



# COLLEGE AREA COMMUNITY PLAN UPDATE

DEVELOPMENT TYPOLOGY REPORT **DRAFT FOR DISCUSSION**

JULY 2021



**citythinkers**  
URBAN DESIGN + PLANNING

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# 01.

## INTRODUCTION

The City of San Diego is in the process of updating the community plan for the College Area. The College Area is projected to grow and change in the years ahead, and the plan update should guide that change in a way that serves city and regional goals while enhancing quality of life and the vision of the community.

This Workbook presents the College Area from a building and development typology perspective. Typology analysis is a visual and written description and documentation of the range of different existing and potential buildings for a given area.

This workbook builds on detailed existing conditions analysis, a community atlas and issues and opportunities report prepared during the first phase of the Plan Update to identify key issues and opportunities.

This Workbook sets the stage for further analysis of development, urban design and public realm opportunities in the community, focused on:

- Existing Building Types visible in the community today
- Potential Place Types focused on the nodes, corridors and neighborhoods of the community
- Site Analysis and Development Feasibility

This workbook presents a range of building and development types for the College Area



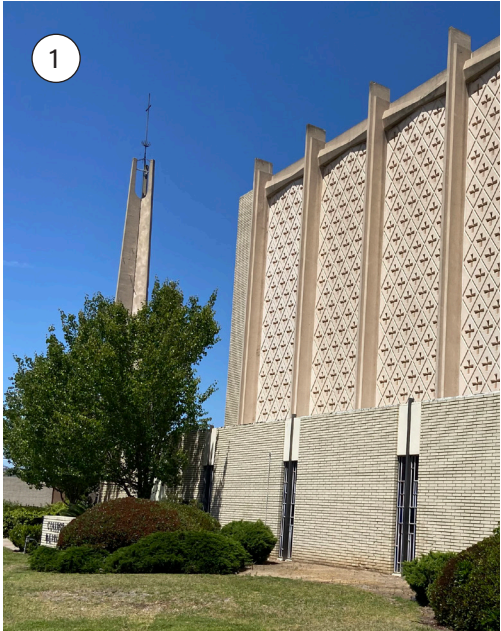


# 02.

## EXISTING BUILDING TYPES

A rich diversity of buildings exist in the College Area today. From residential to commercial, institutional and service uses, the community’s buildings span a range of uses and architectural styles that altogether support a vibrant community. Institutional buildings include churches, libraries, medical clinics, a hospital, schools and one of our region’s major universities. Most institutional buildings can be seen as landmarks in the community, some iconic and others as community anchors that blend into the fabric of the neighborhood. San Diego State University stands out as a campus of institutional buildings, with a unique identity and sense of place. As the commercial corridors of the community have developed over time, one sees at least three patterns of development. Older commercial buildings follow a traditional “Main Street” pattern of development with storefronts that engage directly with the street. Newer commercial buildings are often found in commercial centers, with buildings set behind parking lots. Finally, residential buildings span the gamut from low density to high density, single-family homes to high-rise apartments.





# INSTITUTIONAL CAMPUSES + LANDMARKS

A diversity of institutional buildings representing a variety of uses anchor the neighborhoods around them and enrich the image of the community. Perhaps most noticeable, the SDSU campus marks a key gateway into the community from the north with multiple institutional buildings clustered within and on the edges of the campus. The distinct Mission Revival architecture of the campus sets a tone for that part of the community.

To the west, the Family Health Center and Blessed Sacrament Catholic Church emphasize a sense of arrival to the College Area Business District. And along some of the key corridors and within neighborhoods, institutional buildings, such as The College Avenue Baptist Church, College Rolando Branch Library and the Language Academy, are examples of key institutional buildings in the area. Often due to their civic uses, institutional buildings have distinctive architecture which makes them stand out as landmarks in the urban environment.

- ① CHURCH
- ② SCHOOL
- ③ CHURCH
- ④ MEDICAL CLINIC
- ⑤ CAMPUS





# COMMERCIAL

## STOREFRONT, STRIP CENTER + MIXED-USE

Commercial buildings in the community can be grouped into three categories: storefronts, commercial centers and mixed-use/ mixed-format. Commercial storefronts follow a traditional “Main Street” pattern of development, with shop windows adjacent to, facing and opening up to the street. This traditional pattern is often associated with older development along El Cajon Blvd. and supports high pedestrian activity and walkability as the building activates and enriches the street environment. Commercial centers represent an automobile oriented development pattern typical of newer, suburban development. Stores face and open up to a parking area and access is predominantly from the automobile with little to no pedestrian activity. A few buildings in the area do not fit into either of the previous categories and may be called “mixed” as they either provide a mix of uses or they combine automobile focused centers with walk-up storefront retail on their periphery.



- 1 STOREFRONT
- 2 COMMERCIAL CENTER
- 3 MIXED FORMAT







# RESIDENTIAL

## SINGLE-FAMILY, MULTIPLEX, TOWNHOMES, WALK-UPS, TUCK-UNDER, WRAP, PODIUM + HIGH-RISE

The College Area Community houses a rich diversity of residential building types, with varying densities, architectural styles and construction types. From single-family homes that snake around the many canyons of the community to the high-rise towers that house students on the SDSU campus, residential buildings in the community span a broad range of housing types. Large apartment blocks exist along Montezuma Rd., Collwood Blvd., College Ave. and El Cajon Blvd. Many offer amenities, such as pools, fitness centers and green play areas. Parking is provided within a structure (either below or above ground or tucked under the building). A few examples of mixed-use commercial/ residential buildings are visible near the SDSU campus and on El Cajon Blvd. Most residential buildings are wood construction, with a few concrete/ steel high rises near or on the campus.

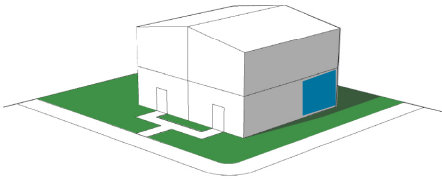
Among residential uses, multi-family housing stands out because it often conforms to easily identifiable and accepted building types and conventions. The following page (page 8) illustrates a palette of the most prevalent typologies seen among multi-family buildings. Most of these typologies exist in the community today, and all represent the range of options the community has for future development of multi-family buildings in the coming decades.

- 1 SINGLE-FAMILY
- 2 WALK-UPS
- 3 HIGH-RISE
- 4 MID-RISE
- 5 PODIUM
- 6 TUCK-UNDER
- 7 COURTYARD
- 8 A DIVERSITY OF RESIDENTIAL BUILDINGS NEAR SDSU



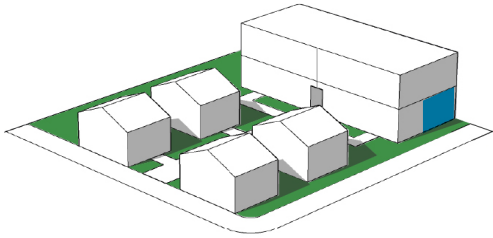
MULTI-PLEX

Two to eight walk-up units within a single building of a scale and architecture that matches a large single-family home or grouping of homes. Parking is often provided off a shared driveway and garage.



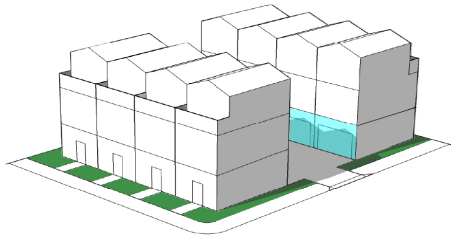
BUNGALOW COURT

A grouping of four to twelve small, walk-up “bungalow-style” units clustered around a shared entry court. Parking is provided off an alley or side driveway and each unit typically has its own patio/entry porch.



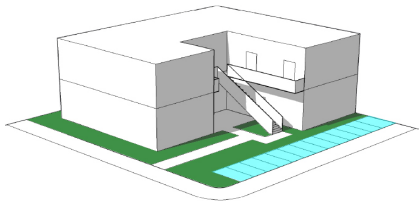
ROWHOME/TOWNHOME

A row of homes grouped side by side with shared demising walls. Parking is provided off an alley or side driveway in individual garages. Typically three stories, with the entry and garage on the first floor, living space on the second floor and sleeping areas on the third floor.



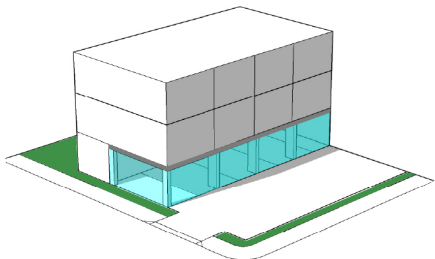
WALK-UP

Two to three story apartment buildings served by shared corridors and stairs in clusters of four to eight units. Parking is provided primarily on surface lots and with some individual garage bays. Only possible on larger sites.



TUCK-UNDER

Stacked flats/ apartments with open parking tucked under the residential units on the rear of the site, typically off a shared driveway.

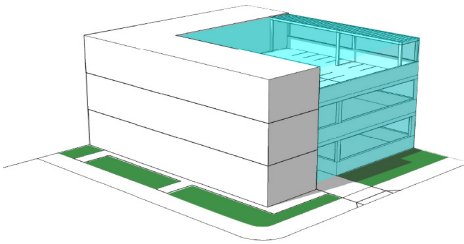


MULTI-FAMILY  
COMMON BUILDING  
TYPOLOGIES

PARKING

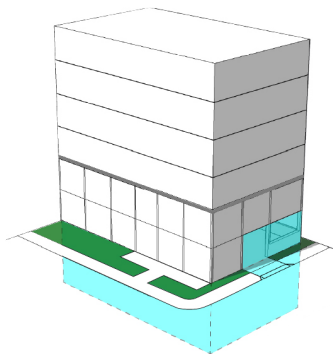
WRAP

Four to eight story apartment building that “wraps” an above-ground parking structure. Circulation is typically provided through interior elevators and corridors with amenities on the top deck of the parking structure. Only possible on larger sites.



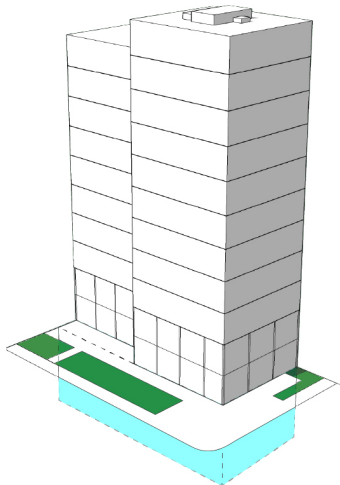
PODIUM MID-RISE

Five to seven story apartment building with internal elevators and circulation. Parking is provided in a structure below or above ground with housing above a concrete ground floor or “podium.” Achieves high densities but is not classified as a high-rise. Suitable for mixed-use.



HIGH-RISE

Greater than eight stories with internal elevators and circulation. Parking is provided in structures below and above ground. Typically highly amenitized and achieve high densities on a smaller footprint.





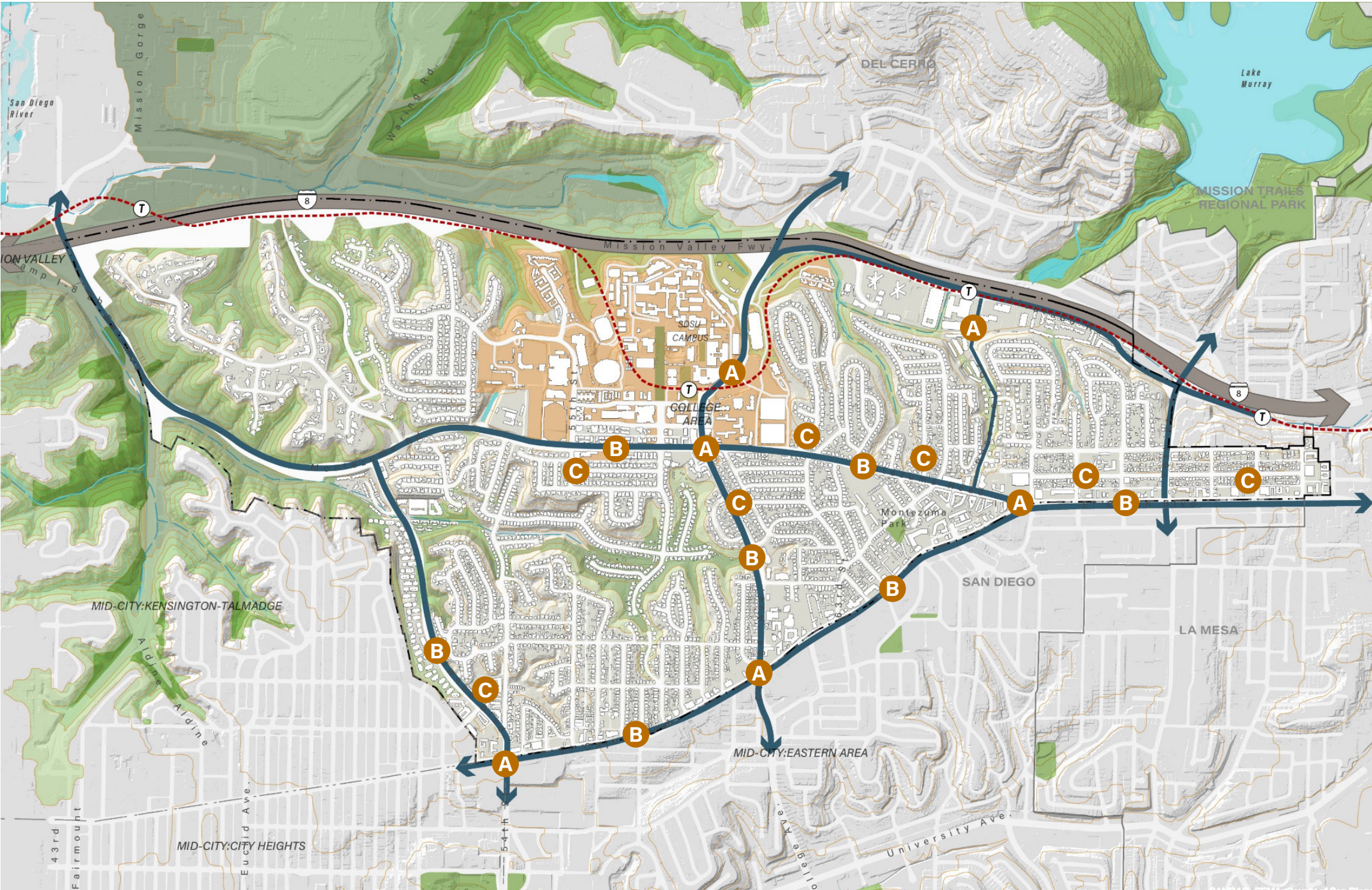
# 03.

## PLACE TYPES

Three types of places are evident in the community: Nodes, Corridors and Transitions. Nodes are central focal points of activity and intensity, such as major intersections or a clustering of buildings and uses in the community. Corridors are the primary circulation thoroughfares in the community where a linear concentration of commercial and mixed-use residential uses exist in the area. Transitions are the areas abutting nodes and corridors where neighborhood services and multi-family uses are located.

The following pages illustrate some of the key opportunities to explore for each of these place types in the community.

- A** NODES
- B** CORRIDORS
- C** TRANSITIONS





# NODE

The community has several important nodes. Nodes are focal points of activity and intensity. These can be a major intersection in the community (such as Montezuma Rd. and College Ave. or El Cajon Blvd. and Collwood Blvd.) or an area with existing high density uses (such as the SDSU campus or the area where Montezuma Rd. and El Cajon Blvd. meet).

Nodes offer an opportunity to focus development in a centralized way, such that activities, buildings, public spaces and even public art and signage all come together to form a sense of place and a distinct point of attraction in the community. Key elements typically seen in nodes include street trees, widened sidewalks with cafe seating, entry and corner plazas, and building forms (such as tower elements or rounded corners) that mark a focal point.

- 1 STREET TREES
- 2 WIDENED SIDEWALKS
- 3 ENHANCED BUILDING CORNERS
- 4 TERRACES
- 5 STROREFRONTS



CONCEPTUAL ILLUSTRATION EXAMPLE OF A NODE



VIEW LOOKING SOUTHWEST ON EL CAJON BLVD. AT COLLEGE AVE.



VIEW LOOKING WEST AT MONTEZUMA RD. AND COLLEGE AVE.



VIEW LOOKING AT EL CAJON BLVD. AND MONTEZUMA RD.

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# CORRIDOR

Key corridors in the community (such as El Cajon Blvd., College Ave., Montezuma Rd., and Collwood Blvd.) traverse the entire community and provide not only circulation access to and through the area but also make up much of the land area used for multi-family housing and commercial uses in the community. As such, corridors offer great potential for new development in the community, particularly, with a mix of uses and greater activation of the street and public spaces.

Corridor development provides an opportunity to enhance the streetscape environment with widened sidewalks, street trees, new lighting, active storefronts, pedestrian plazas and terraces that look out on to the street. Over time, a consistent pattern of development will reinforce the corridor by building the active edges or “streetwall” of the street.

- 1 STREET TREES
- 2 WIDENED SIDEWALKS
- 3 ARCADES AND ENTRY PLAZAS
- 4 SIDEWALK CAFES
- 5 BUILDING FORMS THAT MARK THE CORNER



CONCEPTUAL ILLUSTRATION EXAMPLE OF A CORRIDOR



EL CAJON BLVD. LOOKING EAST AT 54TH ST.  
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MONTEZUMA RD. LOOKING WEST FROM EL CAJON BLVD.



EL CAJON BLVD. LOOKING WEST AT 68TH ST.

*All Illustrations are shown to communicate concepts and do not represent a land use or development proposal*



# TRANSITIONS

The community has several pleasant and walkable residential neighborhoods that are either facing or directly behind the main commercial corridors of the community. A mix of low-scale, single and multi-family housing exists in many of these areas.

The traditional block and lot patterns of the neighborhoods adjacent to the main corridors of the community provide an opportunity to establish transitions in building height and scale from the more intense and mixed-use corridors (such as El Cajon Blvd.) and the predominantly single-family neighborhoods behind them.

Some of the key elements to consider in these areas include the addition of street trees, non-contiguous sidewalks (sidewalks with a landscape strip or “buffer” between the curb and the walking path), a mix of low-scale townhomes and walk-up units with a variety of heights and roof forms, and a mix of porches, stoops, patios and other street front elements that activate and enrich the pedestrian environment.



CONCEPTUAL ILLUSTRATION EXAMPLE OF A TRANSITION AREA

- 1 STREET TREES
- 2 NON-CONTIGUOUS SIDEWALKS
- 3 FRONT PORCHES
- 4 DIVERSE ROOF FORMS
- 5 2-3 STORY ROWHOME WITH UPPER STORY STEPBACKS
- 6 CORRIDOR DEVELOPMENT



VIEW OF A ROW OF HOMES FACING A NEIGHBORHOOD STREET  
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VIEW OF A TYPICAL ALLEY IN A RESIDENTIAL AREA



VIEW OF RESIDENTIAL FACING A MAJOR CORRIDOR

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# 04.

## DEVELOPMENT FEASIBILITY

The primary purpose of site feasibility testing is to identify a range of site characteristics, underlying zoning constraints and resulting scale impacts of development in the Plan Area. To that end, three hypothetical sites have been selected as a representative sample of areas within the community’s nodes, corridors and neighborhoods. The three sites are of varying size and they have varying allowable densities. A range of building types have also been selected to test across the sites, from townhomes to tuck-under flats, wrap, podium and high-rise typologies, with the intent to match plausible development scenarios with standard “products” in the housing industry.





## SITE ANALYSIS

Site analysis helps us evaluate the prevalent site features that exist in the community today. Multiple sites in the community exhibit a range of site characteristics, underlying zoning and physical constraints and opportunities. Site analysis helps us uncover and evaluate these features when considering development potential. The following are some of the key defining elements of sites in the College Area.

### LOT SIZE

Lot and block patterns vary across the community (see Community Atlas, pages 40 and 41). Most of the plan area consists of single family lots that typically range between 5,000 to 15,000 square feet. Multifamily and commercial buildings typically have larger lot sizes and building footprints and are mostly located along the three key corridors in the community. Multifamily and commercial lot sizes range significantly, from 4,000 square feet on the low end to 150,000 square feet on the high end, depending on land use and location. SDSU has a major presence within the plan area, and its pedestrian-oriented campus is made up of extensive blocks and expansive building footprints.

Lot size matters when considering the feasibility of urban infill and mixed-use development because lot width may affect street frontage and access to the site, lot depth impacts parking formats, and lot size influences access to natural light, ventilation, and views from inhabited spaces. Several blocks along key corridors and nodes in the community, such as El Cajon Blvd., Montezuma Rd., and College Ave., have commercial and industrial buildings on large corner lots. These lots tend to be larger than the single-family lots in the area and the location on the corner provides greater opportunity for development, giving these properties two frontages and therefore greater access and flexibility in building layout and design.

### ACCESS & PARKING

In general, development sites in the community offer good pedestrian and vehicle access. A compact grid network of streets and blocks - combined with alleys - facilitate access to and through blocks and lots. As they redevelop, larger sites (greater than 1 acre) may require new roadways, private drives, and circulation paths to provide access to residential units, businesses, parking, and other internal areas of the site.

Parking often drives development capacity on a site. Lot dimensions may facilitate or impede an efficient accommodation of parking on a site. Where sites have alley access, this facilitates parking access and may reduce the need for drive aisles and driveways, making parking layouts

more efficient. Deep lots also enable parking to be located above-ground, located toward the rear of the lot. With enough lot depth, parking may be wrapped in the front with active spaces, creating a more engaging street presence.

### ADJACENCIES

Development sites where proximity to adjacent uses and existing site elements result in potential impacts may require alleviating measures through site design, building design features, and construction to address the impacts. For example, sites near highways may require additional sound attenuation measures and enhanced mechanical ventilation to meet building code standards and control for contaminants. Sites adjacent to single-family buildings may require transitions from new development to single-family with upper story stepbacks and landscape screening, for example.

### TOPOGRAPHY

Topography can also influence the feasibility of development, where based on existing site conditions, significant grading may be required. Site topography along the corridors in the community varies from predominantly flat along parts of El Cajon Blvd. to steep slopes along Collwood Dr., College Ave. and Motezuma Rd. Changes in topography are often noticeable along the canyons and edges of the community, especially the edge along I-8. Sometimes, site topography may create advantageous conditions for parking, allowing parking to be neatly tucked under development along the low point of a site.

*The Table to the right identifies prevalent site features and corresponding opportunities and constraints to consider for development in the community.*

## SITE OPPORTUNITIES & CONSTRAINTS

Multiple sites in the plan area exhibit a range of site characteristics, underlying zoning and environmental constraints and resulting scale impacts that should be evaluated when considering development potential. The table below highlights some of the defining features used to evaluate site development opportunities in the College Area.

SITE FEATURE	OPPORTUNITIES	CONSTRAINTS
Lot Size	Deep lots provide opportunity for parking to be tucked behind active uses of the development fronting the street. Corner lots maximize frontage and facilitate access. Wide lots facilitate housing with dwelling units facing interior common open space and natural light and ventilation.	Small lots (less than 10,000 square feet) constrain multi-family and mixed-use development and may impede efficient layouts for parking and dwelling units. Large lots (greater than 1 acre) may require additional access drives and roadways to facilitate circulation and access through the site. The prevalence of small lots in the study area may require lot assembly, which can make new development costly and requires time.
Access and Parking	A street grid and compact blocks, combined with alleys, make the area accessible and well-connected. Parking access from alleys reduces the need for access aisles and provides design efficiencies.	Small and narrow lots constrain parking and may restrict access to vehicles, pedestrians, light, air and open space opportunities. Blocks without alley access may require a consolidation of lots or easements between adjacent parcels.
Adjacencies	The mix of land uses in the area facilitate an active, 24/7 community that offers a range of neighborhood amenities within walking distance.	Sites near single-family, industrial and automotive uses may require design and construction measures to facilitate compatibility with adjacent uses.
Topography	The relatively flat topography of the corridors in the plan area facilitates new development without significant grading and sitework.	Some areas in the community may require grading, soil remediation and site improvements to address steep slopes (e.g. College Ave. and Collwood Blvd.).
Infrastructure	As an existing urbanized community, basic infrastructure such as roads, utilities and neighborhood services already exist in the area.	Evaluation of impacts to water and sewer capacity in the area should be considered. Future needs related to parks, schools, libraries and other services should also be considered.

SITE CHARACTERISTICS TABLE



# NODE

Development along key nodes in the community may occur in areas with large lots. These areas provide opportunities for a larger building footprint or a campus of buildings with circulation paths, driveways and paseos that connect across the block and to key neighborhood services (such as parks or grocery stores). In larger buildings, parking access may be provided off a private drive and into a structure underground or centrally located on the site and wrapped with active commercial and residential ground floor uses. Residential uses on upper floors may include a central courtyard/ amenity deck.

The floor plans provided to the left demonstrate a potential concept for mixed-use residential development along the community’s nodes. The concept fits within the general parameters of conventional wood-frame construction. The key features of the concept are summarized in the table below.

DEVELOPMENT FEATURE	RANGE
Site Area <i>(hypothetical)</i>	100,000 square feet/ 2.3 acres
Density & Number of Dwelling Units <i>(approx.)</i>	110 to 150 du/ac 250 to 345 units
Access & Parking	garage parking 0.5 to 0.8 spaces/ unit
Building Height	65' (6 stories) to 85' (7 stories)
Building Type	wrap/ podium apartments
Open Space & Amenities	terrace/ courtyard/ amenity deck
Commercial	7,000 to 12,000 sf

DEVELOPMENT SUMMARY TABLE

All Illustrations are shown to communicate concepts and do not represent a land use or development proposal

LEGEND

Property Line

Landscape

Parking

Circulation

Residential

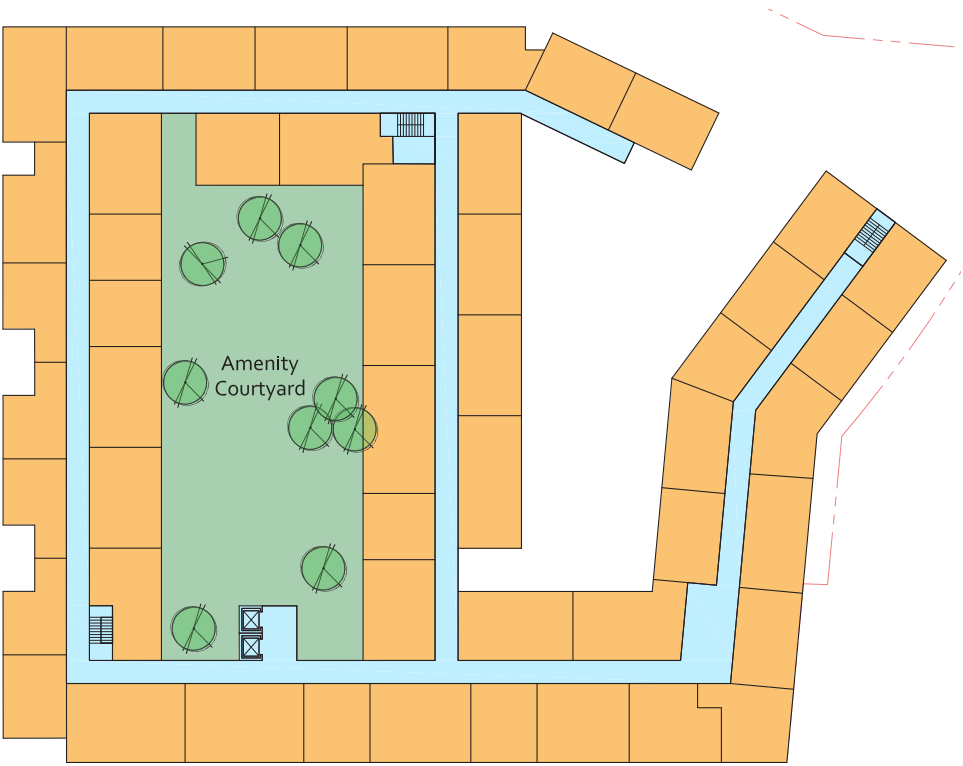
Commercial

NORTH

First Floor



Typical Residential Floor





# CORRIDOR

Development along key corridors in the community (such as El Cajon Blvd.) may encompass a portion of a block or take up an entire block facing the corridor. In areas where alleys exist, parking access may be provided off the alley and a structure located to the rear of the site, with active commercial uses and the building entrance in the front, facing the street. Residential uses are provided on upper floors, wrapping a central courtyard/ amenity deck.

The floor plans provided to the left demonstrate a hypothetical concept for mixed-use residential development along the community's corridors. The concept fits within the general parameters of conventional wood-frame construction. The key features of the concept are summarized in the table below.

DEVELOPMENT FEATURE	RANGE
Site Area <i>(hypothetical)</i>	30,000 square feet/ 0.7 acres
Density & Number of Dwelling Units <i>(approx.)</i>	110 to 218 du/ac 75 to 150 units
Access & Parking	garage parking 0.5 to 1.0 spaces/ unit
Building Height	65' (5 stories) to 85' (7 stories)
Building Type	podium apartments
Open Space & Amenities	Terrace/ Courtyard Deck
Commercial	6,000 to 9,000 sf

DEVELOPMENT SUMMARY TABLE

LEGEND

Property Line

Landscape

Parking

Circulation

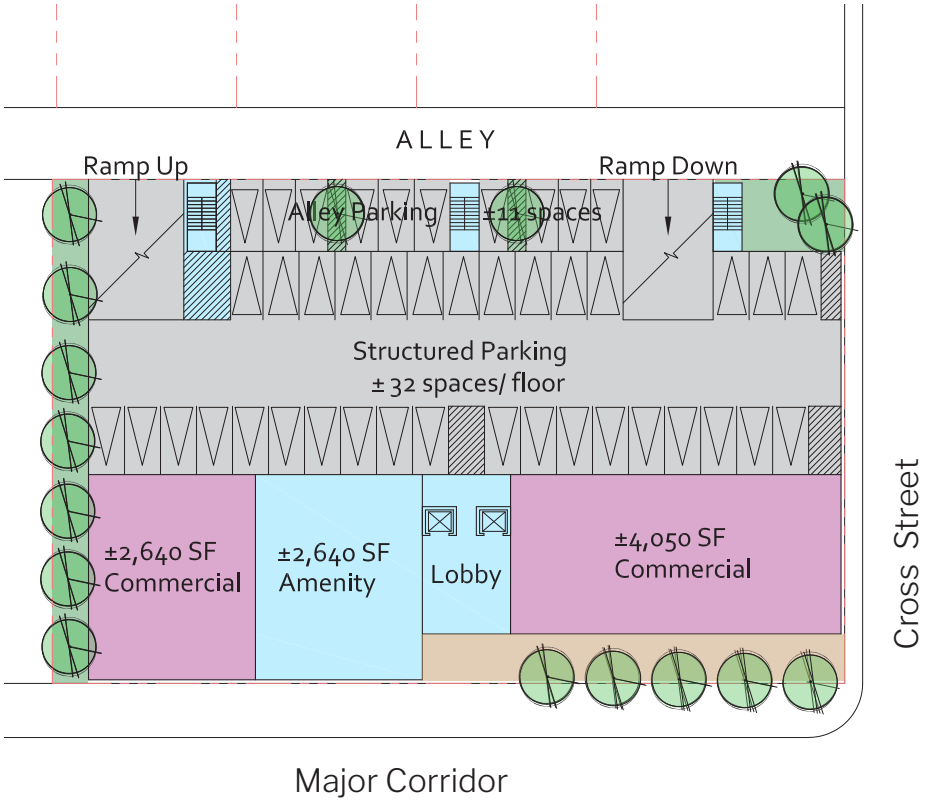
Residential

Commercial

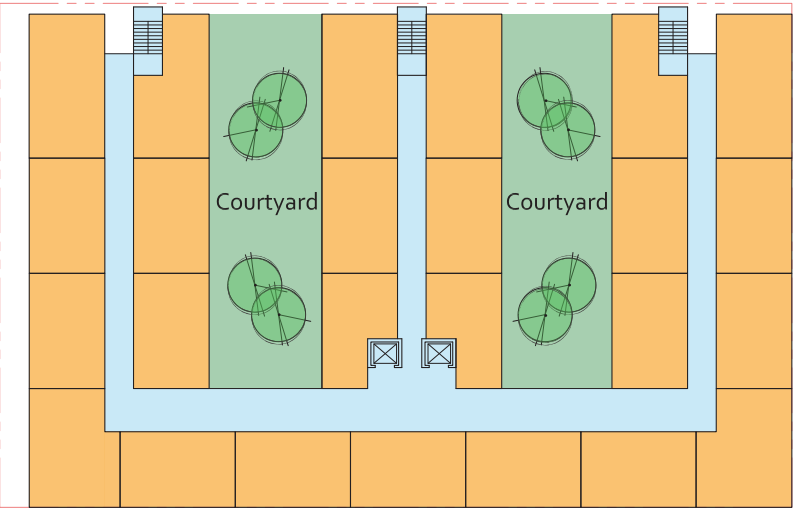


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First Floor



Typical Residential Floor





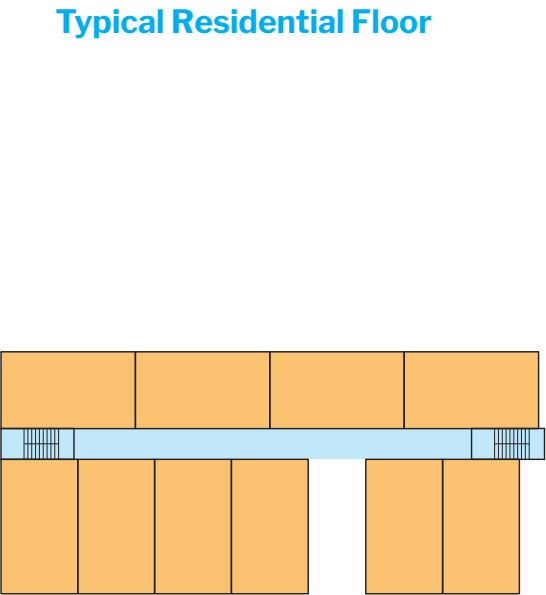
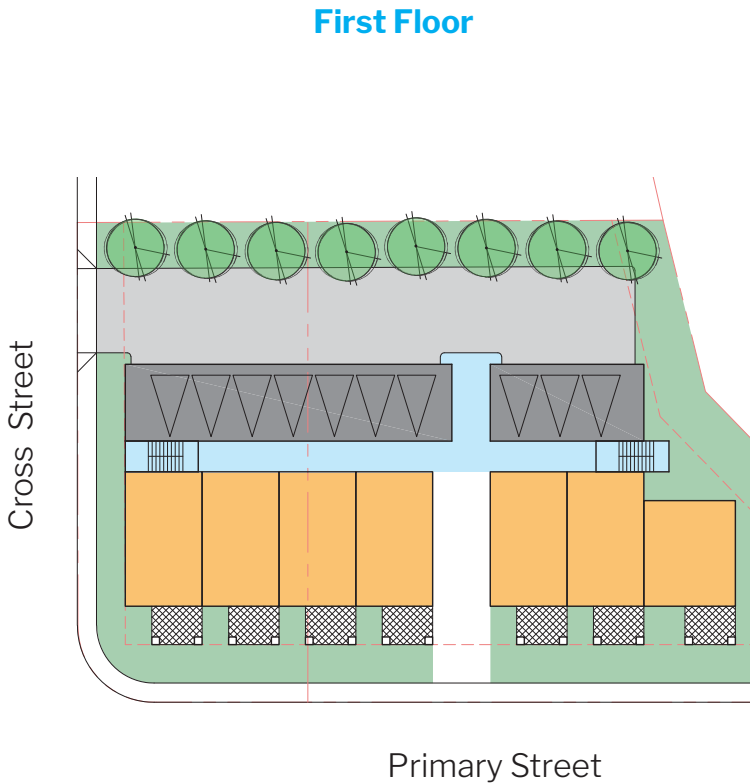
# TRANSITIONS

Development in neighborhood transition sites (such as areas directly behind the key corridors in the community) may include small-scale multi-family, such as walk-up apartments, multiplex, townhomes and bungalow courts. In areas where alleys exist, parking access may be provided off the alley and in individual private garages, with front porches, stoops, patios and balconies facing the street.

The floor plans provided to the left demonstrate a potential concept for mixed-use residential development along the community’s transition areas. The concept fits within the general parameters of conventional wood-frame construction. The key features of the concept are summarized in the table below.

DEVELOPMENT FEATURE	RANGE
Site Area <i>(hypothetical)</i>	22,000 square feet/ 0.5 acres
Density & Number of Dwelling Units <i>(approx.)</i>	20 to 40 du/ac 10 to 20 units
Access & Parking	garage parking 0.5 to 1.0 spaces/ unit
Building Height	24’ (2 stories) to 30’ (3 stories)
Building Type	townhomes/ walk-up
Open Space & Amenities	private patios/ paseos
Commercial	none

DEVELOPMENT SUMMARY TABLE



LEGEND

- Property Line
- Landscape
- Parking
- Circulation
- Residential
- Commercial

North arrow pointing up.

All Illustrations are shown to communicate concepts and do not represent a land use or development proposal