## BAY-TO-BAY CONNECTION

Development of a canal linking San Diego and Mission Bays through the Midway community would be a critical step towards revitalization of the community. The idea of a bay-to-bay link was documented as early as 1926, when the connection was mentioned in the General Plan. The landmark 1974 report *Temporary Paradise?* renewed calls for a water connection between the two bays. However, development of a canal linking San Diego and Mission Bays could result in adverse impacts to endangered species, wetlands and environmentally sensitive habitat areas. Therefore, the canal cannot be constructed without further assessment of environmental impacts and a further amendment of the Local Coastal Program Land Use Plan. Development of this area as a linear park or waterway is a Plan alternative that does not require future amendments to the Local Coastal Program Land Use Plan.

Recently, the closure of the Naval Training Center, re-use of the former Plant 19 site (renamed as the Navy's Old Town Campus) for space and naval warfare research, and the real possibility that the former main post office and the Sports Arena may be relocated or down-sized, have revived interest in the bay-to-bay link as a way of bringing in new and exciting development to the community. A series of public workshops in 1994 resulted in a report recommending that the water link be built. In 1997, the North Bay Revitalization Advisory Committee recommended that the water link be included in future land use plans.

### POLICY

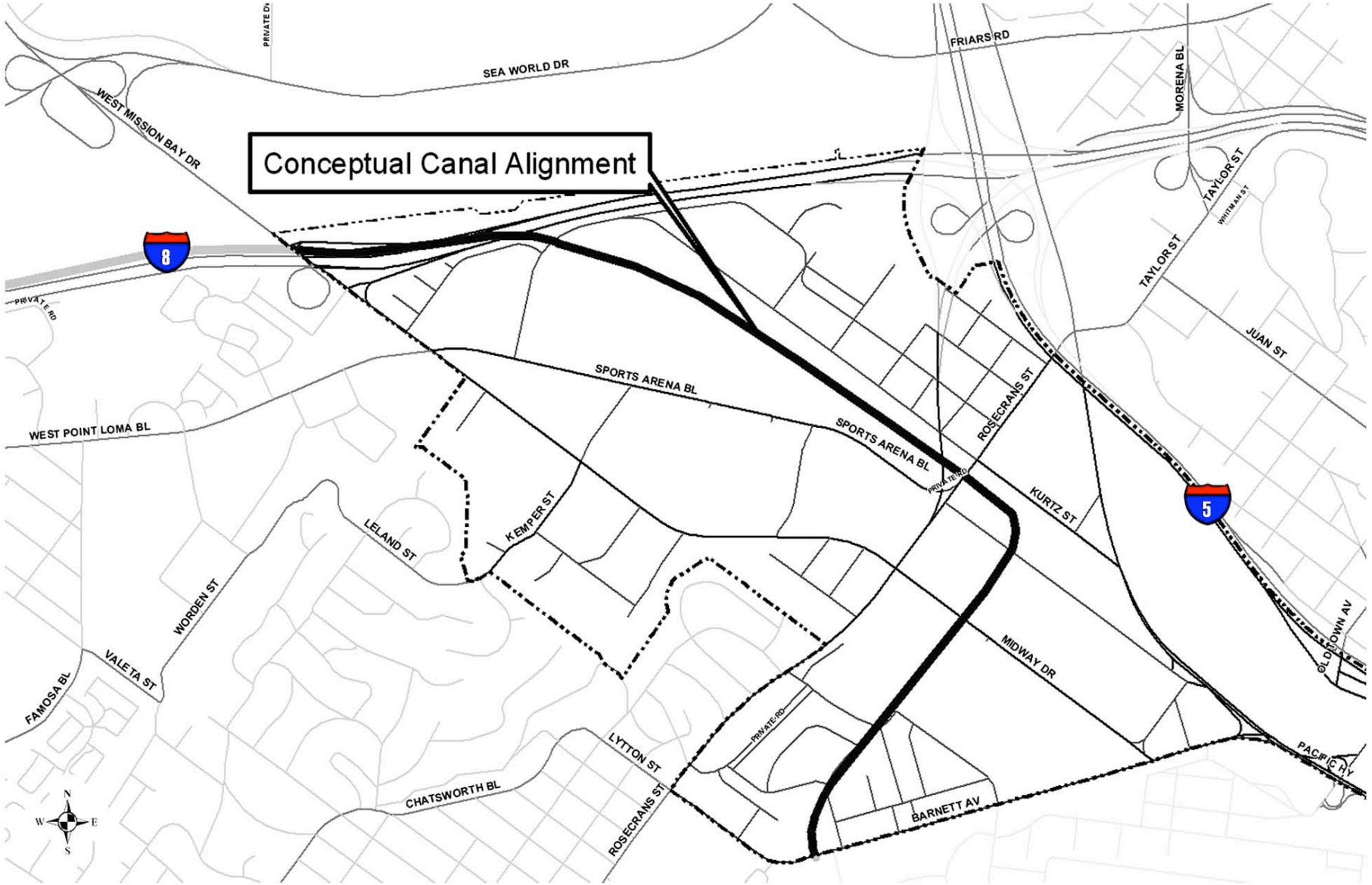
Complete development plans of a bay-to-bay water link through the community as an urban and recreational amenity to improve the image of the community and stimulate revitalization and development. Such a water link would connect San Diego Bay, from the end of the NTC boat channel, to the San Diego River by constructing a canal that can be navigated by small hand-powered and motorized watercraft. Completion of such plans will require further environmental assessment and amendment of the City's certified land use plans. Develop this area as a linear park or waterway if plans for the bay-to-bay water link are not approved.

### FURTHER

- Designate the preferred canal alignment as "canal" as a 200-foot wide corridor. Until such time as the canal is constructed, develop the alignment as a greenbelt system, with water features where appropriate, which will serve as a park linkage.

- Ensure that the design of the potential bay-to-bay canal is the least environmentally damaging alternative and that environmental impacts to sensitive resources are avoided and/or minimized consistent with the habitat protection policies of the Coastal Act. Feasible mitigation measures shall be incorporated to minimize impacts to sensitive resources.

- Identify a 400-foot wide "canal influence area" within which appropriate uses may occur.




**Conceptual Canal Alignment** **12a** FIGURE

**Midway/Pacific Highway Corridor Community Plan**

- Develop appropriate uses within the canal influence area adjacent to the canal, including a mix of passive, park-like amenities, walking and bicycling paths, as well as hotel, retail and other uses that can take advantage of this unique amenity.

- Ensure that development adjacent to the canal sets aside the appropriate right-of-way to accommodate the canal, is oriented to the water and is pedestrian-friendly in its design.

- Link the bay-to-bay canal to other open spaces, including Presidio Park in Old Town, the La Playa area in Point Loma, linear greenways in Centre City and the San Diego River corridor in Mission Valley.

## ACTION PLAN

| Implementation Measures | Timing | | | Responsibility For Implementation | Source of Funding | Index to Action Detail |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Adopt With Plan | Next Five Years | Six to 20 Years | | | |
| Conduct detailed engineering studies to evaluate alignment and specific dimensions of canal linking San Diego and Mission Bays | | ● | | Various City Departments | City | Specific Recommendations/ Canal Alignment and Canal Design |
| Apply the Community Plan Implementation Overlay Zone—Type B to properties abutting the Canal influence area to facilitate acquisition of canal right-of-way and conformance with design standards | ● | | | City Council | Reimbursable | Development Standards **Figure 13** |

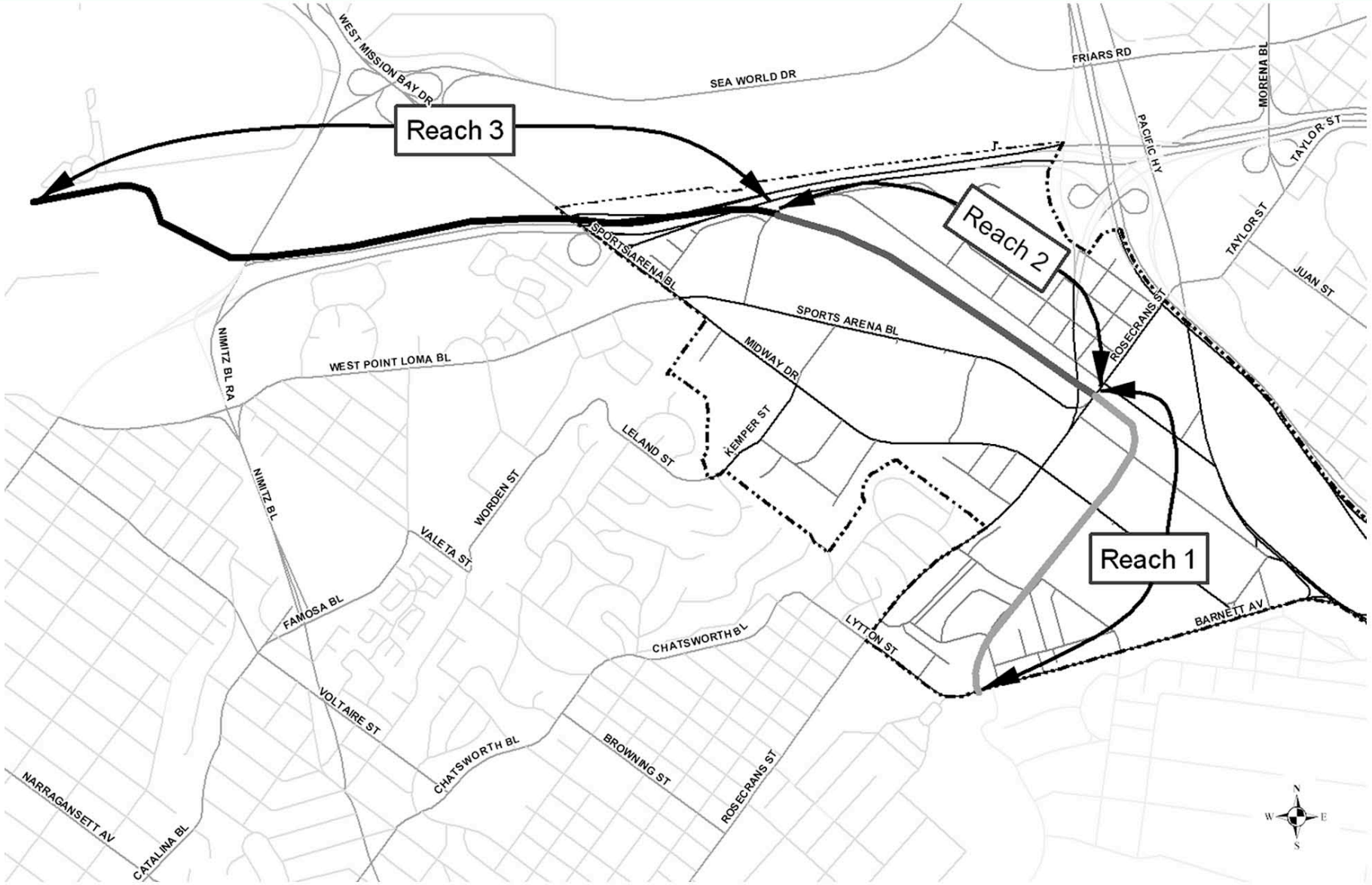
## SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS

### Canal Alignment

The canal alignment is conceptual at this time and subject to further environmental assessment and amendments to the City's certified land use plans. The most likely alignment is shown on the following figure. However, there are potential variations, particularly in Reach 1 (from the NTC channel to Rosecrans Street).

### Reach 1

From its terminus in NTC, the canal would exit the base and cross Barnett Street in the vicinity of Gate 1. Crossing Barnett, the canal would then run through the Gateway Village Housing site, with new housing built on the remainder of the parcel around the canal. From here, the canal runs through the paved parking/storage area on the north side of the U.S. Post




**Canal Segments** **12b** **FIGURE**

**Midway/Pacific Highway Corridor Community Plan**

Office parcel, and then through a portion of the western parcel of the Navy's Old Town Campus (former Plant 19 parking lot), north of the warehouse currently under construction.

A variation of this alignment would keep the canal running through the Marine Corps Recruitment Depot parallel to Barnett Street, then running through the post office's south parking lot, and then through a portion of the western parcel of the Navy's Old Town Campus. This alignment is somewhat less likely, because traversing MCRD appears incompatible with Marine operations at this time. Either alignment ends, for this segment, at Rosecrans Street north of Sports Arena Boulevard. Both the preferred alignment and the variation take advantage of existing publicly-owned land and keep the canal at a relatively low and even elevation.

**Reach 2**

Reach 2 brings the canal from Rosecrans Street to I-8. Alignment options in this reach are few. The conceptual alignment is from Rosecrans Street, between Sports Arena Boulevard and Kurtz Street, which contains existing private commercial facilities, and then the City-owned Glasshouse Square retail area, Sports Arena and Red Lobster retail centers. The canal would exit the community by flowing under I-8 west of the Sports Arena. Since the parcels involved are, for the most part, large sites with numerous development possibilities, the canal can be sited anywhere within those parcels to best suit planned development.

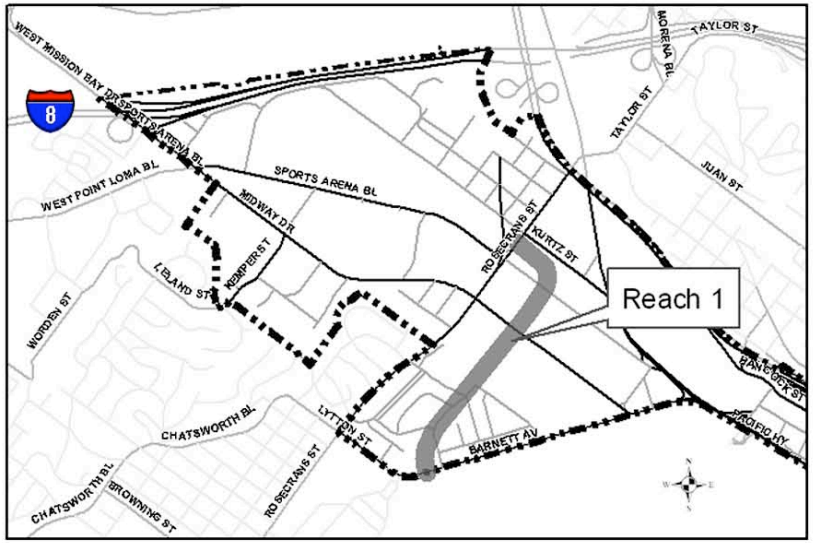
**Reach 3**

In developing plans for this segment, the goal is to locate this segment in the San Diego River flood control channel. The bay-to-bay canal would be constructed as a separate facility within the flood control channel; a jetty separating the two channels would be required. The bay-to-bay canal would likely parallel the flood control channel along the southern rock jetty, and then cross north to enable watercraft to exit the channel to the Pacific Ocean and/or Mission Bay. A gate or lock would probably be needed to protect the bay-to-bay canal from flooding during storm events. However, until further environmental studies are completed, the canal connecting San Diego and Mission Bays cannot be constructed.

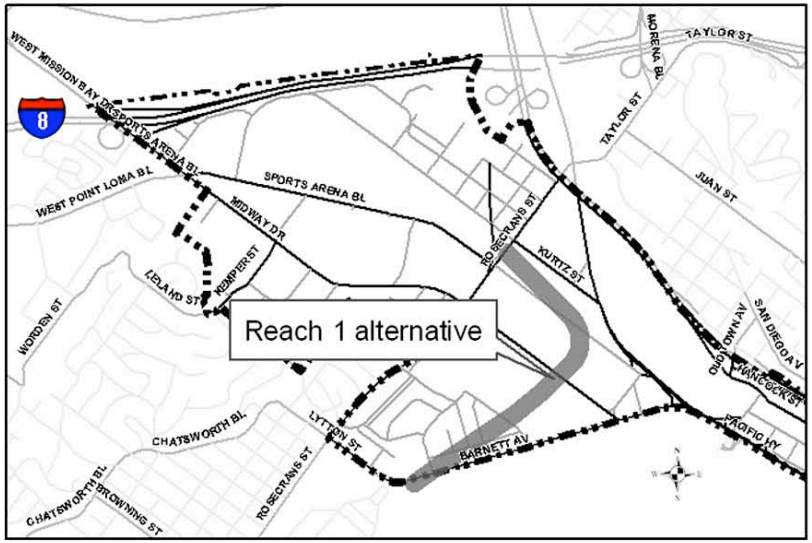
**Canal Dimensions**

The bay-to-bay canal is envisioned as a waterway navigable by small hand-powered watercraft (e.g., kayaks, canoes, outriggers) and by small motor craft (water taxis, trailer-able boats). Wind-powered boats could traverse the canal only with sailing masts retracted. This design feature will lower the costs of canal construction (water depth can be reduced) and of bridge construction (clearance can be reduced). The depth of the canal need not exceed ten feet at low tide, and the bridge clearance need not exceed ten feet at high tide.

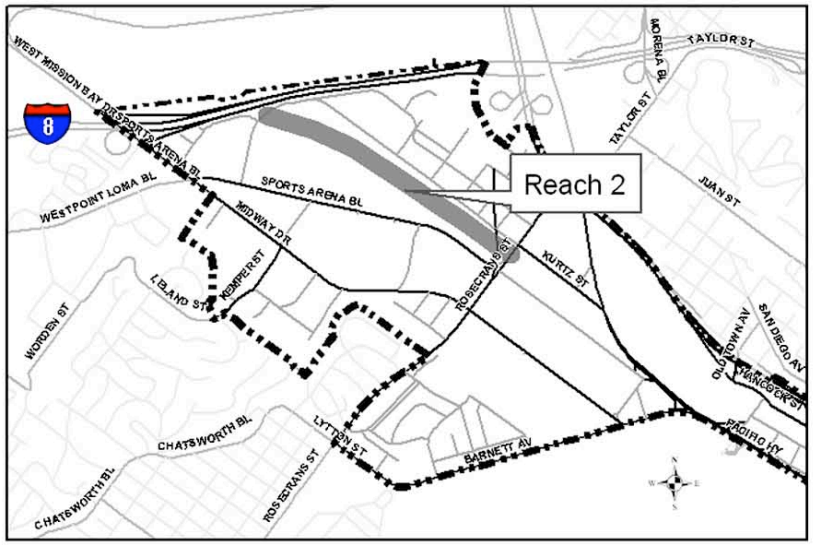
The conceptual canal design calls for a 200-foot-wide canal and associated open space throughout its alignment, although variations in width are expected. These dimensions include a 75 to 100-foot-wide waterway, zero to 75 feet for canal sides, which may be either sloped back and lined with rip-rap or straight-sided concrete, and 25 to 50 feet of sidewalk,



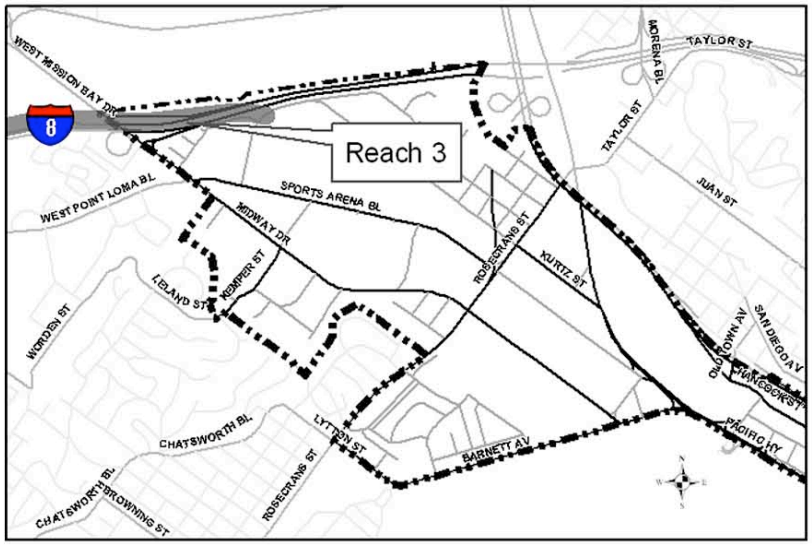

Prefered Alignment - Reach 1




Alignment Variation - Reach 1




Alignment - Reach 2




Alignment - Reach 3

# Alignment, Reach 1, 2 & 3

**12c FIGURE**

**Midway/Pacific Highway Corridor Community Plan**

bike path, and landscaping on one or both sides. Reductions in the width of the canal should be considered when existing development precludes a wider canal; when finger canals or offshoots bring water elements into adjacent areas; and for small parcels where the full right-of-way would preclude reasonable development. The width of the canal will also be re-evaluated following more detailed engineering studies.

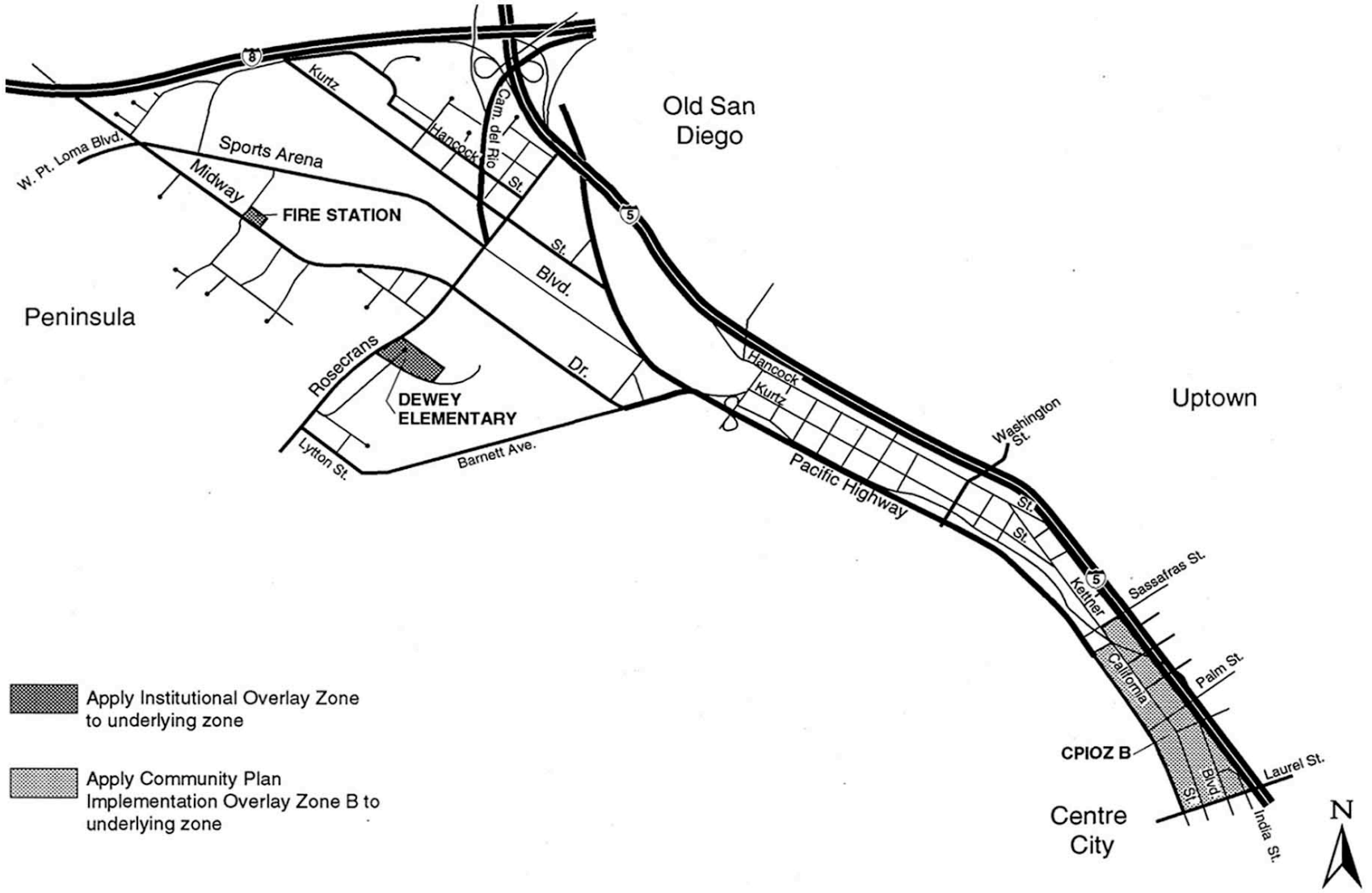
**Canal Design**

The bay-to-bay canal would be designed as a tidal canal connecting two tidal bodies of water. It is anticipated that the canal would ebb and flow with the daily tides. The canal would be designed as a 200-foot-wide facility because a narrow canal would have ditch-like appearance at low tide. However, a detailed engineering study is needed to analyze currents, sediment transport and amplitude differences between the two water bodies. The study would recommend the optimal canal cross-sections and roughness, and evaluate the need for remedial structures, such as locks or gates, to avoid flooding, sedimentation and currents within the canal. The engineering study will evaluate whether a canal with locks would be more cost effective than a tidal canal. Advantages to the lock system are that the width of the canal could be reduced, the depth may be reduced if the water level is trapped at a higher tide situation, and flooding may be easier to control. The disadvantages are the cost of installing the locks and the difficulty of providing continuous access to the two water bodies through the lock system. Additional studies are needed to assess the impact of the canal on wetlands, and the tidal regimes and water quality of Mission Bay and San Diego Bay. Any properties along the proposed canal alignment that redevelop before the engineering study and other environmental assessment are complete must comply with the conceptual design recommended by this Plan.

Ultimate design and construction of the canal shall ensure that environmental impacts to sensitive resources are avoided and/or minimized consistent with the habitat protection policies of the Coastal Act and that any necessary mitigation will occur as close to the area of impact as possible. The City will work closely with the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, United States Army Corps of Engineers, California Department of Fish and Game, California Coastal Commission, as well as other governmental agencies and organizations, in assessing environmental and engineering feasibility and in designing the canal to achieve the best design possible to minimize identified impacts. Should the canal be designed as a linear park or waterway without connections to San Diego or Mission Bay, such that it is located outside the Coastal Zone, consultation with the California Coastal Commission is not necessary.

**Development Standards**

Apply the Community Plan Implementation Overlay Zone (CPIOZ)—Type B to properties adjacent to the canal influence area to facilitate the dedication of the necessary right-of-way and comprehensive review of overall site design to implement the supplemental development regulations identified in this Plan.




## Recommended Overlay Zones

**Midway/Pacific Highway Corridor Community Plan**

**13** FIGURE

A. Require pedestrian-friendly and water-oriented design features next to the canal.

1. Sidewalks are required adjacent to the canal. The sidewalk should be at least ten feet wide, flanked by a row of broad canopy trees.

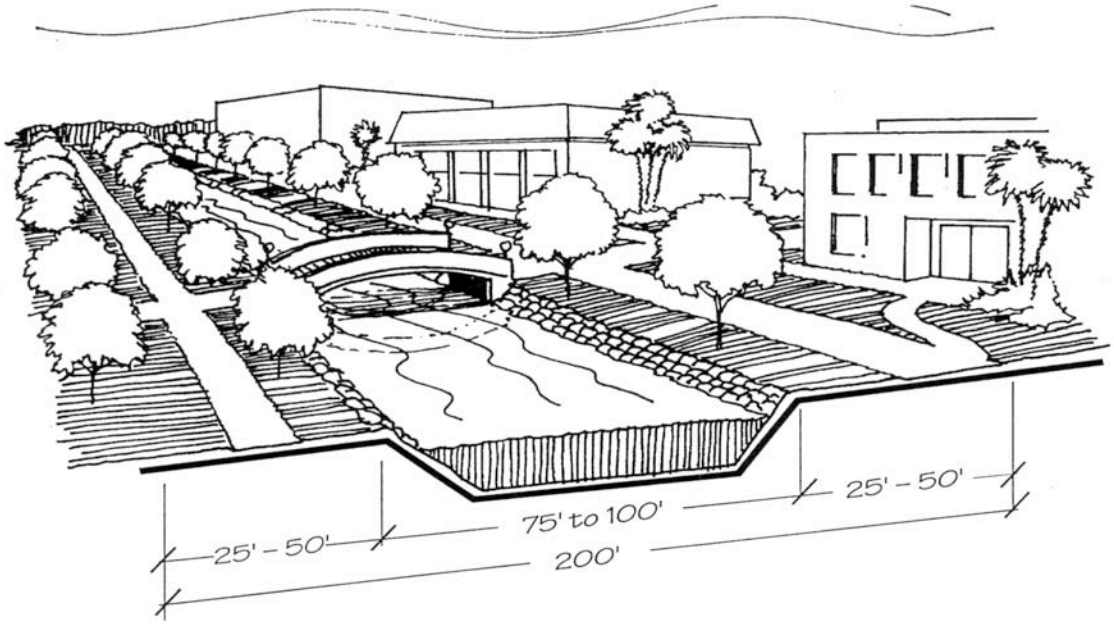
2. Buildings should front on the canal, or at least have secondary entrances onto the canal.Facades fronting the canal should have a minimum 50 percent transparency on the ground floor.

3. Outdoor seating, retail and other uses conducive to a pedestrian environment are strongly encouraged to locate immediately adjacent to the canal in the areas designated for commercial and multiple use.

B. Require that the canal right-of-way be set aside at the time that redevelopment of affected parcels occurs. The right-of-way shall be improved as parkland, leading to the development of a linear park as an interim amenity until the canal itself can be constructed. Water features are strongly encouraged as part of the park design, including self-contained lakes that will eventually be incorporated into the canal.

C. In exchange for reservation of the canal right-of-way, the City should consider variances for building setbacks and floor area ratio.

D. Building heights adjacent to the canal may exceed the Proposition D 30-foot height limit, provided the exception results in a superior site design and subject to voter approval.




Canal Dimensions

# Canal Dimensions and Perspective