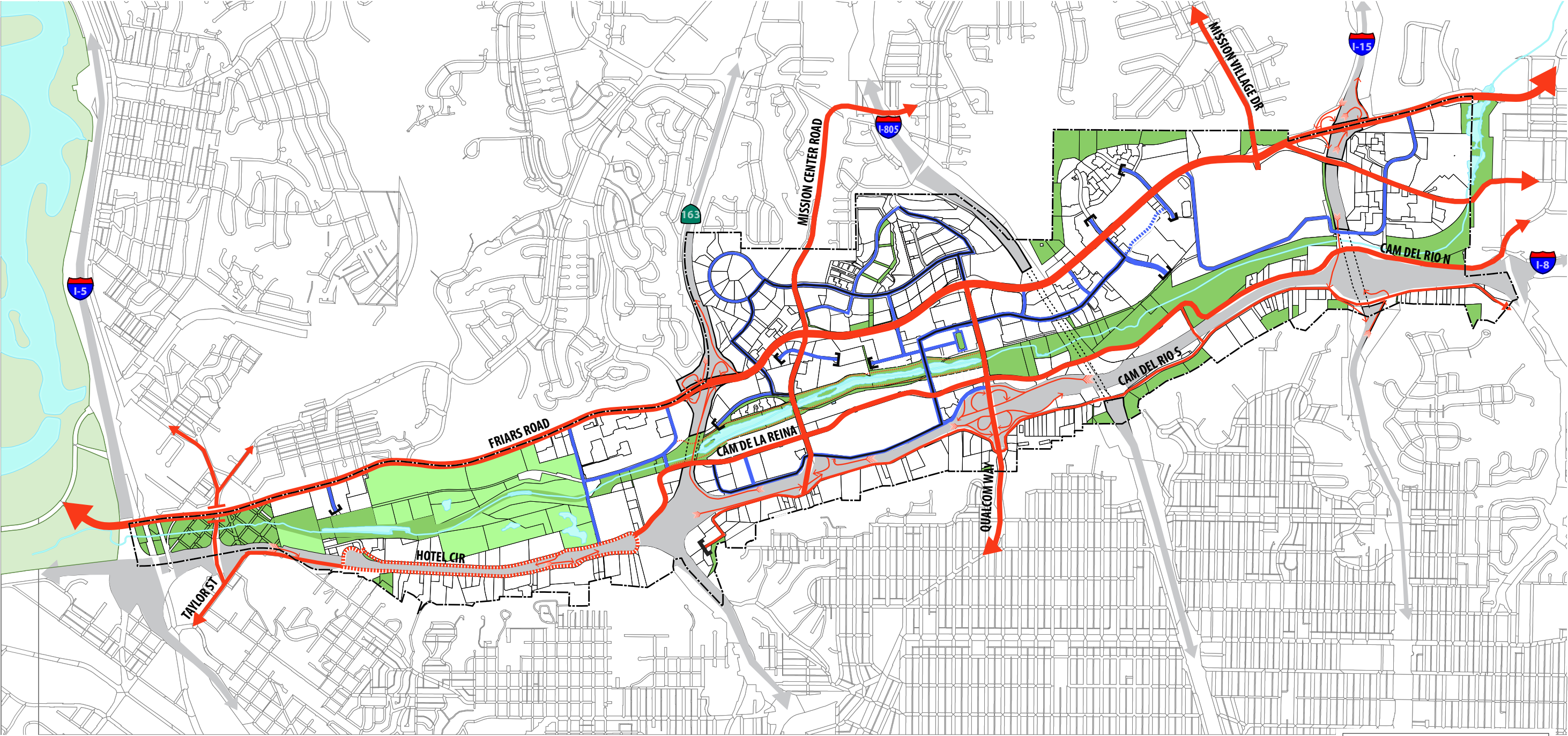
Primary Street Network

Mission Valley's primary street network is depicted in Figure 3-2. Two main streets cross Mission Valley in the north-south direction: Mission Center Road and Qualcomm Way. Neither of these streets traverses the entirety of Mission Valley. Friars Road and Camino de la Reina/Camino del Rio North are the two main streets that traverse Mission Valley in the east-west direction. These are the only two streets that connect the east and west portions of Mission Valley, which are physically separated by SR 163. Friars Road provides access to large, residential developments in the north as well as the main highways in the Planning Area. Camino de la Reina links Hotel Circle and Taylor Street in the west with the Grantville area to the east.

Secondary Street Network

Mission Valley's secondary street network, depicted in Figure 3-2, provides access to and between individual developments in the Planning Area. The network includes many cul-de-sacs and loops, which do not allow a fluidity of movement across Mission Valley's neighborhoods. This street pattern also exerts pressure on the primary street network. A connective system of secondary streets does exist in portions of the commun

Figure 3-2: Streets and Highways

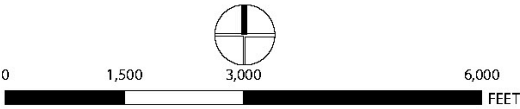


- Primary Streets
- Secondary Streets
- Highways

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Blocks and Lots

In general, Mission Valley’s blocks are large in size and intended to be traversed by automobile. Four types of blocks found in Mission Valley are described below and depicted in Figures 3-3 and 3-4.

“Super” blocks are situated mostly north of the San Diego River. These blocks are primarily associated with large scale-auto-oriented uses and offer limited interconnectivity to surrounding blocks. They typically have one means of entrance and egress, as well as limited internal connectivity. While blocks within the Civita development are shown in this category, more fine grained connectivity, via private streets that are open to vehicles and pedestrians, is being developed.

“Mono-oriented” blocks are generally located along the I-8 corridor and along the southern slopes of Mission Valley. These blocks are accessible from only one frontage. A row of long and narrow lots is typically located within these blocks.

“Mixed” blocks are generally located in the center of Mission Valley. These blocks host a variety of uses. Notably, these blocks are partially divided by dead end streets. They do not provide an efficient secondary street network.

“Urban” blocks are few in number and generally located adjacent to the San Diego River. These blocks are more compact than the blocks described above and provide a more gridded circulation network. These blocks are more permeable and navigable by individuals utilizing a variety of transportation modes (e.g., pedestrians, bicycle, transit, automobile). In many cases, internal circulation is only for pedestrians and bikes; the network of actual streets remains limited.

Figure 3-3: Block Pattern Detail

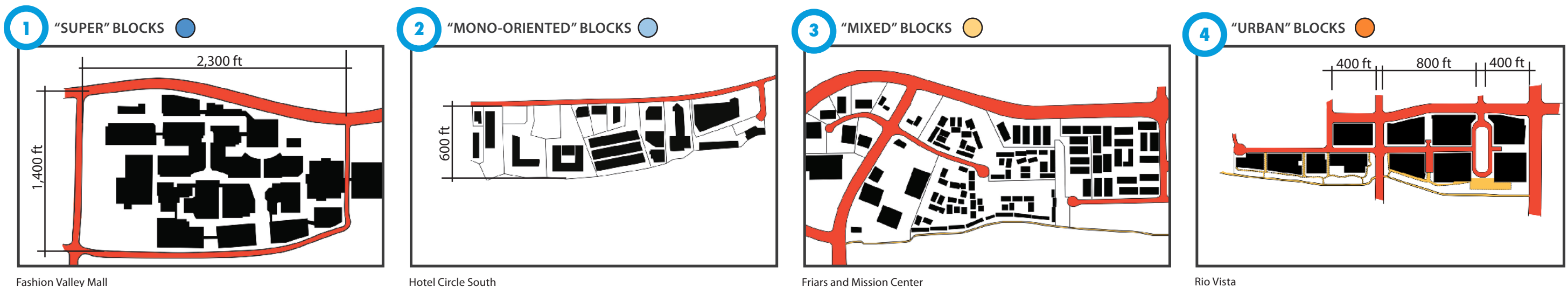
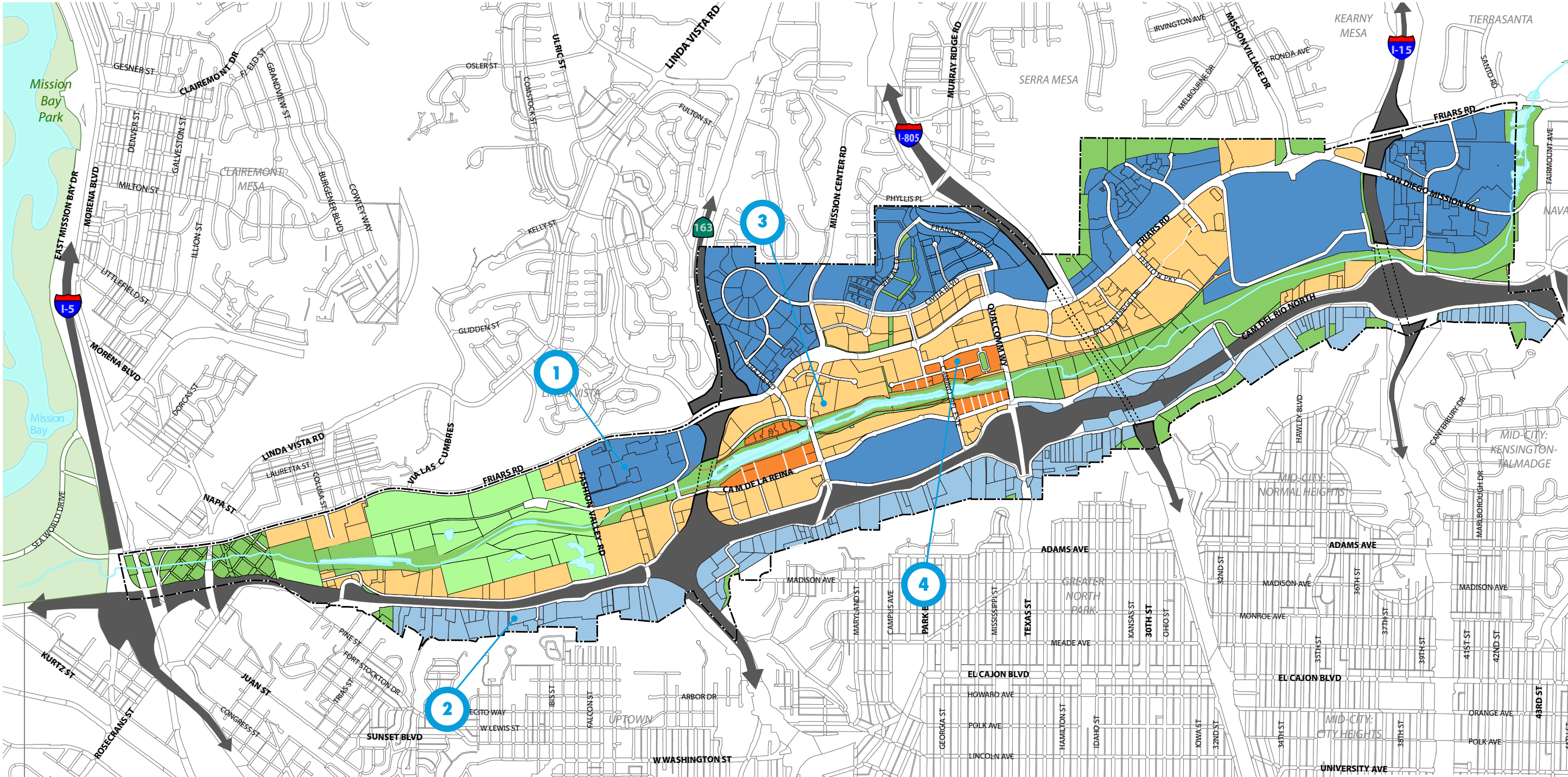






Figure 3-4: Streets, Blocks, and Block Patterns







-  Lots



 "Super" Block

 "Mono Oriented" Block

 "Mixed" Block

 "Urban" Block
-  Open Space / Natural Area

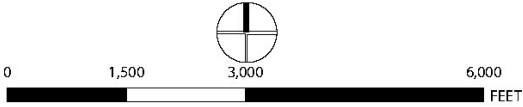
 Golf Area
-  Main Pedestrian Path

 Bridge Infrastructure
-  Infrastructure Footprint / Obstacle

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3.3 BUILDINGS

Residential

Residential buildings in Mission Valley are diverse in their design and layout. While nearly all residential buildings in Mission Valley are multifamily, the community still offers a range of building types, including townhomes, stacked flats, garden apartments, and podium buildings.

- **Townhomes** typically provide parking in the rear. Parking may be accessed from an alley, and/or arranged in a motor court. They are typically two stories high and dwelling units share demising walls.
- **Stacked Flats** often take the form of townhomes, but with single-story dwelling units that are stacked.
- **Garden Apartments** are two- or three-story walk-up buildings with a combination of surface and tuck-under garage parking. Dwelling units are stacked with shared stairs, elevators and walkways.
- **Podium buildings** include structured parking either below or above grade with residential units above. These are larger multifamily complexes and may range in height from three to five stories.

As shown in Figure 3-5, 70 percent of residential units in the community were built after 1980. Most residential buildings in Mission Valley are also constructed of wood and range in height from two to five stories. Complexes typically provide common open space and amenities, such as a pool, gymnasium, community lounge and playground. Several residential communities are gated or have controlled access. Often, this results in a design that focuses inward and places the backs of buildings and parking areas toward public streets. There are exceptions to this condition, particularly in more recent developments, such as Civita and The Promenade at Rio Vista.

Many residential buildings in Mission Valley use cement plaster (stucco) as the building finish, often giving residential communities a Spanish Colonial or Mediterranean style. Recent developments offer a contemporary aesthetic with a greater mix of materials and colors on the facades of buildings.

Mixed Use

Mission Valley has a few examples of mixed-use developments. These often include a mix of residential, commercial retail, office, and hotel. Developments are mixed both vertically (as in the Promenade at Rio Vista) or horizontally (as in Friars Mission Center). A hybrid of the two approaches is seen in Hazard Center, which includes retail with office and hotel in both vertical and horizontal formats.

Residential



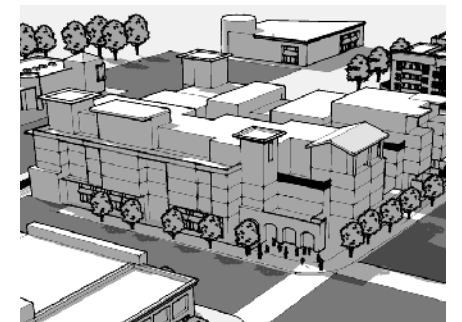
Townhomes



Stacked Flats



Garden Apartments



Podium

Mixed Use

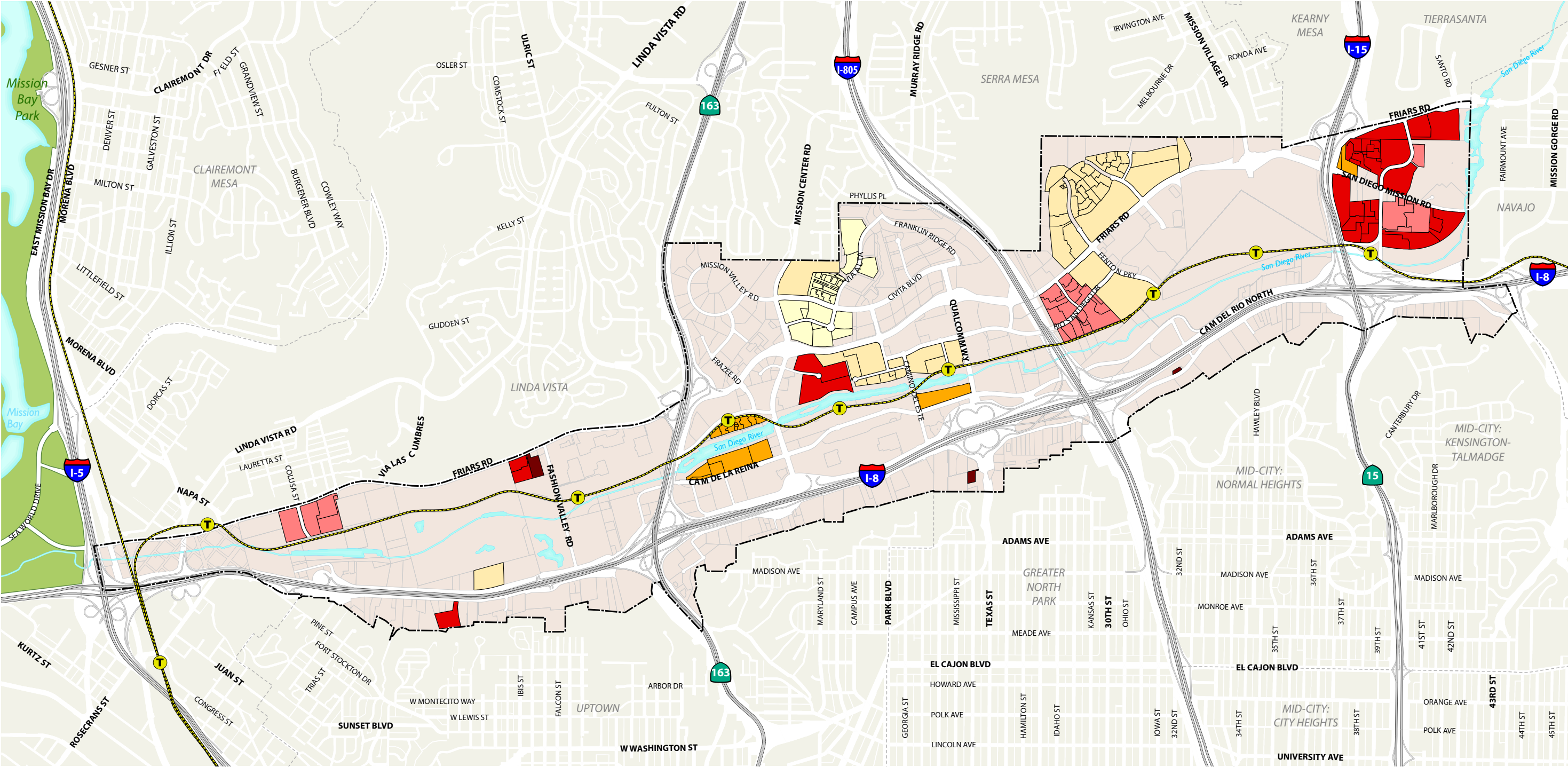


Vertical Mixed-Use



Horizontal Mixed-Use

Figure 3-5: Residential Building Age



T

Trolley Stops

Light Rail

Freeways

Ramps

Building Age

Before 1970

1970 - 1979

1980 - 1989

1990 - 1999

2000 - 2010

After 2010

Study Area Parcels

Mission Valley Community Plan Boundary

Community Planning Areas

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Hotel/Motel/Resort

Hotels in Mission Valley are predominantly focused along the I-8 corridor and Hotel Circle, with good visibility from the highway. They range in scale from two-story motels to mid-rise and high-rise buildings. Older hotels, such as the Town and Country, were designed as resorts for vacationers and for conferences, while more recent hotels target a business crowd.

Industrial/Warehouse

Industrial buildings and warehouses are a limited land use in Mission Valley, and where they exist, are typically storage facilities. The building type is characterized by tilt-up concrete and metal frame buildings with long, expansive bays and flat roofs. They are often surrounded by access drives and alleys and exist at the edges of the community, adjacent to highways.

Special Use

A number of buildings in the Mission Valley stand apart as a special and singular use that is not prevalent in the community and acts as a landmark for the community. These include churches, Mission San Diego de Alcalá, Qualcomm Stadium, and others. Buildings in this category are designed for a specific and unique use and therefore take on a “one-of-a-kind” appearance that makes them icons in the community.

Auto-Oriented Service

Mission Valley is home to several auto-oriented and service businesses, and these are typically represented by a unique building type that is designed for that use. Most often, buildings in this category are focused along the I-8 corridor with good visibility from the highway. Signage is a key component of the building as well as colors and forms designed to attract the attention of fast-moving traffic.

Office

Mission Valley is a major employment center for the region, with office buildings distributed throughout the community. Office buildings include three predominant types: mid-rise and high-rise complexes along Camino del Rio North and Friars Road; two- and three- story “walk-ups” along the edge of the canyon on Camino del Rio South; and business parks, predominantly focused off Mission Center Road.

Commercial Retail

Retail use in Mission Valley is represented by three predominant building types. Strip commercial centers are characterized by “big box” buildings set back behind surface parking lots and with in-line shops. Shopping malls are characterized by anchor stores (such as large department stores) and internal circulation. A third type is smaller-scale retail in a mixed-use format.

3.4 URBAN FORM

As shown in Figure 3-6, freeway infrastructure and steep, undevelopable slopes on the northern and southern boundaries play a big role in defining Mission Valley. These create challenges to connectivity in the Planning Area.

There are distinct districts within Mission Valley. These are defined by their use characteristics—shopping, recreation, hotels, residential areas—as well as by their location in Mission Valley. In general, residential and office uses are situated in the areas of the Planning Area with steeper slopes. Shopping and recreational districts are generally located in the flatter valley basin.

Important street crossings create “nodes” in Mission Valley; these may be the clearest reference points for people who live, work, and visit the area. Although the trolley links active districts, points of interest, and landmarks, trolley stations tend to be under-performing as drivers of nodal activity.

Hotel/Motel/Resort



High-Rise/ Highway Oriented



Mid-Rise/ Business Oriented

Office



Business Park



High-Rise Tower

Commercial Retail



Shopping Mall



Strip Center

Figure 3-6: Urban Form

