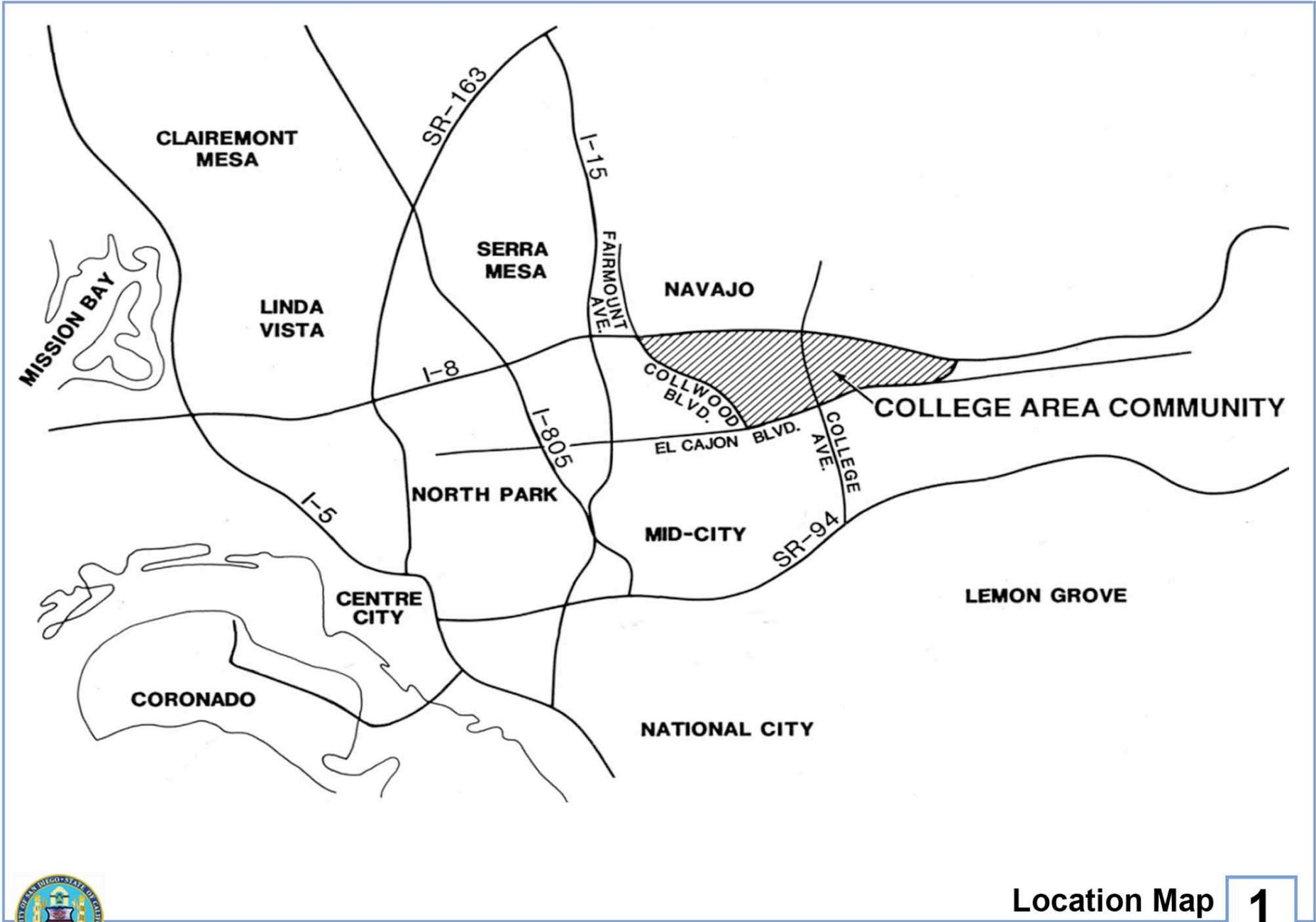


# *Introduction*

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- *The College Area Community*
- *History*
- *Existing Land Use and Zoning*
- *Plan Alternatives*



Location Map  
College Area Community Plan

**1**  
FIGURE

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## **INTRODUCTION**

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### **THE COLLEGE AREA COMMUNITY**

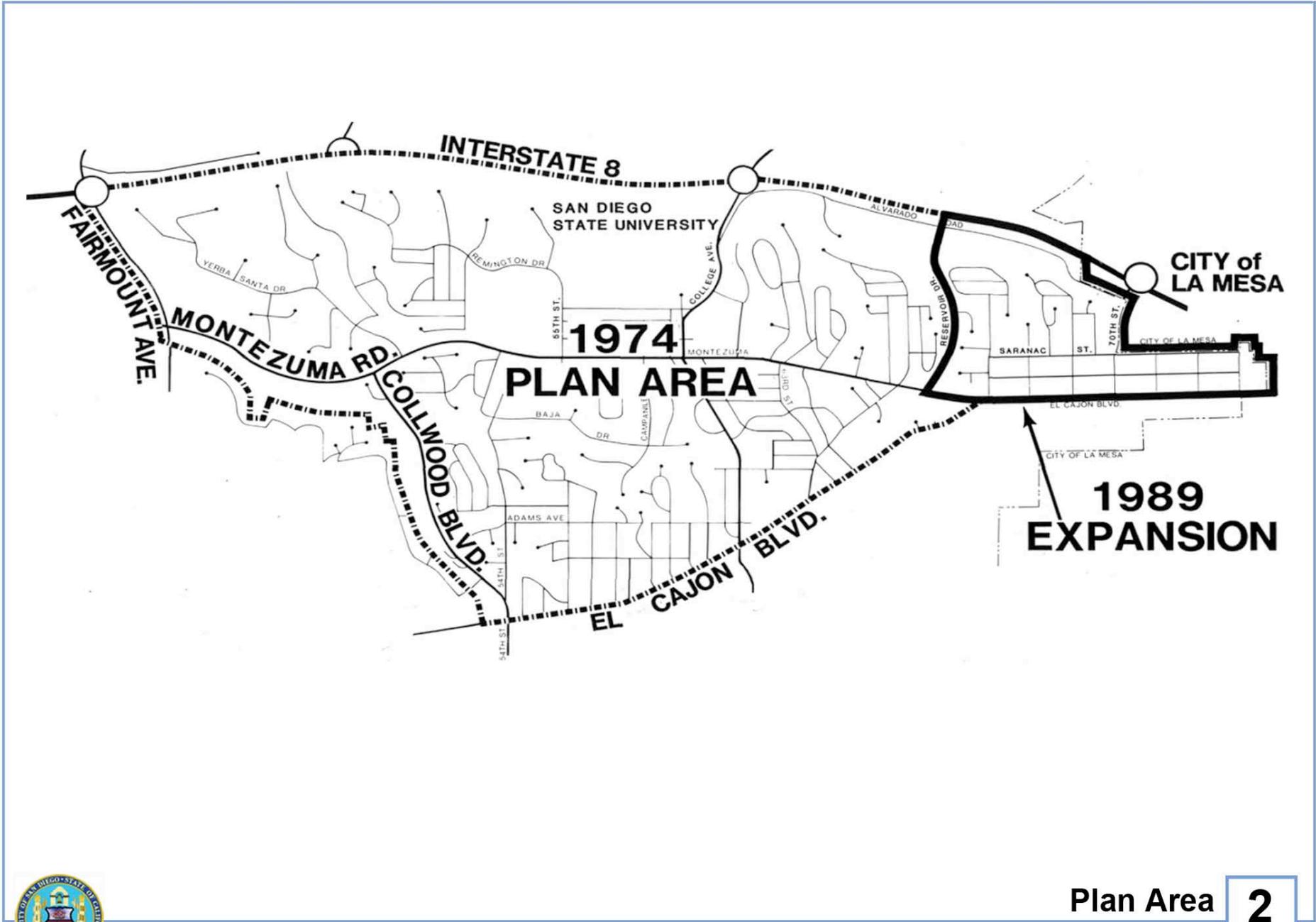
The College Area community is located in the central part of the City of San Diego, along the southern rim of Mission Valley and approximately eight miles northeast of the downtown area. It is a residential community which has been impacted by San Diego State University (SDSU) located on its northern edge and a deteriorating commercial corridor on its southern edge. The residents of the community wish to preserve the well-maintained single-family character of their neighborhoods, but there is also a need to provide additional multifamily housing in the community to house the growing university population. The location and density of this new housing are two key development issues in the community. Revitalization of the commercial corridor is another issue and one that has been addressed by adoption of the Mid-City Communities Planned District. Traffic congestion is also an issue confronting the community and is related to the large university-oriented population and through traffic traveling to and from adjacent communities. Partly because there is a lack of multifamily housing in the community, many students and faculty must commute to school each day. This university-bound traffic combined with traffic generated by growth in the adjacent Mid-City community has resulted in congestion on those streets connecting the community with Interstate 8 (I-8).

The plan area consists of approximately 1,950 acres and is developed primarily as a single-family community with approximately 56 percent of the developable land devoted to that use. The present resident population totals approximately 19,000 people, but a large number of nonresidents enter the community daily to attend school or work at SDSU. The 1987 enrollment at the university was approximately 36,000 students and the impact of large numbers of nonresidents in neighborhoods of the community has caused problems of congestion and overcrowding.

Two main arteries, Fairmount Avenue/Montezuma Road and College Avenue, connect I-8 to the community. The university is located immediately adjacent to I-8, and traffic bringing people to the university does not need to travel through single-family neighborhoods to get to the university. College Avenue and Collwood Boulevard provide north-south connections within the community and to the Mid-City area to the south.

El Cajon Boulevard connects the community to the Mid-City and Greater North Park communities to the south and west and the City of La Mesa to the east. El Cajon Boulevard is developed with older strip commercial development but is targeted for redevelopment and rehabilitation under the regulations of the Mid-City Communities Planned District Ordinance.

The College Area community presents a dual visual image. Entrances to the community are along heavily traveled streets leading to the high activity area surrounding the university. Development along El Cajon Boulevard is auto-oriented and visually fragmented, resulting in a busy and confusing image along the length of the southern boundary of the community



Plan Area **2**  
 College Area Community Plan **FIGURE**

However, within one block of the main arteries of the community and within just a few blocks of the university, the character of the community changes. Here the streets are lightly traveled, tree-lined and curving, some ending in cul-de-sacs. Canyons and hillsides are visible. Houses in these neighborhoods exhibit architectural styles that span five decades, but mature landscaping and similar scale of development give coherence to these neighborhoods. While these neighborhoods have for many years remained intact, now the university population has begun to move into the fringe areas causing some of the formerly quiet streets to become more heavily traveled and congested with parking. Similarly, the commercial development along El Cajon Boulevard has impacted adjacent residential development with overflow on-street parking, parking lots and service areas. The image of these fringe areas is becoming more like the higher activity areas of the community and less like residential neighborhoods. It is this expansion into the neighborhoods that is of greatest concern to residents of the community.

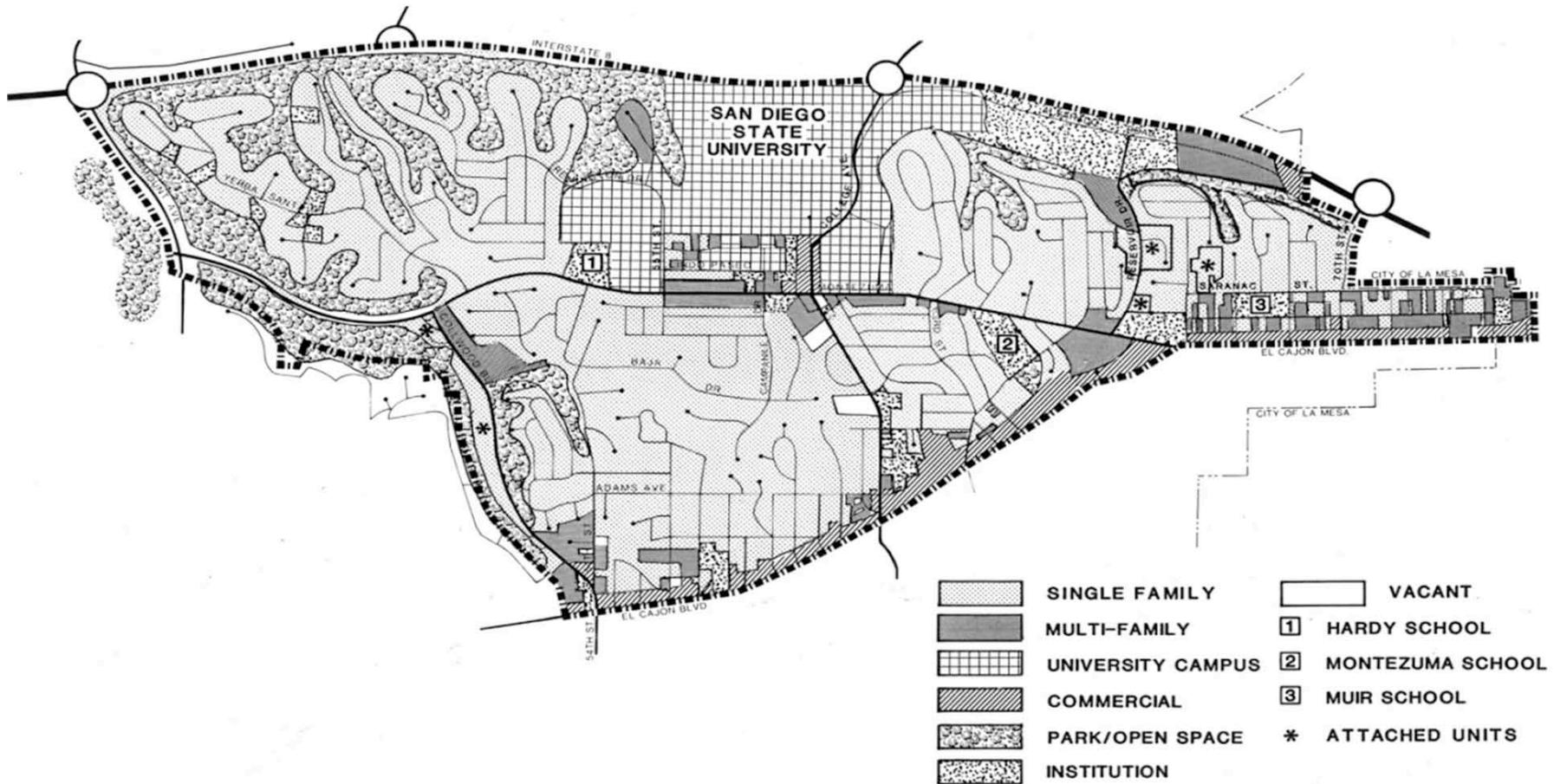
## **HISTORY**

The College Area community began to develop slowly during the early 1930s. The first subdivision maps occurred along El Cajon Boulevard, along Adams Avenue in the vicinity of 55th Street, in the vicinity of 63rd and Stewart Streets, and along Cresita Drive, Lindo Paseo and Hardy Avenue. Although these subdivision maps were recorded, few houses were actually built and the area remained a largely unoccupied, brush covered mesa throughout the 1930s.

In 1931, the State Teachers College, later to become San Diego State University, relocated to the area from its former Normal Street location. The college occupied a site of 125 acres and had an initial enrollment of 150 students. The location of the college in the area, combined with the natural eastward expansion of the City along El Cajon Boulevard resulted in a steady growth of the area over the next three decades. The postwar desire for suburban living and the completion of I-8 in the late 1950s further contributed to the growth of the community and the university.

The steady but gradual growth of the community has resulted in a variety of architectural styles, as well as subdivision patterns and site planning sensitive to the hillside topography of the community. Neighborhoods with Spanish and Craftsman style bungalows are next to neighborhoods with 1950s and 1960s ranch houses. Most neighborhoods are well landscaped and contain curving and hilly streets. The community thus consists of interesting and visually pleasant neighborhoods exhibiting a cross-section of development types and patterns spanning a 40-year period.

San Diego State University has continued to grow over the decades from its original enrollment of 150 students on 125 acres to a 1987 enrollment of 36,000 students on 215 acres. The university has had major impacts on this community as well as on neighboring communities in terms of traffic, parking and off-campus housing. In fact, the community has developed essentially into two communities, the predominantly single-family neighborhoods surrounding the university, and the university itself. Both share the same transportation system and other public facilities and both have developmental and sociological impacts on



## Generalized Existing Land Use - 1988

College Area Community Plan

**3**

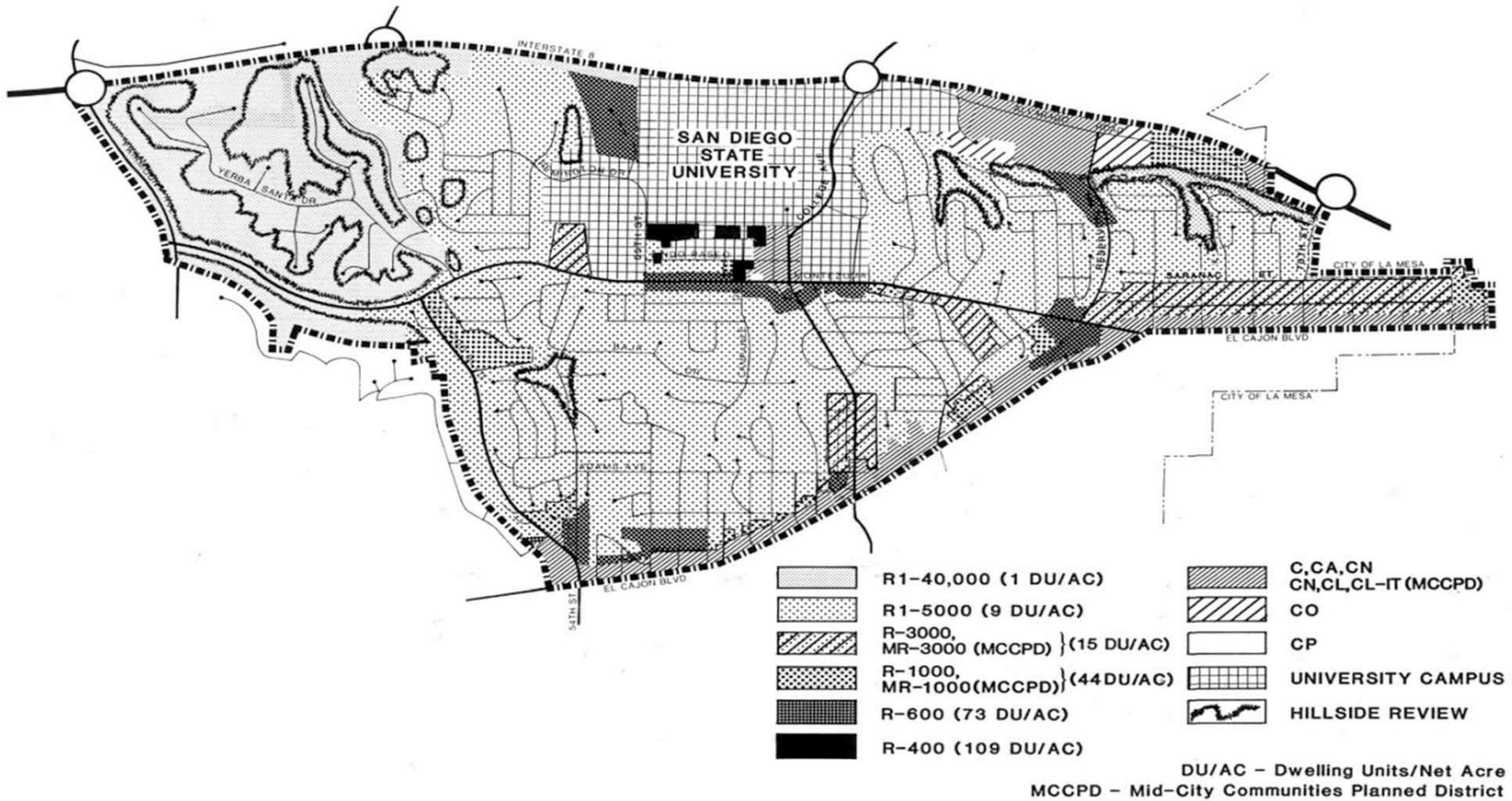
FIGURE

each other. The people who inhabit each community are more or less separate from each other. The majority of the population of the university community is there only part of each day and only on certain days of each week. Their community concerns often differ from the concerns of the single-family residential population that sees the community as a long-term place to live.

Community planning efforts began in 1965 with the adoption of the San Diego State College Area Community Plan which recommended high-intensity student housing adjacent to the university in order to minimize parking and circulation problems and to minimize impacts on single-family neighborhoods. The plan was updated in 1974 in order to address continued concern over traffic and circulation and maintenance of the community as a primarily single-family community. At that time, the plan name was shortened to the State University Area Plan. The 1974 plan continued to recommend high-density housing adjacent to the university and reemphasized the need to maintain existing single-family neighborhoods. In 1983, the plan was amended to designate specific areas in the community for fraternity and sorority houses in order to accommodate the growth of fraternal organizations at the university and to prevent these uses from adversely impacting single-family neighborhoods. This amendment identifies appropriate sites for future fraternities and sororities. Zoning in most of the fraternity and sorority area permits development of dormitories and other multifamily housing as well. This update of the community plan has incorporated the recommendations of the 1983 amendment into this text.

In January 1986, the Mid-City Planned District and the Mid-City Design Plan were adopted. These regulations and guidelines were applied to the Mid-City community, which includes the south side of El Cajon Boulevard. Since the north side of El Cajon Boulevard is experiencing the same problems as the south side, the north side, a part of the College Area, was also included. In November 1987, the planned district development regulations were amended and the name was changed to the Mid-City Communities Planned District. The Mid-City Communities Planned District applies to the State University plan area along the north side of El Cajon Boulevard and to all multifamily development east of Reservoir Drive, north of El Cajon Boulevard. The planned district's purpose is to improve development along the north side of El Cajon Boulevard and to ensure the new multifamily development is compatible with older, adjacent neighborhoods. In 1999, the Mid-City Communities Planned District as applied in this area was revised and renamed the Central Urbanized Planned District.

The 1989 College Area Community Plan changes the name of the plan and the community and expands the boundaries of the planning area to include the neighborhoods east of Reservoir Drive and north of El Cajon Boulevard (**Figure 2**). These neighborhoods were previously part of the Mid-City Community Plan. At the time of the 1974 plan update, Reservoir Drive ran through an undeveloped canyon and served as a natural, topographic boundary to the planning area. However, since 1974, development has occurred along Reservoir Drive and intensification of development has occurred in the neighborhoods south of El Cajon Boulevard, leaving the single-family neighborhoods to the north of El Cajon Boulevard and east of Reservoir Drive more strongly related to the predominantly single-family College Area. For these reasons, the Mid-City Plan has been amended to delete this area and the College Area planning area now includes it.



## Existing Zoning - 1988

### College Area Community Plan

4

FIGURE



## EXISTING LAND USE AND ZONING

As shown on **Table 1** and in **Figures 3** and **4**, the majority of the community is zoned for and developed with single-family housing. Multifamily housing is located in the vicinity of the university and along transportation corridors. Commercial development is located along El Cajon Boulevard and along the portion of College Avenue adjacent to the university. Institutional uses, which include two large facilities, SDSU and Alvarado Medical Center, occupy a proportionately large segment of the community.

Throughout most of the community, existing land use and zoning conform to one another. The notable exception is privately owned open space areas. While there is no specific zoning for such areas, the plan designated such open spaces for very low-density residential development (RI-40000, or one dwelling unit per acre) and Hillside Review Overlay Zoning (HR). There are significant vacant properties in the northwestern portion of the community which are designated for open space and zoned RI-40000 and Hillside Review Overlay.

**TABLE 1**  
**Existing Land Use—1988**

Use	Acres	Percent of Area*
Residential	1,365	70.0
Single-family	1,165	59.7
Multifamily	200	10.3
Commercial	96	9.9
University	215	11.3
Other Public/Semipublic	76	3.8
Vacant	204	10.4
<b>Total Acres</b>	<b>1,957</b>	

\* May not total 100 percent due to rounding.

Sources: U.S. Census, 1980; Series 7 Growth Forecast, San Diego Association of Governments; Population, Housing Inventory Data, January 1, 1988, City of San Diego

## PLAN ALTERNATIVES

The following alternative land use plans have been considered in preparing for the revision of this Plan. The variations largely pertain to differences in population density. In each of the alternatives, nonresidential land use would remain approximately the same. While variations in these land uses have been considered, their impact on the overall holding capacity would be minor.

### Existing Plan Alternative

This alternative would continue development patterns recommended by the 1974 plan and basically reflects existing conditions in the community. Under this alternative, the predominant land use would be single-family housing at densities of zero to ten dwelling

units per acre. Multifamily housing would continue to be located in pockets along the Collwood Boulevard corridor; in areas immediately to the north of El Cajon Boulevard; and in the area immediately to the south of the university with some room for increased growth through redevelopment in this area. New multifamily development could also occur along El Cajon Boulevard as part of redevelopment under the adopted Mid-City Communities Planned District. Multifamily densities would range from 15 to 109 dwelling units per acre. Land uses and zoning are generally in conformance under this alternative.

If this alternative were to be continued, there would be no provisions for growth in the community, nor would there be provision for accommodation of the existing residential and transportation needs of the community. This alternative is not recommended by this Plan update.

### **Moderate Growth Alternative (Selected Alternative)**

This alternative recommends moderate growth of multifamily housing in the community. This alternative identifies a multi-purpose area adjacent to the university for student housing at high and very high densities in accordance with existing zoning. The multi-purpose area would also contain student-oriented commercial uses and university-oriented offices under expanded commercial zoning. This area presently contains a mixture of fraternity houses, multifamily housing, retail commercial and university offices. Under this alternative, new multifamily development could occur on the north side of El Cajon Boulevard as part of redevelopment under the Mid-City Communities Planned District. Commercial redevelopment would also occur under the Mid-City Communities Planned District.

This alternative provides enough housing growth to reduce the growing pressure for additional student housing, but maintains the community as predominantly single-family. This alternative will also help reduce traffic congestion by providing housing close to the university, thereby reducing daily commuter traffic into the community. It is this moderate growth alternative that this Plan update recommends.

### **Maximum Growth Alternative**

This alternative would recommend extensive growth of multifamily housing along three transportation corridors in the community. The area north of the El Cajon Boulevard corridor from Montezuma Road to 54<sup>th</sup> Street, both sides of Montezuma Road from 55<sup>th</sup> Street to Catocin Drive, and both sides of College Avenue from Montezuma Road to El Cajon Boulevard would be recommended for increased densities. In all three areas, existing single-family housing would be replaced with multifamily housing. New multifamily housing could also occur on El Cajon Boulevard as part of redevelopment under the Mid-City Communities Planned District. Commercial redevelopment would occur under the Mid-City Communities Planned District, but no new areas for commercial development are recommended by this alternative.

This alternative would probably reduce the existing pressure for additional student housing and may reduce commuter traffic in the community. However, stable, well-maintained

single-family neighborhoods could be disrupted and, while the community would remain predominantly single-family, some of the single-family neighborhoods within and adjacent to the new multifamily areas could be adversely impacted by traffic congestion, scarcity of on-street parking, and visual intrusion of large buildings out of scale with adjacent single-family houses. This alternative is not recommended by this plan update.