
URBAN DESIGN

Urban design is the community's visual image which the overall patterns of development in the community project. Urban design is a three-dimensional concept that is the image and identity of a community. The aspects of development that make up urban design include the relationship of building bulk, scale, site design and architectural style with the natural topography of an area, and with the pedestrian and vehicular accessways. The visual organization and interest created by development also contribute to the community's visual image. This Plan makes recommendations which will strengthen the urban design concept in the community by providing guidelines which new development should follow.

EXISTING IMAGE

The College Area community is developed predominantly with single-family houses in subdivision patterns reflective of the hills and canyons within the community. Mature and well maintained landscaping as well as native vegetation on hillsides and canyon bottoms is a characteristic of the community. Views from hilltop areas to the mountains to the east and down into small finger canyons are also present.

The streetscape through much of the community is distinctive. Fairmount Avenue and Montezuma Road are characterized by canyon walls with native vegetation on both sides of the street. Collwood Boulevard also runs through a canyon which, though somewhat disturbed, has steep hillsides with a combination of native and ornamental landscaping. Montezuma Road, west of College Avenue, has tall mature palm trees planted along the right-of-way, and almost all of the neighborhood streets have mature trees planted either in the public right-of-way or on private property adjacent to the sidewalks. When entering the community from the north or west, the streets rise sharply giving a distinct impression of moving from outside of the community into it.

The university is distinctive with its broad pedestrian walkways, open plazas and arcades. Automobile traffic is limited to perimeter areas only, leaving the majority of the campus open to landscaping, wide steps connecting plazas on different levels and gathering places large enough to accommodate the number of students using the campus. Architectural styles are tiled and stuccoed Spanish colonial buildings as well as modern glass and steel structures.

The relative scale of the old and new buildings is compatible, and the different buildings are visually tied together by the plazas and landscaping which physically connect them.

Commercial development in the community is fragmented both visually and physically by its orientation to the automobile. Development patterns have been determined by driveways and parking lots, rather than the relationship of commercial facilities to one another or to the neighborhoods and campus which they serve. In an effort to make each individual store or groups of stores stand out from its neighbors, developers and property owners have used a variety of unrelated architectural designs and competing signs. The result is visually cluttered and confusing commercial areas which are in need of both economic and physical rehabilitation.

FUTURE IMAGE

The future image of this community combines maintaining the visual character of the residential neighborhoods while strengthening the visual identity of the university area and the El Cajon Boulevard corridor. As the two major centers of activity become functionally more dominant, there must also be sensitive transition between the centers and adjacent neighborhoods. The existing scale of the neighborhoods should not be overwhelmed by the large-scale development proposed for the mixed-use area near the university or the El Cajon Boulevard corridor.

The presence of the university should be clearly identifiable as a major component of the community. The campus and Core Subarea should project a strong visual image that marks the area as one of very high activity attracting thousands of users every day. At the same time, this area should be visibly linked with the rest of the community and not walled off from it. The use of transition of scale, landscaping, organization of transportation and parking facilities, and organization of land uses are integral to achieving visual harmony between the university area and nearby neighborhoods. These goals are further defined in the 1997 Council adopted Core Subarea Design Manual.

As the El Cajon Boulevard corridor redevelops, its image will become more organized giving clearer identity to commercial uses located here. With the mixture of residential and commercial development which is encouraged, a higher level of pedestrian activity will occur. The improved image resulting from better landscaping, sign control and screening requirements will integrate this corridor functionally and visually with the community as a whole.

Located between the two activity centers, the residential neighborhoods will remain at their present scale and appearance. These neighborhoods should continue to reflect the canyons and mesas within and on which they are built. They should also remain visually distinct from development in the activity centers although they should not appear to be cut off from those centers. The major streets of the community should continue to link the neighborhoods to the activity centers and circulation within the neighborhoods should continue to be confined to local streets.

Recommendations for urban design within the College Community Redevelopment Project subareas are included within the San Diego State University Element and within the Master Project Plan which helps implement the redevelopment project.

RECOMMENDATIONS: RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

Single-Family Development

1. New development of vacant lots or redevelopment should be compatible with the scale and character of the surrounding development. Building scale should be related to the prevailing scale of houses in the area, and to the wider effects upon the neighborhood, views and topography. Front and side yard setbacks similar to those of existing development should be observed. The existing single-family character of the community should be preserved through the use of the Planned Infill Residential Development

Permit. This discretionary permit requires new single-family or a mixture of single-family and multifamily development to be compatible in density and design with existing surrounding development.

2. Subdivision or consolidation of existing single-family lots which would result in new lots substantially smaller or larger than most lots in surrounding neighborhoods should not be permitted. Panhandle lots should also be avoided. The existing neighborhood subdivision pattern and density should be continued in all development.
3. Landscaping of new single-family projects should be compatible with landscaping in surrounding neighborhoods. If landscaping is located between the sidewalk and street, trees located in this landscape strip should be maintained or new trees planted to continue the line of trees along the street. If mature trees are located on a lot to be developed or redeveloped, those trees should be maintained in keeping with surrounding neighborhood character.

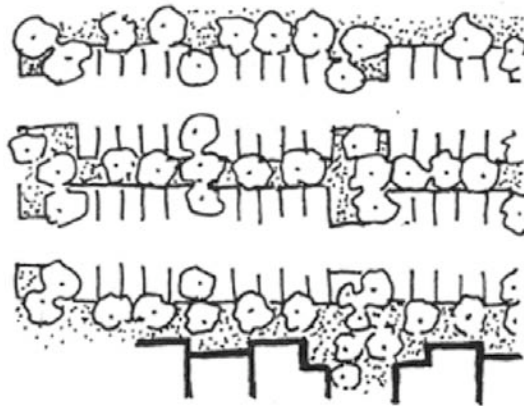
Multifamily Development - El Cajon Boulevard

1. The transitions and visual relationships of multifamily buildings and adjacent lower density development should be harmonious. A conscious effort to achieve balance and compatibility in design between different intensities of development is needed. This can be accomplished by repeating existing building lines and surface treatment, by gradual transitions in height and bulk, and by the use of setbacks at ground level and above ground level. Abrupt differences in scale should be avoided.
2. Since new multifamily buildings are usually larger than adjacent lower density structures, large surfaces should be articulated and textured to reduce their apparent size and to reflect the pattern of existing adjacent buildings.
3. Where lot consolidation takes place, special consideration should be given to adjacent parcels to ensure that new development does not visually overwhelm neighboring development.
4. 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 masses. Such architectural variations help avoid the creation of a wall effect along streets.



5. Trash enclosures, parking areas and service areas should be screened from adjacent lower density residential neighborhoods.
6. Landscaping on side streets adjacent to new multifamily development should repeat the landscaping character of the lower intensity adjacent neighborhoods. This will improve the transition of development between the different intensities.
7. Usable open areas should be provided for each unit. This may be in the form of a garden, courtyard, terrace, or roof deck or other space that allows residents to have their own outdoor areas.
8. When located on ground level, private open areas should be screened from public view by landscaping or privacy fencing.
9. Private open areas should observe solar access principles to provide shade in the warm months.
10. Off-street parking areas should be placed in unobtrusive locations and should be designed to minimize visual impact on the site and the surrounding neighborhood.

11. At least a portion, if not all, 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.



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

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

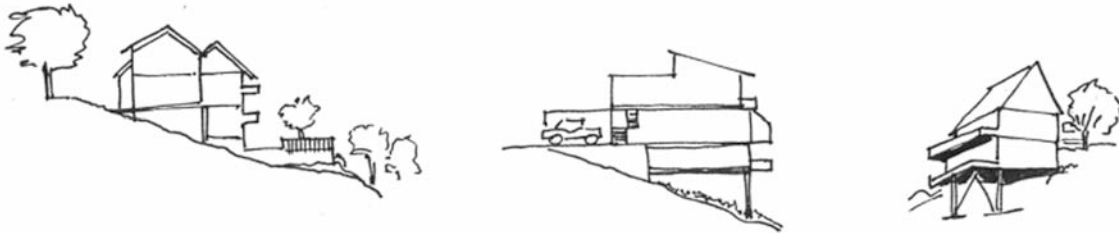


14. Landscaping should be used to screen parking areas from the street near residences. To allow opportunities for surveillance of parking areas, shrub planting or low walls may be used to partially screen parking while still allowing a line of sight into the area.

15. Several small parking areas are preferable to a large lot.
16. Tandem parking spaces (8.5 feet by 35 feet) may be used to reduce the size of paved parking areas and increase open space.
17. Special areas for bicycle parking should be included in project designs.

RECOMMENDATIONS: HILLSIDE AND SLOPE DEVELOPMENT

1. The community's natural hillsides, canyons, and vegetation are important assets that should be protected in new development. Site plans should utilize existing topography and preserve existing vegetation and topographic features.
2. 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 to avoid a wall effect and to maintain views of hillsides and canyons from public rights-of-way. Large expanses of flat areas such as parking lots should be avoided. Multiple small parking lots with appropriate landscaping are preferable.
3. 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.
4. As has already been done in most existing neighborhoods of the community, housing should be designed to fit into the hillside, complementing the land's natural character, rather than altering the hillside to fit the structure. Multi-level structures, pole or cantilever construction should be used rather than grading for flat building pads.
5. Graded slopes should be shaped to conform to existing landforms. Building sites should be graded so that they appear to emerge from the slope.



6. 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.
7. Existing vegetation should be preserved as much as possible. Areas that have been disturbed by construction should be revegetated with drought tolerant plant materials. Non-invasive plants should be used in areas adjacent to native vegetation. Landscaping adjacent to natural canyons or open areas should be selected to be fire retardant while still being sensitive to impacts on native vegetation.
8. Development adjacent to canyon areas should incorporate fire protection features. Fire retardant plants should be used in landscaping areas adjacent to canyons and an irrigation system installed. Property owners should thin out and clear dead underbrush in canyon rim areas. Fire retarding structures such as walls, paved patios or swimming pools should be placed to help slow the spread of fires originating in canyons. Fire retardant building materials, particularly roofing materials, should be used on structures.

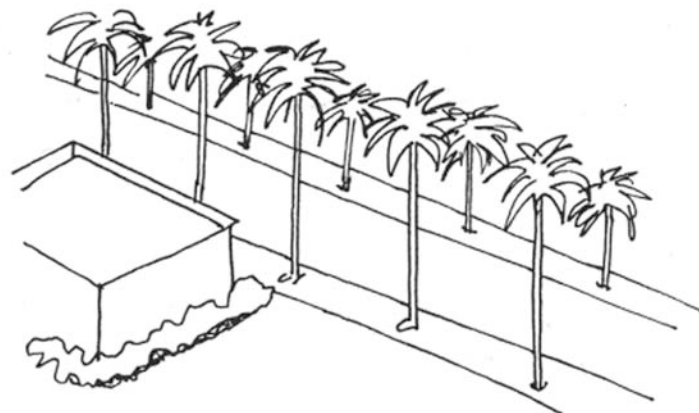
RECOMMENDATIONS: COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT

1. The commercial areas along the north side of El Cajon Boulevard should be developed consistent with the south side with emphasis on the following:
 - a. Provision of adequate off-street parking, screened from adjacent residential development.
 - b. Provision of new development compatible with the bulk, scale and architectural character of older existing development in adjacent neighborhoods.
 - c. Buffering residential areas from commercial areas through the use of appropriate building setbacks, fences, landscaping, or a combination of any of these.
 - d. Streetscape improvements through the use of landscaping and imaginative building facade design.
 - e. Development of a pedestrian orientation in commercial node areas (El Cajon Boulevard at 54th Street, College Avenue and 70th Street (see **Commercial Element**) through the location of buildings close to the street, placement of commercial uses on the ground floor, requirements for transparency of ground floor facades and restrictions on curb cuts and driveways.
 - f. Where mixed-use development occurs, the commercial portion of the project must be located on the ground floor adjacent to the street, with the residential portion located above and/or behind the commercial portion.

RECOMMENDATIONS: STREETScape

1. 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.
2. Multifamily and commercial development along El Cajon Boulevard, College Avenue and Montezuma Road should front on the public street and provide identifiable pedestrian access from the street into the project, especially in areas where parking lots are located between the street and the project.
3. 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.
4. 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 and should utilize native or drought resistant plants where possible.
5. Curb cuts should be minimized to allow more landscaping and parking along the streets.
6. Major intersections which are focal points within the community should be developed with tall trees to add identity to points within the community. The following intersections are important as focal points:

- a. College Avenue and Montezuma Road is a crossroads of two major streets leading into and transversing the community. This intersection is also a major access point to the university.
 - b. Montezuma Road and 55th Street is a minor access point into the university.
 - c. Montezuma Road and Reservoir Drive is an entry point into the Alvarado Medical Center complex.
 - d. El Cajon Boulevard and 54th Street as well as El Cajon Boulevard and College Avenue are entry points into the community and are high intensity commercial nodes.
7. Streets leading to and into the university campus should be developed in a manner that emphasizes the presence of the university. These are streets with high volumes of auto and pedestrian traffic and with high intensity uses located adjacent. Landscaping, street furniture and lighting should be utilized to emphasize these streets. Development should not be separated from the sidewalk by parking or service area. Distinctive signs identifying the university should be located along these streets. These streets should occur as a “gateway” into the university. The following are the “gateway” streets.
- a. Montezuma Road between 55th Street and College Avenue.
 - b. College Avenue between I-8 and Montezuma Road.
 - c. Fifty-fifth Street, north of Montezuma Road.
 - d. Campanile Drive, north of Montezuma Road.
8. Existing mature trees within the public right-of-way or adjacent to it should be preserved. Existing street trees should be used to set a theme along a street and new projects should use the same or similar tree species in or adjacent to public rights-of-way.
- a. Existing palm trees in the public right-of-way along Montezuma Road between College Avenue and 55th Street should be preserved. Similar species of palm trees should be planted in the public right-of-way, adjacent to the curb, on Montezuma Road so that the trees are continuous, on both sides of Montezuma Road, from 54th Street to 63rd Street.



- b. Existing pine and eucalyptus trees along College Avenue adjacent to the university should be preserved. Any new landscaping along College Avenue from I-8 to Hardy Avenue should incorporate similar pine and eucalyptus species.
 - c. Existing trees along Montezuma Road between 54th Street and Fairmount Avenue should be maintained. Sidewalk and street improvements and maintenance should include additional trees to enhance this area as designated open space.
9. A strong sense of edge along public streets 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. El Cajon Boulevard, College Avenue from I-8 to Montezuma Road, and Montezuma Road from Fairmount Avenue to 63rd Street should be improved with this sort of edge.
 10. All street widenings and related improvements should have high design standards. The Planning Department should review all Capital Improvement Program projects to ensure the aesthetic quality and cohesiveness of street improvements.
 11. 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.

RECOMMENDATIONS: LIGHTING

1. Street lighting should be at different illumination levels to reinforce circulation hierarchy (public roads, private roads, parking areas, pedestrian walkways). Lighting should be designed and located to avoid shining on adjacent properties.
2. Where low-level lighting is used, fixtures should be placed so that they do not produce glare. Shatterproof coverings should be used for all low-level lighting fixtures.
3. 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.

RECOMMENDATIONS: SIGNS

1. 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.
2. Wall-mounted signs should not project above the roofline.
3. Multiple signage within a development should have a standardized format and design for uniformity.
4. Off-premises advertising (billboards) should not be permitted.

RECOMMENDATIONS: SCREENING

1. 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.
2. 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.
3. Berms, bushes or fencing should be used to screen parking lots that front roadways. Walls should be continuous with variation of surface relief. Fencing should incorporate posts at regular intervals, and fencing should not be over four feet in height to allow for protective surveillance.