



Urban Design Recommendations
Kearny Mesa Community Plan

15
 FIGURE

URBAN DESIGN ELEMENT

PRIMARY GOAL

Preserve and enhance the physical environment, visual appearance, identity and character of the Kearny Mesa community.

ISSUES

Need for Basic Amenities

Most of Kearny Mesa has developed through the requirements of the M-1A and M-1B industrial zones. Development regulations for these zones do not include the more stringent site design standards found in other City zones. Compared to other parts of the City that were developed under different standards, segments of Clairemont Mesa Boulevard, Balboa Avenue and Convoy Street lack the aesthetic quality that derives from the provision of basic amenities. In addition, landscaped medians, street trees, aesthetically pleasing signage, pedestrian pathways and other urban design elements tend to be completely missing or are provided in a piecemeal manner. Ruffner Street, Mercury Street, Kearny Mesa Road and Kearny Villa Road are also deficient in these respects. Compounding this situation are those retail businesses in the community that have emphasized service to vehicular traffic rather than pedestrian comforts. This is true even of new retail centers.

Since the M-1A and M-1B zones are anticipated to continue to implement this Plan, private property owners and developers will be relied upon to provide amenities beyond the current (1992) minimal requirements of these zones. It is also possible that these zones would be amended at a future date to require more contemporary development standards with which new projects would be required to conform.

Building Scale

The predominant building type in Kearny Mesa is the one- to two-story industrial building. This building type is typical of single-use industrial sites and business parks. The low-scale profile of these buildings is also representative of the retail uses in Kearny Mesa. The commercial corridors are framed by strip retail developments of one- and two-story design. The recent trend toward mid-rise commercial office buildings deviates from this pattern. Office buildings of between three- and six-stories are interspersed throughout the community. While the number of stories, or height, alone does not determine compatibility in scale, buildings that exceed the low-profile norm of Kearny Mesa must be sensitively designed. Scale involves not only the height of the structure, but also mass, intensity and orientation to the surrounding environment.

Gateways

The entrances to Kearny Mesa are adjacent to major freeways, including I-805, I-15, SR-163 and SR-52. Generally, none of the main streets leading into the community are visually distinct. This is unfortunate given the regional significance of the community as an employment center, and the opportunity to capture additional business from freeway users through attractive entrances that announce Kearny Mesa as a desirable place to work and shop.

Topography and Views

Kearny Mesa is located on a mesa top, which, for certain properties, provides unobstructed views of the surrounding communities. In addition, canyon areas along I-15 and to the south of SR-52 provide open space and visual relief from the built environment.

Transportation Corridors

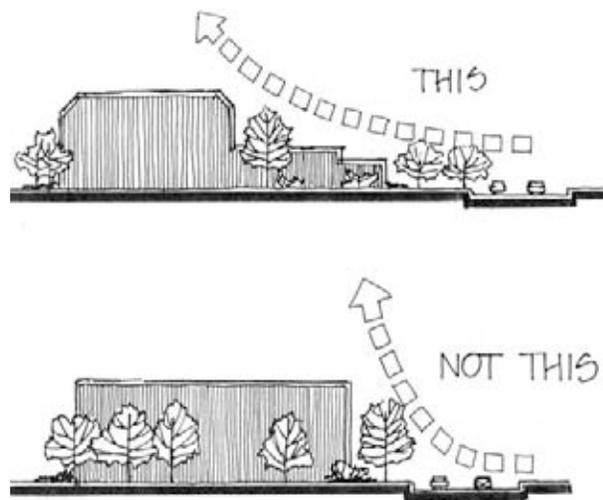
In Kearny Mesa, one of the most significant uses of land in terms of acreage, image and visibility are the transportation corridors. The freeways, arterials and other streets in Kearny Mesa function not only as a passageway for vehicles, but operate also as the front door to the community and are a major contributor to its overall character. The image of the community is largely defined by its streetscapes; therefore, improving the aesthetics of the streetscapes will have a significant effect upon the image of the community.

URBAN DESIGN GUIDELINES

The following Urban Design guidelines have been developed for general application in the community:

Building Scale and Design

New development should be consistent with the scale and character of surrounding development, and should use high quality design, materials, and workmanship. New buildings should provide a transition to older buildings by providing similar building setbacks. In addition, new buildings that are larger than existing structures should avoid abrupt differences in building height and mass through the use of step-back design techniques.

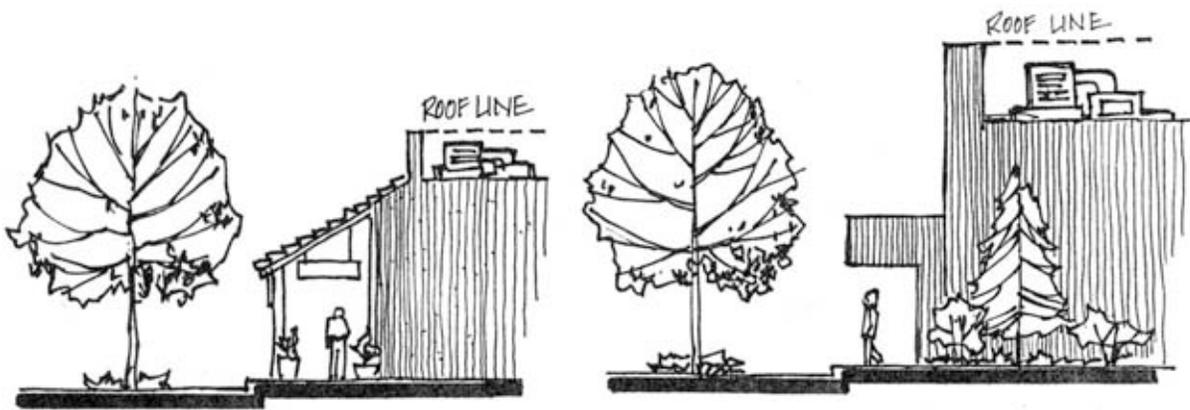


One- and two-story building facades are preferred in order to relate buildings to the human scale. Multi-story developments should use step-back design techniques in order to maintain this preferred relationship.

Where applicable, new development should enhance existing architectural styles in the community. For example to enhance the corporate image of a street developed with office buildings by building a new office building which utilizes the best elements of the surrounding structures. Another example would be the development of a new Asian restaurant locating on Convoy Street that was designed to complement the architecture of existing Asian restaurants that front on the street.

The roofline of new structures is recommended to be varied to increase visual interest and to avoid a box-like building appearance.

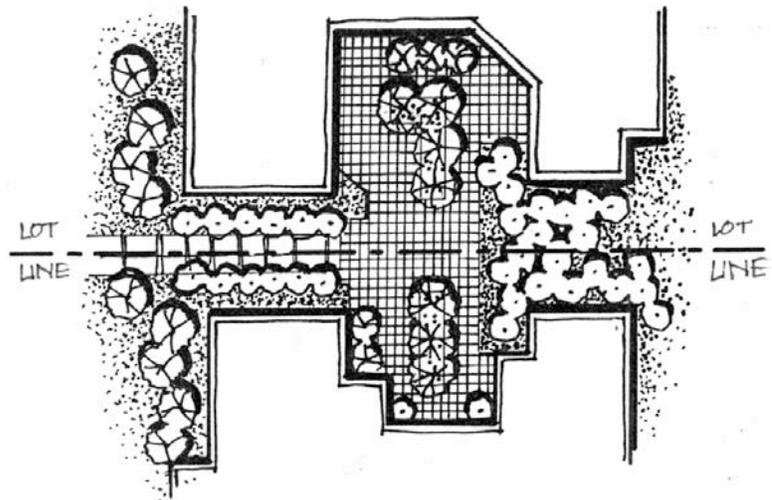
All roof-mounted equipment should be screened from view by use of parapets or other architectural elements that are fully integrated into the overall building design concept.



Service areas such as those containing loading docks and dumpsters should be screened from those areas used by the general public.

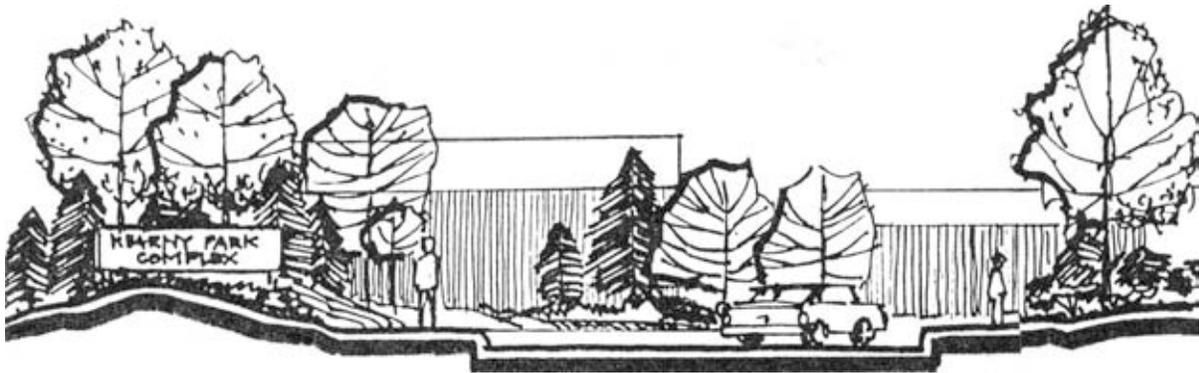
Parking structures should be integrated with adjacent buildings through the use of similar architectural treatment such as vertical and horizontal facade articulation, and use of similar materials, colors and textures.

In the older areas of the community, consolidation of two or more lots should be encouraged. This would allow greater site design flexibility for the provision of landscape and plaza space.



Gateways

There is a need for attractive entry signage that clearly marks Kearny Mesa as a community of San Diego. Focal areas could be incorporated into the design of private developments as well as within the public right-of-way. Such areas should employ monument signs with decorative walls and formal landscaping (i.e. rows of trees, flower beds that bloom all year, etc.) to enhance the image of Kearny Mesa as an employment center and retail destination. The entry signage could also include an easily recognizable logo that serves as a graphic symbol of the community.



Public community identification focal areas could potentially be located in the raised center medians of the following streets:

- Convoy Street, north of Ostrow Street
- Clairemont Mesa Boulevard, near the I-805 ramps
- Clairemont Mesa Boulevard, east of Ruffin Road
- Balboa Avenue, near the I-805 ramps
- Balboa Avenue, east of Ruffin Road

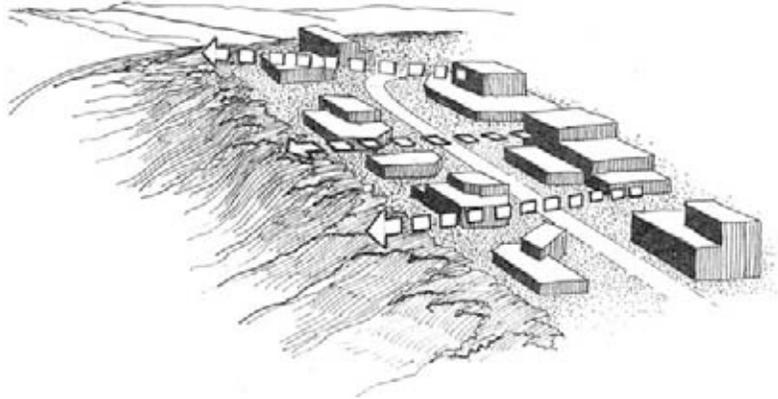
If additional raised medians of sufficient width are provided in the future, such sites should also be evaluated for their potential as a community identification area.

Hillsides and Other Natural Resources

Steep hillsides and other natural resources in Kearny Mesa should be protected and preserved. Where development is permitted, such development should be integrated with the existing landform and buffered from sensitive natural habitat. Criteria set forth in the Hillside Review, Resource Protection, and other City ordinances, such as the Brush Management provisions of the Landscape Technical Manual, should be evaluated on a case-by-case basis as applicable.

Prime Viewshed Areas

The orientation and design of new buildings should preserve and/or create view corridors. Attractive view corridors in urbanizing areas such as those along I-15 and SR-52 can be promoted by designing buildings with step back rather than box-like profiles.



Transportation Corridors\Streetscape

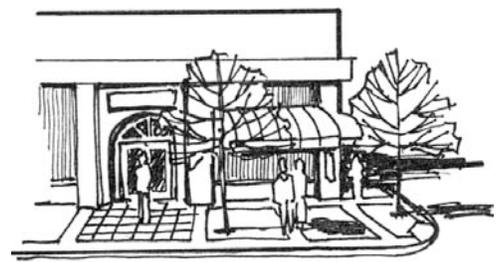
Freeways

In Kearny Mesa, freeways represent community edges and gateways. As a key physical component of the community, freeway corridors warrant careful design treatment by Caltrans to ensure their positive contribution to the visual impression of Kearny Mesa. Off-ramps and intersection areas should be maintained with unified landscaping which could also incorporate berming and land contouring methods, as needed, to mitigate noise impacts and ensure proper drainage. In addition, consideration should be given to maintaining freeway visibility for certain businesses whenever Kearny Mesa freeways are reconstructed or expanded.

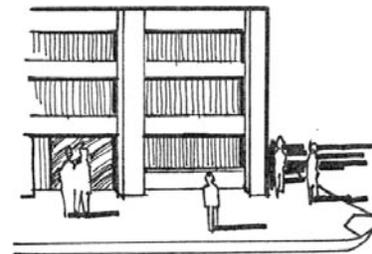
Arterials and Other Streets

The primary arterial and major street systems throughout Kearny Mesa are generally deficient in streetscape amenities. This has resulted in an environment that is visually unattractive and not conducive to pedestrian circulation. In most cases streets are devoid of the amenities necessary to create a pleasant street environment (i.e. landscaped medians, street trees, landscaped pedestrian pathways with street furniture, etc.). An attractive appearance should be presented along major streets in the community, particularly in the retail corridors that serve consumers from all over San Diego.

- Within the General Commercial land use designation, provide a full range of streetscape improvements such as street trees, street lights, landscaped areas and enhanced paving to increase interest at the street level and define pedestrian and vehicular space;

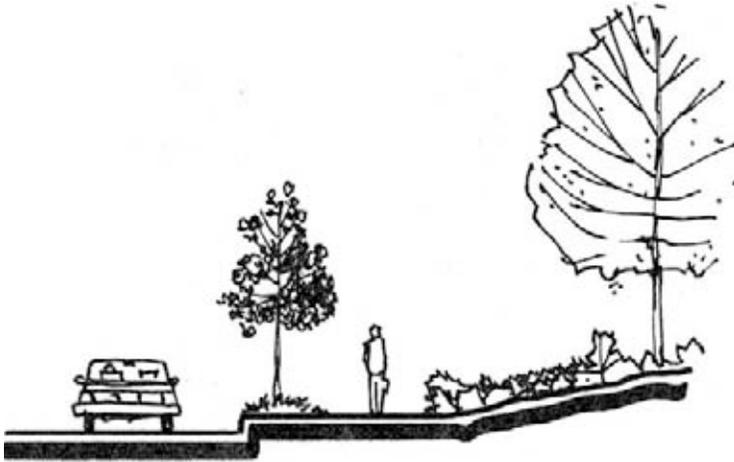


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NOT THIS

- Within the industrial and business park land use designation, basic pedestrian amenities such as transit shelters and sidewalks with wheelchair ramps should be provided.
- Encourage the consolidation of individual signs, and the development of monument signs rather than pole signs.
- Enforce prohibitions on temporary sidewalk signs that block the public right-of-way.
- Increase pedestrian safety by providing pedestrian paths with a buffer between pedestrians and street activity.



- Provide landscaped setbacks between the public right-of-way and new buildings.



- Prohibit on-street parking of campers, trailers, trucks and buses.

A private lighting and landscaping district should be established on the following streets:

- Clairemont Mesa Boulevard between I-805 to I-15
- Balboa Avenue between I-805 to I-15
- Convoy Street between SR-52 to Aero Drive
- Ruffin Road between SR-52 to Aero Drive
- Daley Center Drive between Aero Drive to Friars Road
- The General Dynamics redevelopment project site

This district could be administered by the City of San Diego to collect assessments from property owners who desire the improvements. Additional implementing tools include encroachment removal agreements and the establishment of a private, nonprofit, community organization, charged with providing improvements and administering their maintenance.

